

# Backyards 4 Wildlife



*Backyards 4 Wildlife helps you create waterwise and wildlife-friendly gardens. By planting local native species in urban gardens it also increases the connectivity and overall amount of habitat in the Greater Adelaide area, from the coast to the hills.*

## Conservation in your backyard

As a gardener you can help re-create some of the important ecological relationships that have been lost from local areas. These native gardens can also provide food and shelter for local wildlife, helping to support many of our unique native species into the future.

One of the main ways to bring back biodiversity into the Greater Adelaide is to use provenance, i.e. local native plants grown from seed or cuttings by native nurseries. By doing this, home gardeners protect and maintain the genetic integrity and natural heritage of the bushland native to their suburb.

These local plant varieties are adapted to Adelaide's soils and climatic conditions, surviving for generations on local rainfall alone. In this age of diminishing water supplies, using these drought-tolerant species also makes good sense.

Creating your very own backyard for wildlife can be applied on any scale, ranging from a balcony or patio pot to the largest garden. They can also be applied in any locality and on any budget.

## Top five tips

1. Use native nursery plants grown from seed or cuttings collected from known local provenance (e.g. from your suburb and matched to coastal, riparian - wet areas, creek lines, plains and foothills conditions).
2. Consider adding layers to your garden such as: tall trees (where possible, otherwise the one in the neighbours' yards or council reserves count too), smaller trees and tall shrubs, a medium shrub layer, small shrubs and herbs and grasses. Note: not all layers may be required or appropriate!
3. Use an assortment of plants that flower during different seasons or provide different resources for different species (e.g. butterfly-attracting plants like flowers, grasses or sedges are great for them to lay their eggs on).
4. Keep your pets safe inside and under control outside (e.g. cat runs, leads/harnesses or designate wildlife areas to fence off from dogs).
5. Use alternatives to chemicals whenever possible in the garden.



Beautiful and rare, conserve the groundcover *Glycine tabacina* in gardens where it would have occurred naturally around Adelaide

Other important considerations include the:

- use of mulch to encourage insects that in turn encourage lizards and birds. Mulch also improves soil condition, controls weeds and reduces evaporative water loss. However don't mulch too close to plant stems as this will encourage rot.
- addition of garden features such as logs, ponds, rocks and nesting boxes to enhance backyard biodiversity. Ensure only quarry rocks are used as using moss rocks has negative environmental impacts!

## Keep biodiversity balanced

In Australia, gardening has been recognised as one of our favourite pastimes and what we do in our home gardens has the potential to benefit or harm the natural environment. Local native plants fit within local ecosystems and can contribute to biodiversity conservation goals in the broader landscape. Many "Aussie natives" have become some of SA's worst weeds (e.g. Blue-bell Creeper aka *Sollya (Billardiera heterophylla)* and Swamp Sheoak (*Casuarina glauca*)). Cultivars of some native species (e.g. callistemon, banksia, correa, and grevillea species) have been modified to flower profusely thereby attracting aggressive and raucous nectar-eating bird species that can exclude most other local birds.



Superb fairy-wrens, (male pictured), feed on insects caught on the ground and in low shrubs  
Photo by SA Tourism Commission



## What should I plant?

The most wildlife-friendly garden is one that attracts different kinds of wildlife at different times of the year. Local native plants have co-evolved for centuries with local wildlife. This means that they are the best choice to naturally attract and support local native fauna.

Local native species are also naturally adapted to your soil, rainfall and micro-climate. Hardy and drought tolerant, after establishment they are able to survive our harsh summers and water restrictions. They are also very low maintenance!

The Backyards 4 Wildlife local native plant selector provides gardeners in and around Greater Adelaide the opportunity to search and see which plants historically grew in their local area. It has descriptions and photos of the plant, plus a close up of the fruit or flower. Wildlife gardening attributes are listed to help put the right plants back in the right places.

In addition, visit our website for the *Creating a wildlife friendly garden* booklet and two other booklets that can help you create a healthy, attractive garden using native plants that thrive in your local conditions:

- *Adelaide gardens – a planting guide*
- *Coastal gardens – a planting guide.*

Each guide offers great garden designs to inspire with step-by-step advice on sourcing, planting and caring for local native plants.

## Where can I find local native plants?

Retail nurseries and hardware stores often service large areas and provide a range of different plants, although these are usually exotic species. They often stock some Australian natives, but be sure to ask where they come from as these are unlikely to be from local provenance.

Because these nurseries specialise in the most popular cultivars, they may be less familiar with local native plants in your area. Ask nurseries if they have any local native plants and whether plants are of local provenance. If more people ask these questions, retail nurseries will start to recognise the growing demand for local natives of known provenance.

Local native nurseries collect seed from remnant plants in your area and often grown to order – so you can be sure of provenance. Be sure to plan your garden in advance so you can place orders early. Seeds may have to be collected (Oct-Mar) and then propagated for you (Dec-Mar) to ensure they are ready for autumn planting, other nurseries may have stock on hand. Find the list of native nurseries on our website to locate one near you.

A local native nursery will usually have extensive knowledge about the native species growing in your area. They can provide you with information and advice about how to create natural habitats that will form an ideal Backyard 4 Wildlife.



Landscape features such as rocks, water and mulch not only provide resources for wildlife like this White-naped Honeyeater visiting a birdbath, but add character to any garden

Photo by Craig Gillespie

## More information

Visit the urban biodiversity page of our website to access more Backyards 4 Wildlife information, the local native plant selector and contact details for specialist native plant nurseries.

[www.naturalresources.sa.gov.au/adelaidemtloftyranges](http://www.naturalresources.sa.gov.au/adelaidemtloftyranges)

Or contact your nearest Natural Resources Centre

### Black Hill

115 Maryvale Road, Athelstone, SA 5076  
P (08) 8336 0901

### Eastwood

205 Greenhill Road, Eastwood, SA 5063  
P (08) 8273 9100

### Gawler

8 Adelaide Road, Gawler South, SA 5118  
P (08) 8523 7700

### Willunga

5 Aldinga Road, Willunga, SA 5172  
P (08) 8550 3400

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