

# Best local native plants for use in Bushfire Prone Locations

In the wake of bushfire, many local gardeners seek to replant landscaped areas with so called ‘low flammability’ species. It is important to understand that under extreme bushfire conditions, all vegetative material can burn. However, some species are less likely to ignite or burn intensely than others, and some species have growth characteristics which make them less likely to promote the spread of fire.

If you are replanting the areas surrounding your dwelling or other areas within your Asset Protection Zone (APZ), careful attention must be paid to both **species selection** and **garden layout**. Consider the usefulness and suitability of each existing or proposed planting. Be mindful of the plant’s ultimate height and spread, and don’t overplant, or alternatively be prepared to prune or cull as plants mature. Both **vertical** and **horizontal** separation between canopy components or shrub clusters needs to be retained so as to reduce the potential for fire to spread.

Whether selecting new plants for your garden, or species for retention in your APZ, there are a few key characteristics to look for:

- Relatively high moisture content of leaves (‘mesic’ or rainforest type species, but these need to remain well watered if they are to retain their fire suppressant characteristics)
- Low levels of volatile oil in leaves (crush and sniff the leaf to see if you can detect a strong smell)
- Large or hard leaves with simple margins
- Smooth, hard, or persistent bark, rather than flakey or ribbon bark
- Plants that don’t accumulate a lot of dead leaf and stem material below them or suspended in the foliage.

Observe the following guidelines when positioning plantings or during the selection of trees and shrubs for retention:

## Vertical separation

- Separate trees from shrubs to provide vertical separation. Under-plant trees with ground covers instead.
- Crown-lift lower branching species to separate the foliage from the ground layer
- Regularly maintain the garden areas to remove flammable ground fuels (twigs and other woody debris).

## Horizontal separation

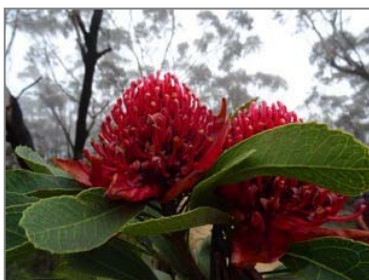
- Plant shrubs in small groups, and maintain a gap or informal pathway between the groups, so that you can comfortably walk around and between them.
- Groups of trees can be retained (rather than individual trees) provided that you ensure that additional space is left between any two groups of trees. Some trees carry more foliage than others. If retaining trees which carry a high load of foliage, maintain these as individual trees. If foliage is sparse, groupings work well.

## Maintenance considerations

- Don’t plant any trees or shrubs adjacent to the dwelling if maintenance will be required to keep the necessary clearances between them and your dwelling. A two metre gap needs to be maintained as a **minimum distance** between the house and any adjacent or overhanging vegetation.
- Ideally, when selecting new shrubs for planting, choose those which have a reliable and fairly predictable size and shape. Alternatively, choose species which can easily be pruned to restrict their spread or ultimate size. Many plants respond positively to regular pruning, and may flower more prolifically as a result. Pruning is also a useful mechanism to use ahead of the fire season, to reduce the overall ‘fuel load’ within garden areas without the need to remove whole plants.



Smooth barked Eucalypts



NSW Waratah (*Telopea speciosissima*)

**Further information** Blue Mountains City Council Guide: <https://www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/documents/guide-best-local-native-plants-for-use-bushfire-prone-locations>

### or contact

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Coral Heath (*Epacris coriacea*)

Most Proteaceae species (e.g. *Banksia*, *Grevillea*, *Persoonia*) have qualities that are consistent with the recommended characteristics for bushfire prone locations, and also provide great habitat for native fauna. Some of the best species to use or retain in Blue Mountains gardens are listed below. The links below are to either the Royal Botanic Garden Sydney (PlantNet: [www.plantnet.rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au](http://www.plantnet.rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au)), or the Australian Native Plants Society ([www.anpsa.org.au/gallery.html](http://www.anpsa.org.au/gallery.html))

This is not an exhaustive list, and local nurseries are likely to have a selection of species that are similar to those listed.

[Banksia marginata](#), Silver Banksia  
[Banksia serrata](#), Old-man Banksia, Wiriyagan (Cadigal)  
[Banksia spinulosa](#), Hairpin Banksia  
[Conospermum longifolium subsp. mediale](#), Smoke Bush  
[Conospermum taxifolium](#), Variable Smoke-bush,  
[Conospermum tenuifolium](#), Sprawling Smoke-bush  
[Grevillea arenaria](#)  
[Grevillea aspleniifolia](#)  
[Grevillea baueri](#), Bauer's Grevillea  
[Grevillea buxifolia](#), Grey Spider Flower  
[Grevillea diffusa](#)  
[Grevillea laurifolia](#), Laurel-leaf Grevillea  
[Grevillea linearifolia](#), Linear-leaf Grevillea  
[Grevillea mucronulata](#)  
[Grevillea oleoides](#), Red Spider Flower  
[Grevillea sericea](#), Pink Spider Flower  
[Grevillea shiressii](#)  
[Grevillea speciosa](#), Red Spider Flower  
[Hakea constablei](#)  
[Hakea dactyloides](#), Finger Hakea, Broad-leaved Hakea  
[Hakea gibbosa](#), Needlebush  
[Hakea laevipes](#)  
[Hakea sericea](#), Needlebush  
[Hakea teretifolia](#), Needlebush  
[Lambertia formosa](#), Mountain Devil  
[Lomatia ilicifolia](#), Holly Lomatia, Native Holly  
[Lomatia myricoides](#), River Lomatia, Long-leaf Lomatia  
[Lomatia silaifolia](#), Crinkle Bush, Fern-leaved Lomatia  
[Persoonia lanceolata](#), Lance Leaf Geebung  
[Persoonia laurina](#), Laurel Geebung  
[Persoonia levis](#), Broad-leaved Geebung  
[Persoonia linearis](#), Narrow-leaved Geebung  
[Persoonia media](#)  
[Persoonia myrtilloides](#)  
[Persoonia nutans](#), Nodding Geebung  
[Persoonia oblongata](#)  
[Persoonia oxycoccoides](#)  
[Stenocarpus salignus](#), Scrub Beefwood  
[Telopea speciosissima](#), Waratah  
[Xylomelum pyriforme](#), Woody Pear

### Open Forest Species

Other suitable Open Forest species which provide good ground cover or low shrubbery include:

[Acacia oxycedrus](#), Spike Wattle  
[Dampiera purpurea](#), Purple Dampiera

[Goodenia ovata](#), Hop goodenia  
[Indigofera australis](#), Australian indigo  
[Pittosporum revolutum](#), Rough fruit Pittosporum  
[Hibbertia saligna](#), Guinea Flower  
[Hibbertia dentata](#), Trailing Guinea Flower  
[Epacris pulchella](#), Wallum Heath  
[Pratia purpurascens](#), Whiteroot  
[Pimelea linifolia](#), Slender Rice Flower  
[Dianella longifolia](#), Blue Flax-Lily, Blueberry Lily  
[Dianella prunina](#), Purple leaf Dianella

### Rainforest Species

Other 'mesic' species (trees and shrubs) which perform well in the local area include:

[Backhousia myrtifolia](#), Grey myrtle, Ironwood  
[Backhousia citriodora](#), Lemon-scented Myrtle  
[Callicoma serratifolia](#), Black Wattle  
[Ceratopetalum apetalum](#), Coachwood  
[Ceratopetalum gummiferum](#), NSW Christmas Bush  
[Doryanthes excelsa](#), Giant Lily Gymea Lily  
[Doryphora sassafras](#), Sassafras  
[Elaeocarpus reticulatus](#), Blueberry Ash  
[Eucryphia moorei](#), Eastern Leatherwood, Plumwood  
[Ficus coronata](#), Sandpaper Fig  
[Ficus rubiginosa](#), Port Jackson Fig, Rusty Fig  
[Hymenosporum flavum](#), Native frangipani  
[Myrsine howittiana](#), Brush Muttonwood  
[Myrsine variabilis](#), Variable Muttonwood  
[Tristania neriifolia](#), Water Gum  
[Tristaniopsis collina](#), Mountain Water Gum, Hill Kanuka  
[Tristaniopsis laurina](#), Water gum, Kanuka



Blueberry Ash  
(*Elaeocarpus reticulatus*)

Mesic species are naturally found in moist, sheltered environments. To get the best out of them you may need to improve the soil at planting, and provide regular water until establishment, unless you are planting them in a well shaded and cool location. Remember that in order for these species to perform in the manner expected during a bushfire, they need to be well watered and their leaves well hydrated.