

# Farm-friendly benefits of native plants on roadsides



Native plants along roadsides aren't just a beautiful addition to the landscape, they also play an important role in supporting sustainable farming practices. Incorporating native plants into the roadside management can offer multiple economic, productivity, environmental and practical benefits for your farm.

## 1. Erosion control

Native plants often have deeper root systems and are more drought tolerant than weeds. This means that they can provide cover through dry times and help stabilise roadside soil, reducing erosion caused by wind and water runoff<sup>1</sup>. This helps to prevent the loss of topsoil from neighbouring paddocks, protects crops from soil degradation and reduces damage to the shoulders of country roads.

## 2. Water management

Native plants act as a natural filter for rainwater runoff, reducing the amount of sediment and pollutants (for example, fertilisers, herbicides and pesticides) that may escape into local waterways and dams. They can also increase soil moisture in and around your crop by helping hold water in place and reduce potential impacts of flash flooding.

## 3. Windbreaks and shelter

Strategic planting of natives along roadsides can create windbreaks to protect crops from wind damage, improving crop yields and reducing water loss. These plantings also provide important shade/shelter for livestock, boosting fertility and growth rates<sup>2</sup>. While gum trees provide great shade, to avoid issues with gumnuts in your grain, consider native grasses and shrubs instead.

## 4. Natural weed control

Native roadside vegetation can provide habitat for weed-controlling insects, and once established, can out-compete weeds, helping to prevent them from reappearing<sup>3</sup>. To stop native seed dispersal into your crop, choose your plants carefully and consider mowing once a year.

## 5. Natural pest control

Some native plants attract insect-eating birds, bats and beneficial insects, such as ladybirds and predatory wasps, which can naturally help control pest populations. This reduces the need for chemical pesticides, decreasing input costs<sup>4</sup>.

## 6. Pollination

Native vegetation on farm roadsides provides crucial habitat for pollinators, such as native bees, butterflies and birds. This can provide boosts to yields in canola and some legumes, which rely heavily on having native pollinators living nearby<sup>5</sup>.

## 7. Biodiversity boost

Native plants along roadsides can act as corridors between larger areas of vegetation, helping native animals to move around without having to cross onto our roads. This includes a range of important species, including birds, lizards and beneficial insects<sup>6,7</sup>.

Increased biodiversity also supports the health of the overall farm ecosystem, helping to control pests and improve soil health.

## 8. Cost-effectiveness

Managing roadsides with native vegetation can often be more cost-effective than using non-native grasses and/or chemicals. Native plants typically require less maintenance, water and chemical inputs, reducing long-term costs for roadside management and providing benefits to the surrounding paddocks.

### More information

**Elly Pratt, Climate Adaptation Facilitator**

Email: [elly.pratt@sa.gov.au](mailto:elly.pratt@sa.gov.au)

Phone: 0429 626 778

[www.landscape.sa.gov.au/ny](http://www.landscape.sa.gov.au/ny)



<sup>1</sup> Milton, S. J., Dean, W. R. J., Sielecki, L. E., & van der Ree, R. (2015). The function and management of roadside vegetation. *Handbook of road ecology*, 373-381.

<sup>2</sup> Baker, T. P., Moroni, M. T., Mendham, D., Smith, R., & Hunt, M. A. (2018). Impacts of windbreak shelter on crop and livestock production. *Crop and Pasture Science*, 69(8), 785-796.

<sup>3</sup> Light Regional Council. (ND). Native Vegetation on Roadside. <https://www.light.sa.gov.au/home/parks-and-vegetation/native-vegetation-on-roadside>

<sup>4</sup> Tsitsilas, A., Stuckey, S., Hoffmann, A. A., Weeks, A. R., & Thomson, L. J. (2006). Shelterbelts in agricultural landscapes suppress invertebrate pests. *Australian Journal of Experimental Agriculture*, 46(10), 1379-1388.

<sup>5</sup> Amato, B., & Petit, S. (2025). Influence of fragment and roadside vegetation on canola (*Brassica napus*) and faba bean (*Vicia faba*) pollination in South Australia. *Agriculture, Ecosystems & Environment*, 382, 109481.

<sup>6</sup> Carthew, S. M., Garrett, L. A., & Ruykys, L. (2013). Roadside vegetation can provide valuable habitat for small, terrestrial fauna in South Australia. *Biodiversity and Conservation*, 22, 737-754.

<sup>7</sup> New, T. R., Sands, D. P., & Taylor, G. S. (2021). Roles of roadside vegetation in insect conservation in Australia. *Austral Entomology*, 60(1), 128-137.