

WHAT IS A NATIVE GARDEN?

A native garden is one that is made up of Australian plants.

WHY SHOULD I HAVE A NATIVE GARDEN?

There are many advantages of native gardens, such as:

- Use less water
- Use less fertiliser
- Increase habitat for insects, local birds and wildlife
- Improve local biodiversity
- Help to reduce weeds
- They look great

HOW DO I START MY NATIVE GARDEN?

It's best to begin your native garden in a small area and increase it's size gradually. Be sure to consider the following;

Soil type

In Lake Macquarie, soil types are mostly sandy in the east and tend to be more clay soils in the west. Check plants label recommendations for soil preferences.

Positioning

Different species of natives favour different locations. The west will be hotter and dryer then the southern side of your house, which will generally be cooler and maintain moisture. Be sure to check the position preference when planting.

Make a plan

It's a good idea to consider existing plants, slope of the site, drainage (natives like well drained soil) and any existing or proposed structures. If the plants are in the wrong area they may not grow as well as they should.

MAINTENANCE



Planting

- Identify the best area in your garden as per the plant label recommendations
- Thoroughly soak the plant while still in the tube/pot
- Loosen hard soil for approx 1 square metre
- Dig a hole the same depth as the tube/pot you are planting and make it a bit wider. Fill the hole with water and allow draining
- Remove the plant from the tube/pot (gentle squeezing should loosen the plant) check roots and straighten any curled ones
- Place plant in hole, roots pointing down
- Fill hole and firm down the soil around the plant with your hands
- Water in your plant.



Watering

- Many natives only require a small amount of water and can be stressed if they are over watered. Signs of stress include not flowering or very slow growth.
- Mulch your plant and water at well spaced intervals around the plants drip line. This is the area under the plant's canopy. Always water in the coolest part of the day. Once the plant is established it will need less water to survive.



Fertilising

Native plants don't need much fertilising. Initially it can be beneficial to fertilise newly planted natives. If doing so, be sure to use native fertiliser which has no phosphorus. Well established natives don't require fertilising.

PROPAGATING NATIVE PLANTS FROM CUTTINGS

- Always take cuttings from new growth of healthy plants
- The cooler months are the best time to take cuttings
- Cut a piece of plant 5-8cm long below the node (the place on the plant where the leaf grows from)
- Remove 1/3 to 1/2 the leaves, be careful not to damage the stem
- Dip cutting into hormone powder/gel
- Place cutting into a hole half of its length
- Thoroughly water and place in a warm moist area.

HOW LONG WILL THEY TAKE TO GROW

Grasses, ground cover and shrubs can take a couple of years to develop, trees can take longer.



Further information on native plants in Lake Macquarie is available in the [Backyard habitat planting guide](#).

Lake Mac residents can sign up to the [Backyard habitat for wildlife program](#).