

Creating a cottage garden style with Australian native plants

The idea of a cosy cottage garden, with herbaceous borders of annuals and perennials against a backdrop of shrubs and (maybe) a small tree or two, is becoming popular again. This is especially so with the reduction in size of modern gardens. This pamphlet has been produced to help you create a cottage garden using native plants

Remember, plants that self seed in a garden can easily become weedy in nearby bushland. By introducing native plants, especially local (i.e. indigenous) species, you will reduce your garden's weed potential and make it more attractive to flora and fauna.

The principles of colour

Australia has more native plants than any other country in the world. There are many low growing annual and perennial Australian plants and shrubs that can be used in a massed display to create a cottage garden. There is a wide range of colours and we are particularly fortunate to have an abundance of blues to choose from.

You can use a colour wheel to choose colour harmonies or just go for a riot of colour – the choice is all yours and will be reflected in the character of your garden.

Many very useful books have been written on using colour in the garden. Colour helps to create moods. When choosing flower colours it is important to remember:

- Warm colours – red, pink, orange and yellow, give a sense of fun and activity; they tend to come to the foreground and thus appear larger.
- Cool colours - blues, greens and some blue-violets give a feeling of space and serenity; they tend to recede from the eye and can appear smaller.
- Neutral colours - white, grey and black. Grey is an excellent 'linking' colour. Be careful with white and black, both can appear as holes or spaces in a colour scheme. Both work well as highlighters of other colours.



C Roach



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Limit the number of contrasting colours. They are high impact so use them sparingly to create a focal point in your garden. Use more of the harmonious colours. They lie next to each other on the colour wheel; they relate to one another and do not clash.

To make it easier to choose the colour palette of your garden, here are a small selection of some suitable plants by their flower colour.

Also check out our plant resources – both information and plant database: <https://resources.austplants.com.au/>

Plant List Grouped in Flower/Foliage Colour

Plants listed are generally no higher than 1.5 metres.

Plants with red flowers

Plants Botanical Name	Characteristics
<i>Grevillea</i> 'John Evans'	Spider flowers in winter/spring, to one metre high, very hardy.
<i>Grevillea pinaster</i>	Pendulous flowers in winter/spring, fine attractive foliage, reasonable hardy, to one metre high x two metres wide.
<i>Grevillea rhyolitica</i>	Pendulous flowers all year, full sun to medium shade, prefers some moisture, to one metre high.
<i>Grevillea rosmarinifolia</i> (original form)	Spider flowers in spring, to one metre high, will take some shade.
<i>Kangaroo paws</i> (Anigozanthus species)	Many forms available. There are three height ranges to select from small approx 600mm high (flower all year), medium to approx 1.2m and tall 1.8m.

Plants with pink flowers

Plants Botanical Name	Characteristics
<i>Bauera rubioides</i>	Flowers in spring, to one metre high, hardy, prefers some moisture and will take some shade.
<i>Boronia denticulata</i>	Flowers in spring, to one metre high, prefers some shade and is one of the hardier Boronias.
<i>Brachycome formosa</i>	Can flower all year, small suckering ground cover, likes some moisture.
<i>Calytrix tetragona</i>	Flowers in early spring, hardy and attractive in flower, best in sun.
<i>Correa reflexa</i>	Flowers in autumn, to one metre high, good for attracting birds.
<i>Crowea exalta</i>	Bright star flowers in autumn/winter, very attractive to 0.8 metres high.
<i>Crowea saligna</i>	Bright star flowers in autumn/winter, very attractive to 1.2 metres high. Excellent as a cut flower.
<i>Grevillea baueri</i>	Soft pink flowers in winter and spring, prostrate to 1.5 metres, dense.
<i>Grevillea lanigera</i> Mt Tamboritha form	Masses of soft pink flowers in winter and spring, prostrate to one metre, soft grey foliage, hardy.
<i>Grevillea</i> Poorinda Tranquility	Large soft pink spider flowers in winter/spring, needs a sunny spot with some moisture, to 0.5 metres high.
<i>Grevillea sericea</i>	Flowers in winter/spring, red and purple flowering forms are also available, to 1.2m high.
<i>Kangaroo paws</i> (Anigozanthus species)	Many forms available. There are three height ranges to select from small approx 600mm high (flower all year), medium to approx 1.2m and tall 1.8m Bush Pearl is a small grower and has soft pink flowers.
<i>Melaleuca thymifolia</i>	Claw flowers in summer, best in damp sunny spot, to one metre high.
<i>Stylidium productum</i> (Trigger plant)	Flowers in spring, small tufted plant to 40cm high.

<i>Tetratheca pilosa</i>	Flowers in spring, needs well drained shady spot, shrub to 30cm high.
<i>Tetratheca thymifolia</i>	Masses of pink bell shaped flowers in spring, needs well drained shady spot, shrub to 40cm high.
<i>Thryptomene payneii</i>	Small soft pink flowers in winter/spring, very hardy, to one metre high, spreading to 1.5m wide. Great for cut flowers.
<i>Thryptomene saxicola</i>	Small soft pink flowers winter/spring, best in sunny spot, to one metre high, okay for clay.
Zieria Pink Crystals	Star like soft pink flowers in late winter/spring, to 75cm high, drier position and will take some shade.
<i>Zieria prostrata</i>	Small pink flowers highlighted by lush green foliage, hardy groundcover to 60cm wide, takes some shade.

Plants with yellow flowers

Plants Botanical Name	Characteristics
<i>Acacia myrtifolia</i>	Pale yellow flowers, in late winter, Shrub to one metre high, will take some shade.
<i>Boronia clavata</i>	Flowers in spring, prefers some shade and is one of the hardier Boronias, to one metre high
<i>Boronia megastigma lutea</i> (yellow flowers) and <i>Boronia megastigma</i> (brown and yellow flowers)	Highly perfumed flowers in spring, prefers some shade and moisture, to one metre high, treat as an annual in Sydney.
Bracteantha Diamond Head	Bright yellow paper daisy flowers in spring/summer, small to 0.5m high and one metre wide
<i>Bulbine bulbosa</i>	Bears small star like flowers on succulent stems about 50cm high, a bulbous plant that self seeds freely.
<i>Eutaxia obovata</i>	Yellow pea flowers in spring, hardy, prune after flowering, to one metre high.
<i>Goodenia ovata</i>	Bright buttercup flowers in autumn/spring, hardy and excellent in a shady spot, to one metre high.
<i>Hibbertia obtusifolia</i>	Bright flowers in spring/summer, groundcover to one metre, hardy.
<i>Hibbertia pendunculata</i>	Bright flowers in summer, matting groundcover to one metre, very hardy.
<i>Kangaroo paws</i> (Anigozanthus species)	Many forms available. There are three height ranges to select from small approx 600mm high (flower all year), medium to approx 1.2m and tall 1.8m
<i>Leionema stenophyllum</i> syn. Phebalium	Small fluffy flower in winter/spring, will take some shade, to 0.5m high.
<i>Senna artemisioides</i>	Yellow pea flowers, in late winter, attractive grey foliage, grows to one metre high.

Plants with orange flowers

Plants Botanical Name	Characteristics
<i>Banksia blechnifolia</i>	Orange/brown flower spikes in spring, is a spreading prostrate plant with runners bearing upright leaves to 30cm high.
<i>Chorizema cordatum</i>	Brilliant orange/pink flowers in spring, outstanding in shade. Note there is also a yellow flowering form.

<i>Leschenaultia formosa</i> (orange forms)	To 30cm high , needs well drained raised bed and a sunny position, difficult.
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Plants with white or cream flowers (assume white unless stated otherwise)

Plants Botanical Name	Characteristics
<i>Astartea heteranthera</i>	Flowers in spring, low spreading shrub to 0.5 metres, hardy, will grow in clay soils.
<i>Austromyrtus dulcis</i>	Flowers in summer, grey edible berries in autumn, spreading shrub to one metre,
<i>Babingtonia virgata</i> syn Baeckes dwarf form	Flowers in summer, to 0.5 metre high, hardy and will take some moisture and shade.
<i>Correa alba</i>	Bell shaped flowers in autumn, to one metre, good for attracting birds and is hardy in a shady spot.
<i>Hardenbergia 'Flat White'</i>	White spring flowering, non climbing form of <i>H. violacea</i> spreads to two metres, hardy in most conditions.
<i>Leionema lamprophyllum</i> syn. Phebalium	Small fluffy flower in winter/spring, will take some shade, to one metre high.
<i>Leionema phycifolium</i> syn. Phebalium	Profuse cream flower in summer, outstanding shrub but hard to maintain, to one metre high.
<i>Micromyrtus ciliata</i>	Masses of tiny flowers turning pink in winter/spring, low shrub spreading to one metre, good cut flowers.
<i>Myoporum parvifolium</i>	Small flowers in spring/summer, low, hardy ground cover to 1.2 metres
<i>Philitheca myoporoides</i> syn. <i>Eriostemon</i>	Flowers in winter/spring, fragrant foliage, to 1.2 m high and happy in shade
<i>Platysace lanceolata</i>	Terminal flowers, hardy and will take some shade, rounded shrub to 0.75m high
<i>Rhodanthe anthemoides</i>	Everlasting paper daisy flowers in summer, perennial, 50cm high by 30cm across, sunny position preferred. Many forms are available
<i>Rhodanthe chlorocephala</i>	Paper daisy flowers in spring, an annual but self seeds. Usually grown from direct sown seeds.
<i>Viola hederacea</i> (white form)	Flowers are on stems to 9 cms, stoloniferous plants forming dense mats in damp places.

Plants with grey flowers and/or grey foliage

Plants Botanical Name	Characteristics
<i>Actinotus helianthi</i> (Flannel flower)	Soft grey/white star shaped flowers in spring/summer, needs well drained sandy soil, to 1.2m high.
<i>Plectranthus argentium</i>	Very vigorous suckering herbaceous plant to one metre high. A great substitute for lambs ears in a border, blue flowers but grey velvety foliage, prefers shade and is frost tender. Also consider <i>P.gaveolens</i> , <i>P.sauvelons</i> and <i>P.parviflorus</i> .
<i>Poa australis</i>	Small grassy clump, very hardy, great foliage contrast
<i>Stenanthemum scortechinii</i>	Woolly flowers in autumn/winter after brown buds, to one metre high, good cut flower.

Plants with blue flowers

Plants Botanical Name	Characteristics
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<i>Halgania cyanea</i>	Brilliant blue flowers in winter/spring, suckers, takes some shade and dampness, to 0.5 metres high.
<i>Isotoma axillaris</i>	Brilliant blue star shaped flowers spring/summer, self seeds, takes some shade to 0.3 metre high,
<i>Leschenaultia biloba</i>	Soft blue to dark blue are a few of the many flowering forms available, To 60cm high , needs well drained raised bed, difficult, needs sunny spot.
<i>Theleonema caespitosa</i>	Clumping blue green grass with stem of brilliant blue star flowers with yellow centres in spring.
<i>Viola banksii</i> syn <i>hederacea</i>	White and purple flowers on stems to 9 cms, stoloniferous plants forming dense mats in damp places.
<i>Wahlenbergia stricta</i>	Masses of light blue flowers on slender stems, clumps to 40cm high, needs a well drained sunny position.

Plants with purple or mauve flowers

Plants Botanical Name	Characteristics
<i>Brachycome angustifolia</i>	Mauve flowers all year, small suckering ground cover, very hardy and will take some shade. Note that there is a pink form as well.
<i>Brachycome multifida</i>	Mauve flowers all year, small ground cover, best in full sun with some moisture. Many forms are available.
<i>Damperia stricta</i>	Purple flowers summer/autumn, suckering ground cover to 50cm, takes some shade.
<i>Dianella revoluta</i> and <i>D. longifolia</i>	Both have flax like leaves and bright blue flowers with prominent yellow anthers on branched spikes, to one metre high, followed by bright blue globular fruits. Hardy plants.
<i>Hardenbergia violacea</i> 'Mini-Haha'	Deep mauve pea flowers in spring, a compact, heavily branched, dwarf shrub to 15cms high.
<i>Indigofera australis</i>	Sprays of purple/pink pea flowers in spring, needs pruning to keep compact average height 2 metres. Flowers better in semi shade. very hardy.
<i>Patersonia occidentalis</i>	Purple flowers on stem in summer, clump to 0.3 metres high, will take damp conditions and some shade.
<i>Plectranthus parviflorus</i> or <i>P. sauveolens</i> and <i>P. graveolens</i> (all very similar)	Pale blue flowers held on spikes in spring and summer, strongly aromatic (menthol fragrance), vigorous herbaceous plant to 40cm, grows on shallow soils and is frost tender.
<i>Prostanthera phyllicifolia</i>	Deep purple flowers in spring, to 1.2 metre high, excellent in deep shade.
<i>Prostanthera scutellaroides</i>	Deep purple flowers in spring, to one metre high, excellent in deep shade.
<i>Scaevola aemula</i>	Small mauve flowers in summer, a ground cover to one metre wide, sunny position with good drainage, hardy. There are many forms available and some have large purple flowers.
<i>Tetrateca ciliata</i>	Brilliant purple cup shaped flowers in late winter, needs some shade, quite hardy, shrub to 30cm high

Notes

1. Syn – synonymous, i.e. it was the name the plant was previously known before it was renamed to its present name.

2. The plants listed have been chosen to represent a range of native plants suitable for use in creating a cottage garden. These plants should be available from most specialised native nurseries and general nurseries.
3. No climbing plants have been listed
4. In producing this pamphlet, the Australian Plants Society (NSW) intends for it to be distributed widely. If used in other publications please acknowledge the source and do so without change.
5. If planting in frost prone areas, check that the plant selected is suitable.

Compiled with the help of Australian Plant Society (NSW) members: Brian Roach, Cas Liber, Jo Hambrett and Jeff Howes -- May 2005, revised April 2021