

bio-diversified backyard

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Nature finds its balance in a complex network of mutual dependence. Each species provides several benefits to other flora and fauna. A tree might feed one animal and shelter another. In natural bushland there are five main layers of vegetation in which different animals live. Replicate this in your garden by combining tall trees like eucalypts with smaller trees and tall shrubs such as banksias, bottlebrushes, tea trees and wattles. Also consider using shrubs like hakeas, grasses and creepers for groundcover and a layer of leaf matter, fallen branches, logs and rocks. Substitute terracotta pipes for hollow logs to give small marsupials and lizards a place to hide from predators.

- *create a haven for native wildlife*



Photo: Marham Kyle
Inset: Corbis Australia

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cover up

Up to 90 per cent of all the water used on Australian gardens, or a quarter of total household water consumption, goes on lawns. Consider replacing little-used grass areas with a native garden that will reduce street noise, increase privacy and can save you the cost of a fence. Groundcover can thrive where grass does poorly. Surrounding your plants and lawn with mulch can cut water loss through evaporation by up to 70 per cent. It also limits weed growth and can improve soil conditions. Pine bark mulch can even be used for children's play areas; it is just as safe as grass and doesn't require watering.

- *plant and mulch to lower your water consumption*



Photo: Corbis Australia

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a cool house

One of the most efficient ways to keep your home cool isn't even in the house! Trees and plants that provide shade can significantly reduce the heat that penetrates your home. Direct sunlight generates as much heat as a single-bar radiator over each square metre of surface. Judiciously planting some trees and shrubs can reduce the intensity of the sun. By cleverly placing deciduous trees, you will enjoy the sun's warmth in winter and protective shade in summer. Plants will lower greenhouse emissions and provide habitats for wildlife and they can also lower heating and cooling costs.

- *use plants and trees to lower your energy bills*

Photo: Corbis Australia

earth

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respect rainforests

The burgeoning human population and increasing land development currently threaten rainforests all over the world. Rainforests cover only 7 per cent of Earth's land, but they contain nearly half of the trees on Earth. Generating about 40 per cent of the world's oxygen, rainforests are not only our Earth's lungs, they are the world's largest gardens. Pumping vital oxygen into the atmosphere, they are home to thousands of different birds, animals, insects and plants. Support campaigns to preserve our rainforests and help to protect them from logging and economic exploitation.

- *let's treat our remaining rainforests with greater respect*

Photo: Marham Kyle