

Planting with indigenous (locally native) species within Merri Creek parklands

Policy

adopted at MCMC meeting 21/8/03

Merri Creek Management Committee (MCMC) uses only indigenous species¹, propagated from seed or cuttings of local provenance plants for revegetation and restoration projects within Merri Creek parklands, and does not support the planting of non-indigenous species within the Merri Creek parklands. MCMC supports the planting of indigenous species on land adjoining the Merri Creek parklands. MCMC recognises that indigenous plantings can contribute, at many levels, to the creation of sustainable landscapes that may be less dependent on resources and offer broad environmental benefits. These are outlined overleaf.

In addition, MCMC will provide education and information to encourage the use of indigenous species in parks, streets, other public spaces and in private gardens throughout the Merri catchment. The catchment contains a diversity of landscape characters, both natural and created, and MCMC recognises the use of indigenous species as complementary in many cases to non-indigenous species in these areas beyond the Merri Creek parklands².

This policy is not intended to refer to the limited number of areas zoned 'Heritage Parkland' within the Merri Creek parklands (Merri Creek Plan). These areas are covered by requirements within the Merri Creek and Environs Strategy and individual site management plans.

¹ 'Indigenous' species are species native to the local area. 'Provenance' refers to the location from which propagating material was collected. Specifying 'local provenance' ensures that propagated plants are planted into the same area from which they were collected.

² The use of indigenous species may be limited by the horticultural and practical functional requirements for establishment and maintenance of plantings in these areas beyond the Merri Creek parklands.

HABITAT VALUES

- Indigenous landscapes provide habitat for local fauna that has evolved concurrently with the indigenous flora contributing to fauna conservation efforts.
- Indigenous landscapes can contribute to the conservation of significant species and genetic material.
- Indigenous landscapes that are not just limited to waterways provide opportunities for habitat linkages and networks across and between catchments, particularly for birds and insects. With a diversity of habitat and fauna species, there is more likely to be diversity of ecological relationships – of predator and prey, of pollinators and other symbiotic relationships.

REPAIR / PREVENTION OF LAND DEGRADATION

- Indigenous plantings can be effective in addressing land degradation issues such as erosion and salinity.
- Use of indigenous species avoids the use of species that may be or may develop into environmental weeds.

ABORIGINAL CULTURAL HERITAGE VALUES

- The indigenous landscape is in itself part of our Aboriginal cultural heritage, as it was actively maintained and managed by Wurundjeri willam for thousands of years. Indigenous landscape restoration therefore reflects and embraces the area's Aboriginal cultural heritage.

AESTHETIC VALUES

- Indigenous landscapes contribute to the creation of distinctive local landscapes, that utilise and celebrate characteristic colours, textures, forms and qualities of foliage, light and shadow.
- Some indigenous plants are versatile and can be adapted to a variety of landscape effects; some species respond well to pruning and hedging. Indigenous species can be used to create wild, informal and formal landscapes, lawns, herbaceous borders, wildflower gardens, etc, etc.

SENSE OF PLACE

- The use of indigenous plants can contribute to a developing 'sense of place' that reflects and defines an area's local or regional 'identity', both in biological and landscape terms.

MINIMISING RESOURCE USE

- Indigenous plants have evolved and adapted over thousands of years to local climatic and soil conditions. They therefore rarely require fertiliser application or soil pre-treatment.
- Indigenous plants require minimal watering; if planted as tubestock they require no followup watering (except possibly during serious drought) provided they are planted between Autumn to Spring.
- Indigenous landscapes provide habitat for a diversity of indigenous fauna, promoting a healthier ecosystem. A diverse habitat is more likely to support a diverse fauna, and is therefore potentially less prone to catastrophic pest attacks from single species (and therefore less reliant on pesticides such as insecticides or fungicides for plant protection). With a diversity of habitat, there is more likely to be diversity of ecological relationships – of predator and prey, of pollinators and other symbiotic relationships.

DIVERSITY OF GENETIC STOCK

- Indigenous plant stock is often represented by a diversity of genetic material (reflecting the genetic diversity of the populations). This means that the population as a whole may be more resistant to disease or insect attack. (In populations with narrow genetic diversity, all plants may be susceptible to a particular disease or insect attack, whereas a population with wide genetic diversity may contain some individuals that are susceptible, but others that are resistant to attack or damage from the particular disease or insect attack.)
- Genetic diversity may result in wide variation in form in some species. Whilst this may be of concern in some landscaping contexts, there are several species that show little variation in form that could be used in areas where consistency of form is required. As indigenous species are used more in a variety of landscaping contexts, our knowledge of the 'horticultural' performance of each species develops further.