

# Ridges and Ranges

## LOCATIONS:

KOONYUM RANGE, ALONG THE RIDGES AND IN THE GULLIES OF HUONBROOK, MONTECOLLUM, MOUNT JERUSALEM, THE POCKET, UPPER COOPERS CREEK, UPPER MAIN ARM, UPPER WILSONS CREEK, WHIAN WHIAN

The spectacular ranges, ridges and gullies of the High Country provide a distinctively different vegetation community to the rest of the Shire. Known as tall open forest dominated by a shady canopy of eucalypts, casuarinas and brushbox, it also has a well developed midstorey of tall tree ferns and pea-flowered shrubs and an understorey of lush ground ferns. Grass trees, cycads and scramblers feature and there are many epiphytes (growing on other plants), including the magnificent bird's nest ferns and staghorns.

These eucalypt-dominated communities are also known as wet sclerophyll forests, and can overlap with rainforest communities, especially in the gullies or on the red volcanic soils. Native orchids can be found on trees and rocks in and around wet sclerophyll forest. On the exposed ridges the soil layer is often very thin and only low, tough-leaved heath shrubs grow comfortably, providing an occasional exuberant and showy flower display.

The plant communities of the ridges and ranges have developed to handle the unique environmental conditions such as exposure to wind, extreme cold and heat, fire and drought and an elevation ranging from 50m to 100m and more. Fires are an integral part of the Australian bush but it is a delicate balance – while it can stimulate germination and growth of new species, fire can also destroy homes, property and in some cases, reduce the number of plant species and allow weeds to grow in place of natives.

## WILDLIFE:

KOALA, RING-TAILED POSSUM, SPOTTED-TAIL QUOLL, WEDGE-TAILED EAGLE, POWERFUL OWL, BARKING OWL, GLOSSY BLACK COCKATOO, YELLOW-TAILED BLACK COCKATOO, LACE MONITOR, A VARIETY OF SKINKS & REPTILES, BLUE AND BROWN BUTTERFLY.



Koala  
Photo: Rainer Hartlieb



Tawny Frogmouth  
Photo: Rainer Hartlieb



Lace Monitor  
Photo: Rainer Hartlieb



## FEATURE PLANTS FOR RIDGES AND RANGES

Planting in clumps provides a variety of textural accents to your garden. By including structural diversity in your design, (different layers of heights and plants), you will create ample habitat for local wildlife and draw the eye to focal points. Try using some of these feature plants, either en masse or as a point of interest, to create a spectacular local native garden.

- |                  |                   |
|------------------|-------------------|
| Bird's Nest Fern | Cliff Bottlebrush |
| Cycad            | Giant Spear Lilly |
| Grass Trees      | Hovea             |
| Coast Banksia    | Narrow-leaved     |
| Hairpin Banksia  | Palm Lily         |
| Flooded Gum      | Tree Fern         |

## CREATING A RIDGE-TOP GARDEN

**SOIL DESCRIPTION:** Red/brown soils, well-drained and often gravelly, slightly acidic and often leached of humus from high rainfall, runoff and exposure to wind. The addition of mulch is always helpful to retain moisture, add organic matter and keep weeds under control.

The major consideration in designing a ridge-top garden is to avoid creating a fire prone environment. An 'Asset Protection Zone' (APZ) is essential in providing a firebreak between your assets (house, shed etc.), and fuel (vegetation). Check with your local fire brigade or council about recommended setbacks.

Although most eucalypts are not suitable near the house, a ridgeline garden can provide a shady cooling environment. If you have the space and can set back far enough from the house, eucalypts do make spectacular feature trees – local native Flooded

Gum are beautiful in wet gullies and Tallowwood are a favourite for koalas. A smaller canopy of trees could include the Mountain Bottlebrush, Banksias, Forest Oak and Blueberry Ash – all will provide colour, and a range of foliage and shade for the understorey to establish. Try planting masses of ground ferns interspersed with a variety of shrubs such as Grass Trees, Hovea, Narrow-leaved Palm Lily, Tall Treefern, Cycad or Giant Spear Lily to provide a contrast of foliage. Shaded or moist spots with rocks may help to establish Native Orchids, Bird's Nest Fern and Elkhorn.

### EXAMPLES: Mt Jerusalem National Park, Koonyum Ranges

#### Factors to consider near your house:

Avoid tall, fire-loving trees like eucalypts, in the house garden. Avoid plants with a fibrous bark. Use plants that can be trimmed and that resprout from lignotubers (e.g. some banksias). Rainforest plants are good to include,

especially climbers such as Grape Ivy (*Cissus antactica*) and Snake Vine (*Hibbertia scandens*), which are effective fire and weed barriers for edges of the garden.

Space taller plants further apart and don't allow taller shrubs and trees to hang over the roof and gutters. Keep gutters clear of leaves and branches. Carefully arrange the taller plants to avoid a continuous canopy, thus avoiding a fire prone garden, even though a dense canopy is a feature of the natural environment. Use Sweet Pittosporum (*Pittosporum undulatum*) for low cover and shade. Position lawns, garden walls, paved areas, swimming pools and other fire retarding features such as water features and ponds on the side closest to the fire threat. The native Basket Grasses (*Oplismenus* spp.) make excellent lawns in shady places when mowed regularly. Use mulches that break down quickly (finely chopped tea tree or gravels).

Photo: Rainer Hartlieb

# Ridges and Ranges



## Native Ginger

Lush clumping plant. Bright blue berries. Attracts wildlife.

1



## Blue Flax Lily

Great clumping grass. Edible blue berries. Bushfood.

2



## Kangaroo Grass

Fine foliage, coppery seed heads. Attracts butterflies.

3



## Lomandra

Dwarf tussock-like grass with fine foliage. Great edge plant. Other species include *Lomandra filiformis* and *L. multiflora*.

4



## Rainbow Fern

Ground cover, lush foliage. Many native ferns such as the Harsh Ground Fern (*Hypolepis muelleri*) are ideal to plant as a sea of understorey.

5



## Basket Grass

Great native groundcover. Soft leaf and can be lightly mowed

6



## Bird's Nest Fern

Can grow on ground or be attached to tree. Features for trees, habitat for frogs, lizards and other reptiles. A striking alternative is the Staghorn (*Platycerium superbum*).

7



## Grape Ivy

Shiny leaved climber, good screen hedge or fire retardant.

8

		COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	HEIGHT	WIDTH	SUN	SHADE	WET	WELL-DRAINED	FLOWER SEASON
GROUNDCOVERS & GRASSES	1	Native Ginger	<i>Alpinia caerulea</i>	2m	1m	✓	✓	✓	✓	Spring/Summer
	2	Blue Flax Lily	<i>Dianella longifolia</i>	0.8m	Spreading	✓	✓	✓	✓	Spring
	3	Kangaroo Grass	<i>Themeda australis</i>	1m	Clumping	✓	✓		✓	Summer seed heads
	4	Lomandra	<i>Lomandra confertifolia</i>	0.5 m	0.8m	✓	✓	✓	✓	Summer
	5	Rainbow Fern	<i>Calochlaena dubia</i>	1m	Spreading		✓	✓	✓	
	6	Basket Grass	<i>Oplismenus aemulus</i>	0.2	Spreading	✓	✓	✓	✓	Summer
VINES/EPIPHYTES	7	Bird's Nest Fern	<i>Asplenium australasicum</i>	1m	1m		✓	✓		n/a
	8	Grape Ivy	<i>Cissus antactica</i>	tall	Climbing	✓	✓	✓	✓	Spring/Autumn
SHRUBS & SCRAMBLERS	9	Snake Vine	<i>Hibbertia scandens</i>	1m	2m	✓	✓	✓	✓	Spring/Summer
	10	Pointed-leaf Hovea	<i>Hovea acutifolia</i>	2m	1m	✓			✓	Winter/Spring
	11	Cliff Bottlebrush	<i>Callistemon comboyensis</i>	2m	1m	✓	✓	✓	✓	All year
	12	Tree Fern	<i>Cyathea australis.</i>	10m	4m	✓	✓	✓		n/a
	13	Narrow-leaved Palm Lily	<i>Cordyline stricta</i>	2-4m	1m	✓	✓	✓	✓	Spring/Summer
	14	Hairpin Banksia	<i>Banksia spinulosa</i>	3-5m	1-2m	✓	✓		✓	Spring/Autumn
PALMS/PALM LIKE PLANTS TREES	15	Grass Trees	<i>Xanthorrhoea johnsonii</i>	3m	2m	✓	✓		✓	Autumn to Summer
	16	Spear Lily	<i>Doryanthes palmeri</i>	3m	3m	✓	✓		✓	Spring
	17	Shining Burrawang	<i>Lepidozamia perroskyana</i>	3m	2m	✓	✓		✓	Winter (cones)
	18	Weeping Pea Tree	<i>Daviesia arborea</i>	14m	6-14m	✓			✓	Spring
	19	Blueberry Ash	<i>Eleocarpus reticulatus</i>	6m	2-3m	✓			✓	Summer
	20	Forest Oak	<i>Allocasuarina torulosa</i>	10m	2-3m	✓	✓	✓	✓	Spring/Summer

For more species please refer to Native Species Planting Guide

Tweed and Byron Shires [www.byron.nsw.gov.au/native-plants](http://www.byron.nsw.gov.au/native-plants)

## Narrow-leaved Palm Lily

Shiny green leaves and bright red berries in summer. Attracts birds.

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## Hairpin Banksia

Showy yellow/orange flower spikes. Excellent specimen for winter colour. Attracts birds.

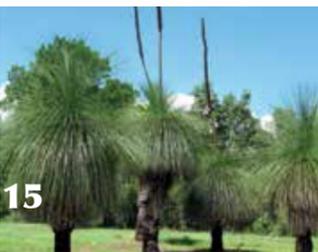
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## Grass Trees

Attractive grass tree with tall spikes. Slow growing feature plant.

15



## Spear Lily

Large flax-like plant with tall spikes of red flowers. Grow in clumps or a single feature specimen. Attracts birds.

16



## Shining Burrawang

Very attractive palm-like specimen with glossy foliage. Slow growing feature plant.

17



## Weeping Pea Tree

Shrub or small tree with drooping leaves and fragrant yellow pea flowers.

18



## Blueberry Ash

Attractive white 'lily of the valley'-like flowers.

19



## Forest Oak

Major food tree for the endangered Glossy Black Cockatoo

20



## Snake Vine

Twining shrub-like hardy plant. Large yellow flowers, good groundcover or on fence lines.

9

## Cliff Bottlebrush

Small bushy tree 2m. New foliage pink with nectar-rich red flowers throughout year. Attracts wildlife.

11



## Pointed-leaf Hovea

Fine open shrub; purple pea flowers in late winter; prefers filtered light; deeper soils.

10



## Tree Fern

Tall fern for feature plantings.

12



Arrowhead vine, Illustration: Tim Roberts



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