



Growing Native Plants

Getting Started

Whether you start your garden from scratch or want to gradually incorporate indigenous plants into your existing garden, this web site will give you an overview of what can be achieved and how.

A list of plants indigenous to Warrnambool and particularly suited to garden situations is included elsewhere on this web site, together with planting and care advice. However, there are many more than can be listed here, and any native nursery will be happy to advise you when selecting plants for your garden.

You can also find links to other Australian Plants Society web sites if you would like to grow plants from other parts of Australia.

Site Analysis:

Like with any other garden, the design of an indigenous garden begins with an inventory of existing plants, features and site conditions such as hard landscape features - paving, retaining walls, paths - slope, soil conditions, easements and services and aspect (sun/ shade). This site analysis, combined with a list of lifestyle wants and needs, will be an invaluable guide when designing your garden and selecting plants.

A thorough site analysis will help you plan your design and implementation, especially when you are landscaping larger areas or are planning work that requires large amounts of materials to be brought in. Make a rough sketch of the site, measure the sides and main features and record your measurements.

In case of heavy rainfall or/and if you are planning to install irrigation, where is your water going to drain to? Don't put plants that require well-drained conditions in an area that is prone to inundation with water. Choose plants suitable for wetter areas.

Test your soil. What is its texture, structure and pH? Soil test kits are available from garden centres or hardware stores.

Soil testing:

Soil pH can be tested using simple pH testing kits available from nurseries and hardware stores. Take soil samples at 5 -10 cm depth, this is where the feeder roots are most active. Depending on the area size, more than one soil sample may be required.

Soil texture refers to how coarse or fine a soil is, this is determined by its clay, sand and silt content. There is a simple test to give you a general idea of the composition of your soil sample:

Take a handful of soil and add water until you can make a ball.

Feel if the ball is gritty (sand), silky (silt) or sticky (clay). If the ball does not stick together at all and crumbles, your soil is very sandy.

If you can make a ribbon with your soil, it contains clay. The longer the ribbon you can make, the higher the clay content of your soil.

Checking soil moisture content in various spots will give an indication of potential low-lying wet areas, or of drier areas - e.g. under large trees - these will require special consideration when designing, to either select wetland plants/install drainage or select plants that will survive very dry conditions. You can also improve drainage by building up the height of garden beds, even a few inches will help. These simple tests will help you determine if any work is required to improve the soil prior to planting and how much time is required for any ameliorations to become effective.



Lifestyle requirements:

What do you want from your garden? Do you require large entertainment areas? Do you have children that need play areas? Do you want lawn or hard landscape features?

If you have or want to build hard landscape areas such as decking, paving and paths, choose materials that have been sourced from sustainable sources. Timbers ideally should be impregnated using non-arsenic based treatments, so they can also safely be used for vegetable gardens and around children's play areas.

There is a range of paving and path coverings available that are permeable, so water will be absorbed into the soil underneath and run-off issues can be largely avoided. If you want lawn areas, consider using native lawn species (see section on "Indigenous lawn alternatives").

Well designed micro-climate zones in a garden can be cooler than their surrounds. This is achieved by establishing canopy plants for shade, suitable undergrowth, water features for evaporative cooling effect and the use of non-reflective, permeable materials for paths and sitting areas.



Track is comprised of crushed limestone that has been compacted