

Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne

Growing Indigenous Plants

The Royal Botanic Gardens acknowledges the contribution of the Victorian Indigenous Nurseries Cooperative in compiling this information.



Why plant Indigenous species?

Native plants have adapted to the local environment over tens of thousands of years and are suited to the soil, rainfall and topography.

- They require less pesticides, fertilisers and maintenance
- They are habitat forming: attracting indigenous birds, butterflies other animals. They help restore wildlife corridors.
- They are varied, beautiful and many are drought tolerant. Others are water and wetland plants.
- The plants can be used to great effect in large and difficult areas such as school yards and creek frontages.



Photo: R. Helton

An established indigenous garden bed

Seedlings used by the Royal Botanic Gardens Education programs are supplied by Victorian Indigenous Nursery Cooperative (VINC)
For more information about growing plants indigenous to Melbourne www.vinc.net.au



NB. Please be aware that these plants, although indigenous to the Melbourne area, may not be indigenous to other regions and therefore could pose some weed threat; we recommend that you check with your local council if you are in doubt.

Arthropodium strictum (Family – Liliaceae)

Chocolate Lily

Perennial 30cm x 30cm. Long grass-like leaves. Scented mauve purple flowers Sep - Dec. Foliage dies back during summer if very dry, reshoots in autumn. Flowering may be extended by removal of stems before seed head forms.

Prefers: Open position, full sun in moist well drained soil. Drought tolerant.

Tip: Can also be planted in rock gardens and pots. Most effective when planted in groups.



Photo source: VINC

Indigenous People's Connection: Tubers, taste watery and bittersweet raw. Dig up after the foliage has withered. The numerous root tubers are not starchy, in Victoria they were cooked before eating.

Austrodanthonia racemosa (Family – Poaceae)

Clustered Wallaby Grass

Tufted perennial 20cm x 30cm. Slender flowers with pale green spikelets. Flowers during spring and summer, wind pollinated.

Prefers: Full sun to part shade, dry to moist well drained soils. Very adaptable, tolerating a wide range of conditions.

Wildlife connection: The seeds are bird attracting.



Photo: N. Sumner, VINC

Chrysocephalum semipapposum

Clustered Everlasting

Clump forming perennial 50cm x 40cm. Perennial wildflower, golden clusters of button-like everlasting flowers Sep-Jan, grey foliage. Aromatic herb.

Prefers: Full sun, dry soil. Very hardy and drought tolerant. Growth during spring. Also grows in semi-dappled shade.

Tip: Prune old flower heads and stems off at ground level in winter to promote dense growth.



Photo source: VINC

Wildlife connection: Provides nectar for butterflies including Painted Lady caterpillars.

Daviesia leptophylla (Family – Fabaceae)

Narrow-leaf Bitter Pea

Open, erect shrub 1.5m x 1m. Showy, yellow and red flowers, Sep-Jan.

Prefers: Full sun/part shade, well-drained.

Wildlife connection: Good habitat, butterfly attracting. Flowers are a pollen and excellent nectar source for various native insects and birds.



Photo source: VINC

Dicantheum sericeum (Family – Poaceae)

Silky Blue Grass

Ornamental grass 30cm x 30cm. Leaves are coarse, green, blue, grey and purple, forms an erect tussock. Silver-grey flower heads Dec-Mar.

Prefers: Full sun, dry to moist soil, open position. Ground cover, effective when planted in groups. Drought tolerant, cinnamon fungus (*Phytophthora cinnamoni*) resistant.

Tip: Rejuvenate old tussocks by severe trimming or burning, water heavily to ensure new growth.

Most effective when planted in groups.

Wildlife connection: Provides fodder for grazing animals, eaten by red and eastern grey kangaroos, seed for small birds.



Photo source: J. Hard, VINC

Leptorhynchos squamatus (Family – Asteraceae)

Scaly Buttons

Delicate perennial daisy, 25 x 40cm. Bright yellow flowers Sep-Jan on slender wiry stems. Often dies back to rootstock in summer, re-appearing after autumn rains.

Prefers: Full sun and partial shade, moist soil. Drought tolerant once established.

Tip: Most attractive when planted in groups.

Wildlife connection: Provides food for butterflies.



M Fagg
Photo source: ANBG

Linum marginale (Family – Linaceae)

Native (wild) flax

Delicate perennial to 50 x 40cm. Bright blue cup shaped flowers with dark blue veins Sep-Mar. Blue green leaves. Dies back after flowering to a thick tuberous rootstock.

Prefers: Full sun/occasional shade, moist soil, open position. Will often seed in the garden. Hardy, drought tolerant once established.

Indigenous peoples' connection: Leaves contain fibre to make string for fishing nets, bags, baskets and mats. Small seeds are edible and ground in large quantities.

Wildlife connection: Important habitat and food source for native animals. Butterfly attracting.



Photo source: VINC

Poa labillardieri (Family- Poaceae)

Common Tussock Grass

Large dense tussock grass, 80cm x 80cm. Long green leaves, drying to silvery grey varying from fine to coarse, depending on soil moisture and situation. Green purplish flowers Oct-Mar.

Prefers: Full sun/part shade, open position. Grows well in most soils but prefers some moisture during summer.

Tip: Rejuvenate old tussocks by severe trimming or burning, water heavily to ensure new growth. Very hardy, drought tolerant. Good for rock gardens, groundcover, beside ponds.

Indigenous peoples' connection: Poa grass was used by Aborigines as a fibre source to make string for nets, bags, baskets and mats.

Wildlife connection: Provides seed for small birds and food for butterfly caterpillars. A favourite food of the common wombat.



Photo source: VINC

Poa morrisii (Family – Poaceae)

Velvet Tussock Grass

Soft tussock to 30cm high. Perennial grass with fine velvety blue-green leaves. Flowers Oct-Jan.

Prefers: Full sun to part-shade, semi-moist, well-drained soil.

Tip: Rejuvenate old tussocks by severe trimming or burning, water heavily to ensure new growth. Most effective as groundcover, or in rock gardens, under trees, and when planted in groups.

Wildlife connection: Provides seed for small birds and food for butterfly caterpillars.



M Fagg
Photo source: ANBG

Poa sieberiana (Family- Poaceae)

Grey Tussock Grass

Perennial, erect tussock, velvety grey to blue-green fine leaves, 30cm H x 30cm W. Purplish grass flowerhead, flowers Oct-Jan.

Prefers: Grows well in most conditions but prefers dry well-drained soils and part-shade. Grows well under established trees, accepts full sun. Rejuvenate old tussocks by severe trimming or burning, water heavily to ensure new growth.

Drought tolerant and cinnamon fungus (Phytophthora cinnamoni) resistant.

Wildlife connection: Provides seed for small birds and food for butterfly caterpillars. A favourite food of the common wombat.



Grieg, D
Photo source: ANBG

Xerochrysum viscosum (Family - Asteraceae)

Sticky Everlasting

Biennial wildflower, 50cm H x 30cm W. Large papery golden flowers Aug-Apr. Dies back during summer and reshoots in autumn.

Prefers: Full sun, well drained soil.

Wildlife connection: Provides both food for caterpillars and nectar for butterflies. Provides food for insect eating birds.



Macdonald, C.
Photo source: ANBG

For more information about growing Australian plants go to www.anbg.gov.au