

Planting local natives

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Native gardens support local wildlife and generally use less water. Even adding just a few native plants can help to support native bees, butterflies, lizards, and birds, and contribute to a more sustainable and resilient Adelaide.

Choose local

The geographical location or source of a plant is known as its provenance, and choosing native plants with provenance close to your home can greatly benefit your garden.

For example, golden wattles grow across Australia, but seedlings sourced in New South Wales may not grow as successfully in the Adelaide climate as local provenance seedlings would. Plants already adapted to local climate and soil conditions will require less maintenance and watering and will be more resilient.

It is easy to source local species because an abundance of specialist native nurseries now enables gardeners to choose from a wide selection of plants, often specific to their suburbs, to create gardens that most complement the landscape, fit their needs and benefit the environment.

How to plant native tubestock

While it can be tempting to opt for larger, more mature plants, planting tubestock seedlings will generally result in healthier, better-established gardens, giving greater results and saving money in the long run.

Where possible, plant in autumn, winter or early spring to give plants a chance to establish with the help of natural rainfall, before the heat of summer arrives.

Plants can often be slow to adjust after being transplanted from a container. To increase the success and encourage healthy growth of your new seedlings, follow these steps when planting.

Step 1: Create the ideal hole

The ideal hole is roughly twice as deep and wide as the container the plant is in.



In compacted and heavy soils, it is important to avoid glazing – creating hard smooth sides with an almost polished look. The hard soil can restrict root growth and cause the plant to become root-bound. Avoid this by using a garden fork to loosen the soil around the walls and base.

Step 2: Soak the soil

Fill the hole with water and allow it to fully soak into the ground. For heavy clay soils this may take some time.

Step 3: Soak the potting mix

Soak the potting mix the seedling is growing in by submerging the seedling (still in the container) up to the top of the potting mix. Hold the plant container in a bucket of water at the right level until it stops bubbling. This gives the plant a good drink and makes it easier to get the plant out of the container. Adding a small amount of seaweed extract to the water can help reduce transplant shock and stimulate root growth.

Step 4: Remove the plant from the container

The soil and roots should come away easily. If not, tap the edge of the container lightly with a small garden tool and lightly squeeze the sides of the tube to help loosen the soil inside. Supporting the stem of the seedling by holding it with one hand, use your other hand to hold the roots and soil together as you place it in the hole. If the roots are coiled tight, tease them out gently with your hand, from the sides and base.

Step 5: Backfill soil

Backfill soil and tamp firmly without over-compacting the soil. Create a small depression around the plant to act as a water bowl to retain moisture. Always water new plants immediately after backfilling to settle the soil and reduce the chance of transplant shock. Newly planted seedlings need to be soaked - not sprinkled with water. A good soaking reduces evaporation and causes water to penetrate deeper into the soil, encouraging roots to grow deeper.

Watering

Newly planted seedlings will require more than rain alone and will benefit from watering every other day for the first few weeks. Make sure roots don't dry out and water as required until established.

Once established, native plants will benefit from a deep soaking once a week, especially during hot weather for the first and second summers.

Watering should be done in the cool of the mornings or evenings to reduce moisture loss through evaporation.

Adding a good layer of mulch to your garden can reduce evaporative water loss by over 70%. Mulch will also reduce weed growth and improve the diversity of the soil bugs and insects that maintain soil structure and productivity. It will also reduce stress to plants by keeping soil temperatures more stable.

Designing your garden

Visit the Green Adelaide website or use the QR code on this factsheet, to find 'Adelaide gardens - a planting guide' and 'Coastal gardens - a planting guide' to help you to decide what style of garden you want to create.

These guides provide a range of garden design ideas and suggest local native plants and how they can be used in preference to the introduced species that are commonly found in gardens across Adelaide.

If you want to achieve a natural look, avoid planting in rows. Instead, grow several plants of the same species together in clumps. This generally looks better, has greater habitat value and makes watering more efficient.

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Small gardens

There are many wonderful local native species that are suitable for growing in pots on verandas or in courtyards. These include local flax-lilies (*Dianella* species) or karkalla (*Carpobrotus rossii*), a trailing succulent that grows well in hotter areas. To support butterflies, use irongrass (*Lomandra* species), local sedges (*Juncus*, *Ficinia* or *Gahnia* species) and native grasses (e.g. *Poa* species).

If you are looking for a larger feature, various *acacias*, *melaleucas* and even *eucalypts* can be grown in large pots. State Flora can help you select the right variety and also has a list identifying which native species are suitable for indoor use.

Wildlife friendly gardening

Gardening is a popular pastime, and what we do in our home gardens has the potential to benefit or harm the natural environment.

By following the five tips below, you can contribute to a better local environment, help conserve our local flora and fauna, create important habitat, reduce your maintenance costs, and reduce the threat of invasive environmental weeds.

Top 5 tips

1. Use plants native to your suburb.
2. Plant species that are a range of heights.
3. Select a mix of local native plants to provide flowers throughout the year.
4. Manage your pets responsibly.
5. Minimise chemical use.

Together we can work toward a cooler, greener, wilder Adelaide.

Scan to discover a range of gardening resources, including a list of native plant nurseries, on the Green Adelaide website.

