

CREATIVE SPACES

Dividing the garden into different activity areas is something we all do. Vegetable gardens, utility areas, play space, front garden are often part of the garden 'design'. For those who like a formal garden there is the concept of linked garden 'rooms', possibly enclosed by hedges and featuring borders of annual and perennial plants. These are often featured in magazines and there are no reasons why native plants cannot be used instead of, or even with, exotics.

Sight lines are important in encouraging the visitor to wander through the garden and discover what lies beyond each space. Mulched paths are just as effective as strips of lawn in leading the way through.



Many native shrubs lend themselves to hedging, even topiary, with the main criteria being small crowded leaves and a dense growth habit. Local native hollies (*Graptophyllum* spp.) are relatively slow growing but can be pruned to form a low hedge.

An alternative to formality is to create spaces that feature leaf types, colour or relationships but are casually separated by shrubs or perhaps a trellis covered by vines like *Hardenbergia violacea* and *Pandorea jasminoides* which are free flowering and not too vigorous. A specific genus such as *Xanthorrhoea* (Grass Tree) under-planted with grasses and low flowering forbs may define a space.



Colour is often used. A cool, relaxing garden can be created with white *Scaevola* at ground level, white daisies, Brisbane lilies, grevilleas of various sizes and growth habit plus *Ozothamnus* and perhaps scented native *Daphne* (*Phaleria clerodendron*) in the background.

For a more vibrant combination, there are many bright yellow daisies, tall kangaroo paws, members of the large legume family such as *Pultenaea villosa*, orange/yellow banksias and of course acacias. This space prefers plenty of sunshine. Hibbertias and goodenias have yellow to gold

flowers, are generally hardy, and there are several local species. *Hibbertia vestita* forms a spreading mound; *Goodenia ovata* is a vigorous ground cover and *Hibbertia scandens* with large yellow flowers is a twining vine. *Goodenia paniculata*, worth finding, is a ground cover for drainage lines and produces many spikes of small citrus yellow flowers in summer.

In the orange to red range, *Banksia spinulosa* is a medium shrub with narrow leaves and tall flower spikes. Banksias generally have a long flowering period. *Petalostigma triloculare* with orange to reddish fruit is hardy and has an open growth habit.

For smaller plants in the pink and blue range, it's hard to go past the spring wildflowers of our coastal heaths. Native irises (*Patersonia* spp.) are often available in community nurseries as is Purple Pea Bush (*Hovea acutifolia*). *Dampiera stricta* (blue) and pink Dog Rose (*Bauera rubioides*) are finding their way into commercial nurseries.



For moist, shady spots, *Tripladenia cunninghamii* is a very attractive low, clumping forest lily with pale pink flowers spring to summer.

The only real restrictions will be species availability but it is worth searching, and most nurseries list available plants on their websites. It would be rare to find punnets of annual seedlings but the shorter lived large flowered selections of, for example Scaevola, are easy to propagate from cuttings.

For this type of garden, choose plants which lend themselves to a relatively formal setting and don't hesitate to prune. Regular tip pruning is best. Since soils are very variable in our region, ask at your local community nursery about plants known to grow well in your soil type. Many of our species are adapted to hot, dry conditions but will perform better with a regular water supply. Sudden changes in soil moisture levels tend to result in damage to roots which of course affects the health of the whole plant.

A daily wander through the garden is beneficial to the soul and simple observation will tell you which plants require pruning and which ones really need extra water. In my case, it also tells me where the local bandicoots have been digging and generally creating havoc.