

A Cottage Garden



Traditionally, a cottage garden is informal, colourful, contains a random and often dense mix of ornamental and edible plants, and uses different heights and colours to add texture. Edible plants are likely to be those grown in any kitchen garden, as the toxicology of our native plants is often not well researched.

Temperate climate Australian cottage gardens using local species are not uncommon.



However, we live in the humid subtropics, which presents a challenge and an opportunity. Plant selection is the key and will be guided to some extent by your local vegetation and soil type e.g. rainforest, coastal heath and so on. Do not, however, feel constrained as many species are quite adaptable.

Phebalium woombye

Some native species from the temperate zone will grow well, others are best treated as annuals and will add seasonal colour to the garden.

Some wallum plants will grow, and look healthy, in heavy clay soils. Punnets of native seedlings are very hard to find.

Availability of water will be a key concern. Dense planting of many individual plants may not be possible so choose plants which sprawl across the ground or root from the stems, but are not excessively rampant.

Spring will usually deliver the most vibrant colour “splash” but many species flower at other times so make sure those are included. A cottage garden should provide year round colour and interest.



The daisy family is an excellent source of massed colour. Bracteantha, Helichrysum and Brachyscome species and named varieties can be sourced in several colours and heights. There are other genera which are equally free flowering. Goodenia and Hibbertia species with yellow flowers suit the cottage garden as do a wide range of members of the pea family.

Leiocarpa brevicompta

Scaevola, Dianella and Patersonia species have blue flowers, small flowered grevilleas add colour and attract birds. Choose both groundcover and shrub forms and don't be afraid to prune your shrubs. Regular tip pruning promotes the dense growth required and usually leads to increased flowering.

A list of potential sources for a range of interesting and appropriate plants is on our website. You will also find a link to our Cottage Garden brochure which provides additional information that may help you with your plant choices.