

Central Coast Plants for Your Garden

There are reputed to be some 2,300 Australian native plant species indigenous to the N.S.W. Central Coast in the Gosford and Wyong areas.



Epacris longiflora

Many of these are especially suitable as garden plants, because they do well in our local soils and climatic conditions.

Some are very hardy and tolerant of most soil types; others, and particularly some of the spectacular favourites, are less forgiving and have special requirements for success.

Site conditions can often vary over small distances, e.g. the shallow sandstone soils of Kariong, the deep former rainforest soils of the Narara Valley, and the ocean front soils along the coast provide very different growing conditions. What is admirably suited to one site may fail hopelessly in another.

Ultimate size of trees should be matched to the site. Avoid large trees on small residential blocks. Remember that what looks like a small seedling may grow to a substantial size. It would be prudent to find a mature tree of the type you wish to plant. That way you would know how large they can grow.

Reminder - Most native plants that fail to survive in our garden have been killed with kindness:

- over watering
- too much fertiliser
- too rich a soil mixture.

This is why some over-zealous gardeners mistakenly think of native species as 'drop dead plants'.



Eriostemon australasius

Below are listed some of the local species that are regularly available in plant nurseries.

Reliable small trees or large trees

Hymenosporum flavum, Native Frangipani: 3-8 metres. Fast growing. Cream scented flowers in spring.

Callistemon salignus, Willow Bottlebrush: 3-5 metres. Attractive pink new growth. Papery bark.

Acacia sophorae, Coast Wattle: 3 metres. Dense foliage. Good in sandy soil near the sea.

Backhousia myrtifolia, Grey Myrtle: 2-4 metres. Ornamental specimen tree. Long lasting pale green bracts after flowering.

Ceratopetalum gummiferum, NSW Christmas Bush: 5 metres. Spectacular ornamental tree. Pink/red bracts after flowering in mid- summer.

Reliable flowering shrubs and ground covers

Westringia fruticosa, Coast Rosemary: 1 metre. White flowers. Hardy and drought resistant. Needs tip pruning.

Banksia spinulosa, Hairpin Banksia: 2 metres. Spectacular banksia brushes with black styles. Full of bird attracting nectar. Cultivar 'Birthday Candles' is a compact form to 600mm.

Bauera rubioides, Dog rose: 1 metre. Long flowering. Prefers semi-shade and moist conditions.

Crowea saligna: 1 metre. Pink star shaped flowers. Thrives in semi-shade and moist conditions.

Prostanthera ovalifolia, Mint Bush: 1 metre. Dark green fragrant foliage. Profuse mauve flowers in spring.

Prostanthera incisa, Cut-leaf Mint Bush: 1 metre. Aromatic foliage. Profuse mauve flowers in spring.

Hibiscus heterophylla, Native Rosella: 2 metres. Large white or yellow hibiscus flowers. Needs regular pruning.

Syzygium australe, Lillypilly: 3 metres. Glossy green foliage. White flowers in spring, then edible red fruits. Many new decorative cultivars are available.

Tetradlea thymifolia, Black-eyed Susan: 300mm. Compact ground cover. Profuse dark purple flowers. (Note - There are at least 3 other plants popularly known as Black-eyed Susan. That is why botanical names are necessary.)

Goodenia ovata, Hop Goodenia: 1 metre. Yellow flowers. Hardy and long flowering in semi- shade.

Climbers and Trailing Plants

Pandorea pandorana, Wonga Vine: Vigorous climber. Cream flowers in spring. Many cultivars available.

Hibbertia scandens, Golden guinea flower: Low scrambling vine. Large golden yellow flowers throughout the year.

Viola hederacea, Native Violet: Ground cover. Very hardy. Useful as a spreading cover in wet areas or under trees.

Hardenbergia violacea, False Sarsaparilla: Vigorous climber. Spectacular purple flowers in spring. A more compact cultivar 'Mini Haha' is available.

More difficult plants with special requirements

Epacris longiflora, Native Fuchsia: Emblem of Gosford City. Trailing stems of striking red and white tube flowers. Needs a moist spot in low nutrient stony sand.

Banksia robur, Swamp Banksia: 3 metres. Bright bottle green banksia flowers. Best in swampy ground.

Correa reflexa, Common correa: 1 metre. Red and green tube flowers in spring. Hardy cultivars available e.g. *Correa* 'Marions Marvel' with pink and green flowers. Prefers part shade.

Philotheca buxifolius syn. *Eriostemon buxifolius*, Box Leaf Wax Flower: 1 metre. Clusters of pink and white star flowers in late winter and spring. Needs well drained sandy soil.

Eriostemon australasius, Pink Wax Flower: 1 metre. Spectacular pink star-shaped flowers in spring. Does best in well drained stony sand with sandstone pebble mulch.

Grevillea sericea, Pink Spider flower: 1 metre. Long flowering. Hardy. Low phosphorus sandy soil. Many cultivars available.

Grevillea speciosa, Red Spider Flower: 1 metre. Striking red flowers. Thrives in low phosphorus sandy soil.

Actinotus helianthi, Flannel Flower: Wyong floral emblem. Does best in low nutrient sandy soil. Compact forms available.

Telopea speciosissima, Waratah: 2 metres. Spectacular red or cream flowers. Many new cultivars are hardier and more reliable. Needs perfect drainage.

Ricinocarpos pinifolius, Wedding Bush: 1 metre. White star shaped flowers in spring. Needs low nutrient moist sand in part shade.