



## PESTS

Pests and diseases on plants not only look unsightly but depending on the level of infestation they could lead to the death of the plant. Prevention is always better than a cure and there are a few ways that you can boost your garden's immune system before pests or disease strike.

Pests and diseases often target plants that are already weak and struggling. This could be the result of too much water or too little, or just the wrong plant for the locations. Work on increasing the health of your plants by pruning and getting the right balance of nutrients and water, and replacing struggling species with more suitable ones.

Nature's pest controls - birds and beneficial insects, work to remove pests in your gardens without you even noticing. Foster an environment where they can flourish by increasing biodiversity, planting varied species, and avoiding any exotic plants which are known to harbour pests.

Avoid using broad spectrum pesticides that kill friend and foe alike, and only spray if necessary. There has been much work in recent years to develop more natural, less toxic pesticides, so do your research to find out the best approach to target your pest. Sometimes the best thing to do is to prune off any badly affected parts of the plant and let nature do the rest.



## WATERING

In our country water is a precious resource and must be protected and conserved where possible. Like any plant, natives require water to grow and survive. The amount of water each plant requires varies depending on species and soil type.

To best conserve water and save you time at the end of a hose, it is always best to choose species that suit your soil type and climate, but sometimes even the right plants need a little help in times of extreme drought or heatwaves.

Get your plants off to the right start when planting by using watersaving crystals in the planting hole -- these can hold many times their own weight in water. Encourage deep roots that can search out water further underground by only watering when necessary, for example, when you see the foliage wilting.

The best method for watering is to use a pulsing method, allowing water to soak into the soil before coming back and applying more. This allows the water to be absorbed deep into the soil without wasting water by having excess run-off.

Another way to conserve moisture is by mulching around your plants. Using a layer of mulch at least 10cm thick will help to retain moisture in the soil, prevent weeds from using available water, and keep the soil cool to prevent evaporation.



# Caring for Native Plants



**PRUNING, FERTILISING  
AND MORE!**





## Caring for Native Plants

If you want to achieve the best results from your native garden, it is going to need some care every once in a while. Beautiful, strong, healthy plants require pruning, correct nutrients, weed management along with pest and disease control.



## PRUNING

Pruning plants is a great way to keep plants to the size you want, along with encouraging bushy growth and prolific flowering.

As pruning encourages new growth, it is best to leave pruning until after frosts finish, as any new growth may be burnt. Avoid pruning just before flower buds form on plants if you don't want to affect the display. If it looks like rain, wait until after the sun comes out, as moist open cuts on plants can make them vulnerable to disease.

Native plants generally love to be pruned, but species with wide spaces between the leaf nodes (ie. some Grevilleas and Banksias) require a gentler touch restricted to tip pruning. Don't be afraid to vigorously cut back Callistemons, Hakeas, Lilly Pillies to rejuvenate.



## FERTILISER

Every plant needs food. Australian plants are very good at accessing nutrients in depleted soils and usually require less fertiliser than exotic species. Generally fertiliser requirements for natives are divided into two categories -- those that can cope with Phosphorus and those who require less.

Slow-release fertilisers are often best, as they are designed to release the correct amount of nutrients at the right time to enable the best absorption. It is usually best to steer clear of organic fertilisers such as chicken manure as the amount of nutrient delivered is not easy to measure or control.

Nutrient availability is also dependent on micro-organisms in the soil. Using seaweed based fertilisers helps to encourage microbial activity in soils, unlocking nutrients for plants.

### Low Phosphorus Fertiliser (<3%)

Acacias	Banksias
Grevilleas	Waratahs
Proteas	Kangaroo Paws

### Regular Fertiliser

Callistemon	Leptospermum
Eucalyptus	Acmena/Syzygium
Melaleuca	



## WEEDING

Weed management is essential for achieving growth rates on new planting, for keeping plants healthy and gardens looking presentable. In the age of over-exposure to chemicals there are many low-toxicity alternatives to harsh herbicides. Consider using pine oil, vinegar or flame torches. Mulching and using dense carpeting plants can also prevent weeds from getting a foothold.