

## ***CREATING A BUSHLAND FRIENDLY BACKYARD***

You can help protect our local bushland from your own backyard. The way that we live and how we maintain our gardens can have a significant impact on the health of native bushland.

Here are some simple tips on how you can create a bushland friendly backyard.

### ***Choose native plants suitable for your location***

Native plants that are suitable for your area will grow well, be hardy and provide local fauna requirements. Planting local native plants helps provide habitat, food and shelter for our wildlife neighbours.

Look at the type of native plants that are growing in bushland near you for ideas on what will grow well in your garden. You can also consult your local native plant nursery, Council or Landcare organisation for advice on selecting suitable plants for your location.

### ***Avoid or remove plants that will spread into bushland***

Wind, water, birds, animals, humans and machinery disperse plant seeds. If you choose to plant exotic species, make sure they aren't noxious or environmental weeds.

Be aware of how seed from your garden can spread into and bushland. Pruning flower heads from exotic plants after flowering and before seed set will prevent their spread beyond your garden fence. For information on noxious and environmental weeds plants contact Far North Coast Weeds or your local Landcare organisation.

### ***Don't extend your backyard into bushland***

It is illegal to clear bushland areas or to extend your backyard into bushland by planting, building fences, erecting buildings or dumping rubbish. Unauthorised tree pruning, poisoning and vandalism are also offences. Fines apply to offenders, and the local Council and National Parks and Wildlife Service have the power to require removal of offending items from bushland and issue substantial fines.

### ***Manage garden waste***

Garden waste can include mulch, branches and lopped material, lawn clippings, tree trunks and stumps, leaves and unwanted and dead plants. Dumping of garden waste in native bushland can damage fauna and flora habitats by introducing diseases and environmental weeds and by providing a refuge for vermin; dumping also increases the risk of bushfires.

Consider reusing garden waste. For example, you may be able to shred leafy or soft plant parts to produce raw mulch, add it to your compost or use smaller branches as mulch; care needs to be taken not to utilise noxious or environmental weed propagules in mulch. Take advantage of green waste collections offered by Council or transport green waste to a refuse disposal facility. When transporting garden waste, ensure that the load is covered.

### ***Choose plants that don't require too much watering***

By choosing native plants that are suitable to your local area you can reduce the need for extra watering. Using mulch in your garden can reduce evaporation from the soil by up to 80%. If you do water your garden, the ideal time is in the early morning or in the evening.

### ***Use friendly pesticides and fertilisers***

Pesticides and fertilisers can be toxic to native animals, your pets and even your children. They also have the potential to poison native plant species in surrounding bushland. Excess fertilisers that runoff from your garden can increase weed growth in bushland and watercourses. Try using compost and organic fertilisers such as manure as they provide low cost nutrients for your garden.

### ***Don't feed native fauna***

Providing artificial food poses a major health issue to native birds and can encourage feral birds such as Indian Mynas into your garden. The plants in your garden can provide natural food for native birds and animals and can also attract insects that in turn provide food for local wildlife. Try to mimic natural habitats by planting a range of native trees, shrubs and grasses that will provide flowers, nectar, fruit and seed.

### ***Be a responsible pet owner***

Domestic pets can share the environment with native animals if managed responsibly. Keep your cat indoors at night when many native animals are active and within your garden during the day; domestic cats may range up to 1km from home. Keep your dog on a leash when in public and restrict uncontrolled access to bushland areas. De-sex your pets to prevent unwanted litters, interaction with feral animals, to reduce fighting and territoriality and limit feral populations that prey on native animals.

### ***Reduce fire hazards***

You can help local fire fighting agencies to reduce bush fire risks and hazards by ensuring that your garden is maintained in a low fuel state. Never dump green garden waste into bushland as it can increase the risk of fire; rather recycle or dispose of waste through a green waste collection or at an appropriate waste disposal facility. Regularly clear gutters of organic litter, trim back overhanging trees or shrubs and store flammable materials (e.g. wood pile) away from your house. If an alternative water supply is available (e.g. swimming pool or designated supply) put a Static Water Supply (SWS) sticker on your letterbox.

***Remember that the bushland belongs to everyone and we all have a role to play in protecting these natural places.***

#### ***For more information visit:***

Tweed Landcare Inc. at <http://www.tweedlandcare.org.au/>

Tweed Byron Bush Futures Project at <http://www.tweed.nsw.gov.au/BushFutures/default.aspx>

Far North Coast Weeds at <http://www.fncw.nsw.gov.au/>