

Local Plants

Bushy Creek Parkland



Enchylaena tomentosa - Ruby Salt Bush



Lomandra longifolia - Spiny Headed Mat-rush



LOCAL plants for LOCAL people

Text and images provided by Trevor Eddy, Greenlink Box Hill

It's not too hard to notice the urban development which is occurring in many of our once leafy suburbs. Plants and trees are making way for high rise and multi dwelling developments, rail projects and revegetation of our altered waterways. For the home gardener these changes present a number of challenges and they struggle to know what to plant, when to plant it and what to do with it when it is in the ground.

Some local Councils through their Parkswide teams and others responsible for revegetation works

seemed to have found the potential answer – plant Indigenous, and it seems that locals are catching on to the idea as well because they are becoming very popular.

Nestled in the sprawl of Box Hill, is the Greenlink Indigenous Plant Nursery which is fully operated by volunteers, specialising in growing plants from locally sourced seeds and cuttings and distributing to residents. In other words, “local plants for local people”. Sounds simple enough but it still doesn't answer the many questions and concerns people have

about making the transition from a traditional garden or replanting to one which features indigenous plants.

I couldn't count the number and variety of questions I have been asked over the years when serving customers. However, if I was to choose the most frequently asked, my number one pick would be “will they grow in my garden?” The second most asked question believe it or not is “will they attract birds and insects to my garden”?



Kennedia prostrata - Running Postman



Patersonia occidentalis - Long Purple Flag



Eryngium ovinum - Blue Devil



Hardenbergia violacea - Purple Coral Pea

Indigenous plants come in all forms, ground covers, grasses, shrubs, trees, and wetland plants. So, like all garden planning, to achieve the best survival rates, you need to have the right plants to fit the available space.

When taking a walk through the Bushy Creek parklands behind Greenlink Nursery, which is the traditional land of the Wurundjeri people, it's easy to see the large variety of indigenous plants. They form part of the local eco system—a very important provenance for such plants and local wildlife which has evolved with these plants to provide perfect homes for them. The fact is that there is an important symbiotic relationship between birds, insects and indigenous plants which enhances wildlife corridors and provides habitat steppingstones between fragmented and otherwise isolated communities.

Rainfall or not, these local plants are very tolerant and have adapted over many years to the weather and soil conditions comprising mainly of loose topsoil or natural mulch then a layer of clay. Somehow, mother-nature helps them find a way to survive.

Indigenous plant selection goes through phases of popularity for the home gardener whereas revegetation projects are somewhat more predictable with Project Managers tending to stick with what works for them.

So what are people looking to plant out for this spring?

Enchylaena tomentosa
– Ruby saltbush

This is a hardy attractive plant which is very useful for undershrub plantings. It often displays a

variation of coloured berries which can be eaten raw or soaked in water to make a sweet tea. It doesn't mind creeping over logs and rocks but is an excellent ground cover for large areas adapting well to all soil types including dryness and salinity

Kennedia Prostrata
– Running Postman

A spectacular plant for hanging baskets where the reddish pea shaped flowers with yellow centres can cascade down the sides. It is great for softening garden edges and steps. A very popular use for the Kennedia is open trailing or as a densely matting perennial ground cover which enjoys well drained soils but tolerates dryness. ▶

Local Plants



Eryngium ovinum – Blue Devil

The striking metallic blue flower heads of this prickly perennial are attractive to passers by to the extent that it is often “borrowed” from its natural home meaning the species has diminished in some areas over recent years. It prefers moist and well-drained but is known to gain footage in cracked clay. Great for rockeries and pots.

Lomandra longifolia – Spiny Headed Mat-Rush

The Wurundjeri people particularly favoured this large dense tussock plant for weaving cultural items such as necklaces, headbands, girdles, baskets, mats and bags for carrying foods. Very attractive to butterflies, great for filling difficult spots is hardy and drought tolerant

Pattersonia Occidentalis – Long Purple-flag

Very popular for cottage gardens, rockeries and water features. With strappy leaves and blue to purple and occasionally white flowers, this compact perennial herb with its dense tufts is very adaptable and looks pretty special in mass plantings.

Hardenbergia violacea – Purple Coral Pea

If you are looking for something that is adaptable and enjoys climbing up a shrub or scrambling over a retaining wall, then this hardy and very showy scrambler could be the answer. With its purple pea flowers and deep rich green leathery leaves, it makes a great spectacle

Poa labillardierei – Common Tussock Grass (Blue Form)

Provides a dramatic sight when mass planted, particularly when the sunlight picks up on the subtle blue tinge in the ornamental grass through the varying heights of the tussocks. A very tolerant plant which has people use for bird shelter in aviaries, particularly for quail.

Goodenia Ovata – Hop Goodenia

Aboriginal women gave a carefully prepared infusion of the sticky leaves of the shrub to babies to help them sleep. This medium size shrub with its small vibrant yellow blooms is easily propagated, is hardy and provides a great food source for insect eating birds and habitat for small creatures such as lizards. Very popular for revegetation projects.

There are of course many more indigenous plants and trees in our parklands that are there to admire, photograph and ponder the hundreds of years these have survived and tolerated the new density of living. My walk through the Bushy Creek Trail has thrown up just a small sample of what we hope will remain for future generations to enjoy.

Will they grow in my garden? Yes they will!

*Greenlink grows around 200 species of local indigenous plants in tubestock. Pictures and details of the wonderful plant selection, are on their website greenlinkboxhill.org or contact them by email greenlinkboxhill@gmail.com