

Other Points for Consideration

CULTIVARS

When a naturally occurring plant has been selected or changed by the intentional actions of humans, it is called a cultivar (under the International Code of Nomenclature for Cultivated Plants). Humans have been 'improving' nature by cultivation for thousands of years; orange trees, tomatoes and wheat are good examples. It is important to recognise that cultivated native plants are not the same as local natives or naturally occurring species.

Cultivars often have fancy names like Callistemon Perth Pink, which is a selected form of *Callistemon salignus*, a local native plant. Cultivars can be identified where the abbreviation 'cv' is used. They are often bred to flower more prolifically than true natives and if they are not sterile, may produce viable seed. For this reason, cultivars should never be reintroduced to bushland situations, or used in revegetation. If you live near natural bush, be aware that the cultivars and exotics in your garden may influence native vegetation through the spread of seeds by birds or seedlings over time.

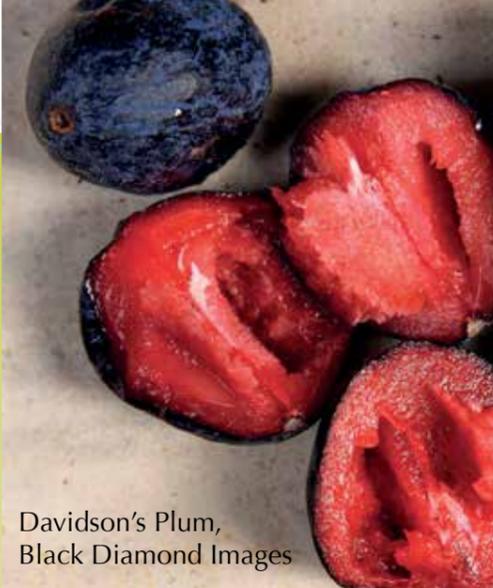
Cultivars are very popular for gardens as they are seen as improvements to the wild species. However they have potential to hybridise or cross with the native species, thus changing the genetics forever. The dangers in this are that the new species may not have the

Native Landscaping
Photo: Alison Ratcliffe

genetic characteristics (resilience) to survive over time; frost hardiness or drought tolerance may be reduced. We ask you to please consider the importance of the natural ecology and genetic integrity when designing your garden.

PLANT PROPAGATION & SEED PROVENANCE

Growing your own native plants can be immensely rewarding and cost saving. Many Australian seeds require specific treatments before they will germinate. Care should be taken when collecting seeds to propagate, that they are collected from a nearby, existing, healthy area of native vegetation. Provenance is based on the idea that local plants are genetically adapted to local environmental conditions. Provenance is difficult to predict across different species. This means seed should always be sourced from a large, healthy population even if this means sourcing seed from a larger population that is further away but from a similar environment. Local nurseries that collect and grow wild seed are performing a valuable service



Davidson's Plum,
Black Diamond Images

in preserving the genetic resources of our native bush. More information can be found on the Florabank website and the Australian National Botanic Gardens Website – details in the resources section.

BUSH FOOD

What could be more logical than planting endemic species that provide food for wildlife and people? Local plants are adapted to the conditions and rarely need fertilisers, pesticides or additional water once established. Some people like to dot their bushfood plants around the garden so they can have a nibble as they potter, others prefer to create a food forest where all the edibles are clustered in one area for ease of harvesting. Please note the previous section on cultivars when choosing plants where there is a possibility their



seed may be spread into the bush. Our favourites include: Midgen Berry, Macadamia Nut Tree, Brush Cherry, Native Raspberry, Davidson's Plum, Native Tamarind & Finger Lime. The Internet is a great resource for recipes – just search for 'Bushfood' or the plant of your choice into your search engine.

CLIMATE CHANGE

A predicted increase in extreme weather events in the form of more severe droughts, more frequent fires and the possibility of greater variations in rainfall patterns, may lead to increased stress on plants and animals as they become progressively isolated in remnants of vegetation (CSIRO 2007). All the more reason why it is critically important to protect existing remnants and expand local wildlife corridors to allow species to move across the landscape. This will offer some refuge and provide our endemic plants and animals a chance to adapt to these evolving conditions.

Land Mullet (left)
Photo: Rainer Hartlieb
Myrtle Rust (centre)
Photos: Byron Shire Council

PLANT HEALTH

Since the first edition of this book some of our local native species have become hard to find in nurseries due to myrtle rust. Myrtle rust (*Puccinia psidii*) is a fungal disease which infects plants in the Myrtaceae family. Common Australian Myrtaceae species include eucalyptus, willow myrtle, turpentine, bottlebrush, paperbark, tea tree and lilly pilly. Myrtle rust was first detected in NSW in April 2010 and has since spread across the eastern Australian landscape and is now widespread. As with any plants with diseases, all affected material should be removed and disposed of. An effective way to prevent the spread of diseases, pests and weed seeds is to hot compost. Byron Shire Council's green organic bin undergoes this process so it is safe to dispose of infected material and weeds in your green organics bin. Always practice good hygiene when working with native plants and general nursery stock. Clean equipment such as containers and secateurs after use. For more information please visit www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/content/biosecurity/plant/myrtle-rust



Mulch,
Photo: Rous County Council

SOIL

The condition and type of your soil will impact on what plants grow best.

- **Soil texture** – tested by taking a handful of soil from various spots in your garden. Gradually wet each soil sample and work it in your hand until it forms a ball. It should be just drier than the point at which the soil sticks to your fingers. Add some dry soil if it becomes too sticky. Slowly squeeze the soil out to form a sausage-like ribbon. **Clay soil** produces a firm shape that will bend like clay. **Sandy soil** crumbles and you can see and feel sand. **Loam soil** holds together but is still slightly crumbly.
- **Soil pH** – test kits are widely available and inexpensive, as are products to adjust your soil's pH.
- **Organic matter** – regularly adding compost and manure can help improve the soil structure and its ability to store moisture and nutrients.
- **Organic Mulch** – regular applications of a 5cm thick layer of mulch (sugarcane waste, hay, straw, chipped bark, tea tree mulch, or sawdust) placed over the soil helps to reduce water loss and insulates plant roots against extremes of heat and cold. It also helps prevent weed growth and releases nutrients as it decomposes.