

Nature play activities

# Parent pack



# Nature play activities



## Water Quality

As rainwater travels through our catchment, it carries everything that it picks up along the way, including many contaminants which can cause problems in our environment.

The water that falls as rain and then travels throughout the catchment as runoff is known as stormwater. All stormwater flows by gravity from the highest to the lowest points, firstly into a gutter and drain into your local creek line then into the Georges River, Botany Bay and eventually the ocean.

### Actions to do at home

- Never tip unused paints or oils down the drain or sink. Contact Council for responsible disposal or drop them off at our Chemical CleanOut day.
- Never wash paint brushes or any other type of pollutants down the sink.
- Sweep leaves and dirt from driveways and gutters, and reuse it as mulch – your garden will love it.
- Go native. Fill your garden with endemic Australian plant species and reduce the spread of weeds through the catchment.
- Use the minimum amount of detergent and/or bleach when you are washing clothes or dishes. Try using phosphate free soaps and detergents.
- Keep solid wastes solid. Make a compost pile from vegetable scraps.
- Don't flush pills, liquid, powder medications or drugs down the toilet.
- Avoid pouring fat from cooking or any other type of fat, oil, or grease down the sink. Keep a "fat jar" under the sink to collect the fat and discard in the solid waste when full.

### Teaching & learning activities (please tick)

- ☐ Visit your local creek or river to dip a net and catch water bugs.
- ☐ Do your own "get the dirt out" experiment by filling a tub with water to simulate the ocean. Add rubbish, food scraps, oils and food dye to it throughout a day. The result will be a very murky and polluted 'ocean'. Try to reverse the pollution by sifting out the rubbish and removing the oil-slick. You'll learn that it's nearly impossible once it has been done.
- ☐ Create your own water cycle by placing a recycled drink container half-filled with water in the sun to capture condensation.

- ☐ Discuss the different uses of water for animals, plants, humans and make a storyboard using pictures from magazines or newspapers.
- ☐ Make a display of items that can't be flushed or put down the drain, this could include paint, baby wipes or even food scraps. Once finished share this message your family.
- ☐ Discuss what aquatic animals might live in the Georges River? What do they need to live a healthy life?

### Books

- Eric the Eel – by Campbelltown City Council and Campbelltown Performing Arts High School
- Hey, Water! By Antoinette Portis
- Watch Over Our Water by Lisa Bullard
- Over and Under the Pond by Kate Messner





## Nature Play

Science has shown direct association with nature has both mental and physical benefits to people. It has been proven to improve mood, reduce depression, and also reduce mental fatigue as well as providing a range of other benefits. Kids who are involved in regular outdoor play also benefit from increased flexibility, improved gross motor skills and better sleep patterns.

Play spaces in natural environments include plants, trees, edible gardens, sand, rocks, mud, water and other elements naturally found in nature. These spaces invite open-ended interactions, spontaneity, risk-taking, exploration, discovery and a general connection with nature.

They foster an appreciation of the natural environment, develop environmental awareness and provide a platform for ongoing environmental education.

### Actions to do at home

- Create home discovery kits with natural objects found in your yard or local park.
- Download one of our activity sheets and visit your backyard, local park, reserve, bushland.
- Write a newsletter article about what you've been up too and share it with your friends and family.
- Introduce more plants to your daily life both indoors and outdoors.
- If you have the space, consider sustainable and suitable pets that can also eat leftover food scraps such as chickens and rabbits.
- Have a nature sensory box with items you've collected that feel interesting to touch.
- Climb a suitable tree at your house or local park.

### Teaching & learning activities

- ☐ Go on a nature scavenger hunt using our scavenger hunt templates.
- ☐ Create a nature collage with interesting items you've collected on your adventure.
- ☐ Use empty photo frames for kids to create their own nature based artworks.
- ☐ Press some flowers grown from home or ones you have collected nearby.
- ☐ Decorate a pet rock.

- ☐ Go on an alphabet bush walk and see if you can spot things starting with all 26 letters.
- ☐ Use all of your five senses in a nature setting, try them one at a time.
- ☐ Investigate what insects and animals might live in your backyard.
- ☐ Use mud to make a birds nest.
- ☐ Use mud to make a mud pie kitchen.
- ☐ Use sticks to paint things, make imaginative creatures, musical instruments, weave material or push them into playdough.
- ☐ Make scented herbal playdough with fragrant leaves, veggies and herbs.
- ☐ Make a rock pool using natural materials.
- ☐ Stick together leaves to make a crown.
- ☐ Make a treasure basket with natural gems.
- ☐ Create a frog pond with native plants.
- ☐ Build a magical fairy garden with things you've found in nature.
- ☐ Make a daisy chain bracelet using flowers from your garden.
- ☐ Build a stick shelter cubby house from natural materials.
- ☐ Make paints from bark, leaves or fruits.
- ☐ Make a kite with sticks you find and old material and fly it.

### Books

- Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Patridge by Mem Fox.
- Stick Man by Julia Donaldson.
- We're going on a leaf hunt by Steve Metzger.
- Fairy Houses by Tracy Kane.
- Nature Crafts for Aussie Kids by Kate Hubmayer.
- Treasures and collections: a touch of magic in the early years by Michele Roberts.



## Biodiversity - plants

Over 50 per cent of Campbelltown is covered in pristine natural bushland. The local bushland is home to a rich mixture of plant and animal species that collectively make up our local ecosystems – this is called biodiversity.

Biodiversity is important for maintaining a healthy environment, not only for the plants and animals that live within it, but also for us humans that share it with them.

Biodiversity fuels many of the processes we rely on like the trees that clean the air, plants that filter our water and organisms that nurture our soils.

### Actions to do at home

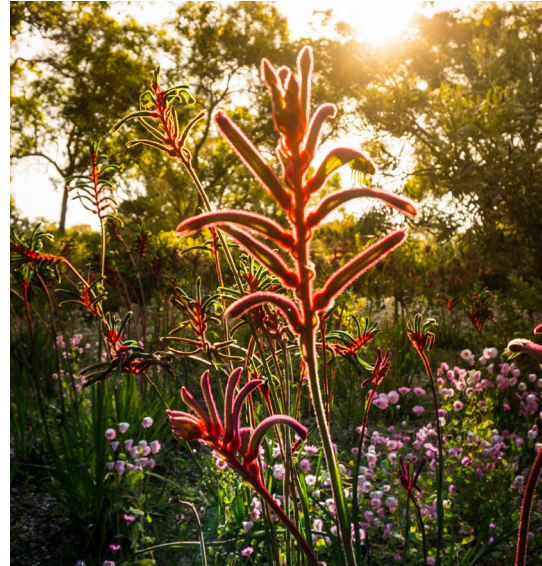
- Always sweep up leaves and either put them onto the garden as mulch or into your green waste bin for reuse rather than into landfill.
- Use leftover water from drinks and water play activities on the garden, potted plants or your vegetables.
- Plant bush tucker plants and natives that attract birds and pollinating insects.
- Keep large trees that provide habitat and food for native wildlife.
- Create a compost heap and put all of your grass clippings and food waste into it so you can reuse on your garden.
- Encourage your neighbours to plant native plants.
- Learn about the plants in your local area.

### Teaching & Learning Activities

- ☐ Shop online at a local nursery to buy your plants.
- ☐ Create nature rubbings using different materials.
- ☐ Make seed bombs using clay and seeds and leave them in your backyard and watch them grow.
- ☐ Make a natural petal perfume using fragrant flowers.
- ☐ Grow pretty flowers from seeds or bulbs.
- ☐ Find the biggest tree you can and feel its cooling abilities.
- ☐ Grow bush tucker plants from seed, watch them grow and have a taste testing.
- ☐ Record the plants in your backyard using inaturalist, visit <https://www.inaturalist.org>.

### Books

- The Garden of Happiness by Erika Tamar.
- Kate, Who Tamed the Wind by Liz Granton Scanlon.
- The Tree lady: The True Story of How One Tree-Loving Woman who Changed a City Forever by H. Joseph Hopkins.





## Biodiversity - animals

There are many animals that call Campbelltown home including koalas, platypus, echidnas, wombats, wallabies and grey-headed flying foxes. Of all animals we have in our local area, 64 are listed as threatened species meaning they are at risk of being extinct. It has never been more important that we do our part to protect them.

The youngest people in our community are the key to saving these species into the future. The more awareness we can raise by getting early learners to think about the part they can play in helping our wildlife, the more our future generations will benefit.

### Actions to do at home

- Install a bird box.
- Create wildlife watering station or bird bath.
- Create a pollinator hotel that attracts stingless insects to help pollinate vegetables etc.
- Print out a 'threatened species poster' from Council's website that lists all the animals that live in Campbelltown.
- Add hollows, logs, rocks and stones for lizards and insects.
- Survey for frogs in your yard or local reserve or create a miniature frog pond.  
Visit [www.frogID.com](http://www.frogID.com) to discover free lesson plans on frogs and how your local hardware store can help.
- Watch birds from your backyard, balcony or window and record what you see or even create bird habitat in your backyard.  
Visit <http://www.birdsinbackyards.net>.

### Teaching & Learning activities

- ☐ Go bird watching with binoculars.
- ☐ Make a bee hotel with natural and recycled materials.
- ☐ Go on an adventure in your local reserve, take photos of animals you see and create a poster of them in their habitat.
- ☐ Create print outs of native animals and match these animals to the habitat they live in.
- ☐ Celebrate events relating to biodiversity including National Tree Day, Threatened Species Day, Biodiversity Day and Pollinator Week.
- ☐ Leave an old phone to record in your backyard or hidden in a reserve and listen back to identify any animals you hear.

- ☐ Borrow a motion sensor camera and set it up in your yard to see what animals are stopping by.
- ☐ Take a magnifying glass outside and look for insects.
- ☐ Make koala, platypus and other Campbelltown native animal masks.

### Books

- Bee and Me by Alison Jay.
- Little lost Koala by Blaze Kwaymullina.
- The Koala who could by Rachel Bright.
- Little Platypus by Nette Hilton.
- KooKoo Kookaburra by Gregg Dreise.





## How can your home become a haven for native flora and fauna?

Your backyard is the perfect haven for native wildlife. There are many ways you can transform your backyard to provide habitat for our important plants and animals. Much of the time, native habitat on your property not only benefits the 'birds and the bees' but also means using less water and less maintenance while being visually attractive for humans too.

### Creating habitat for native animals and birds

Habitat is the place that plants or animals live. It could be in a log, under a rock, the hollow of a tree or even in long grass. By reusing different materials that would otherwise pollute the environment or end up as waste, we can repurpose them and create new habitat that will allow native plants and animals to thrive in your backyard.

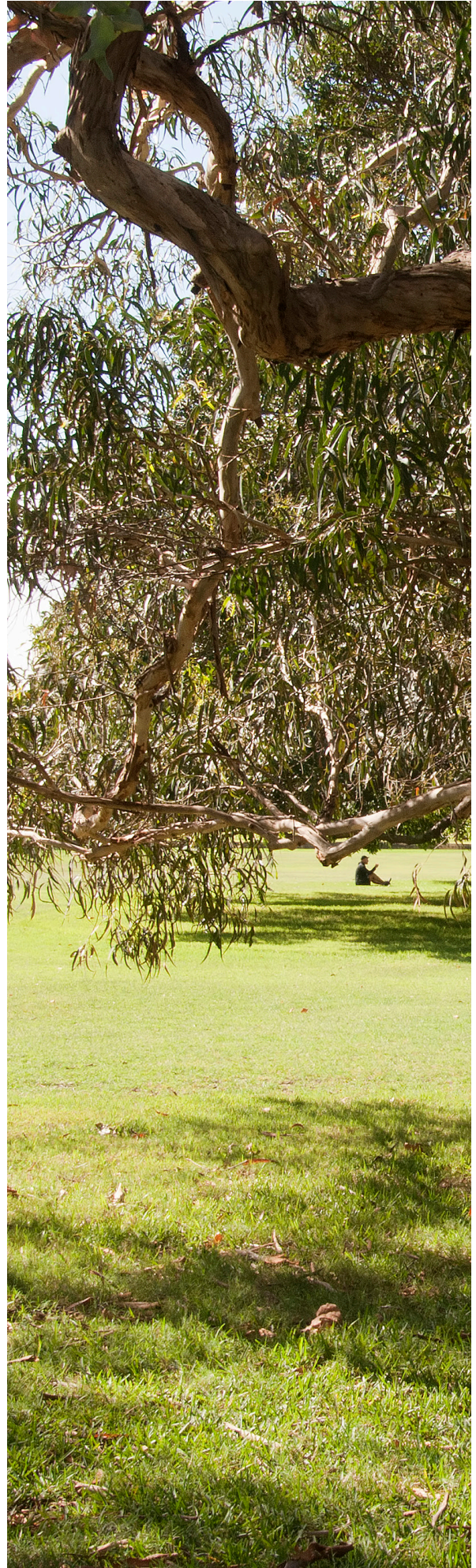
Here are some examples:

- A piece of PVC piping that would otherwise go to landfill can be used as a waterproof log that an animal can find shelter in or that a plant can use to grow its roots through.
- Pieces of wood, bamboo stakes, bricks or any other hollow objects can be reused to create a bird house to attract native birds to your garden by providing them with shelter.
- Remove those pesky plants and replace them with local native plants

Our gardens can easily become overrun with plants that are not native to our country and often these weeds prevent our native plants from emerging. Tackling weeds in your garden and planting native plants helps not only the plants and native animals that need these plants to survive, but also the visual appeal of your yard. For a list of common weeds and suitable native replacements visit <http://www.growmeinstead.com.au>.




### Visit a local nature reserve

Getting outdoors and visiting our parks and reserves provides you and your family with many benefits, from mental and physical health benefits to improving overall happiness. Not only this but supporting and becoming engaged in natural areas protects them for future generations. Always remember when visiting local bushland reserves to take only photos, leave only footprints and kill nothing but time.













## Natural Treasures for Nature Play

Flowers			
Name	Natural Treasure	Description	Uses
Common Paper Daisy ( <i>various spp</i> )		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Suitable for growing at home.</li> <li>- Can grow in pots</li> <li>- Herb grows to 0.5 metres.</li> <li>- Silver-grey leaves, clusters of bright-yellow daisy flowers in spring to summer.</li> <li>- Pick with hand.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Float flowers in small bowl of water.</li> <li>- Dried flowers.</li> <li>- Posies.</li> </ul>
Golden Wattle ( <i>Acacia pycnantha</i> )		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Suitable for growing at home.</li> <li>- Australian floral emblem.</li> <li>- Tree grows 2-8 metres.</li> <li>- Bright yellow ball-shaped flowers.</li> <li>- Winter to spring.</li> <li>- Grows in well-drained soils.</li> <li>- Pick with hand or scissors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Make a flower headband.</li> <li>- Crush into a fairy dust powder.</li> </ul>
Blue flax-Lily ( <i>Dianella caerulea</i> )		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Suitable for growing at home.</li> <li>- Can grow in pots.</li> <li>- Flax-Lily grows up to 0.5 metres high.</li> <li>- Berries are not edible.</li> <li>- Stalk cut with scissors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Wand.</li> <li>- Drawing in dirt.</li> <li>- Wind chime.</li> <li>- Weaving.</li> </ul>



Native Pigface ( <i>Carpobrotus glaucescens</i> )		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Suitable for growing at home.</li> <li>- Can grow in pots.</li> <li>- Succulent.</li> <li>- Groundcover with bright pink flowers, red edible fruit and fleshy leaves.</li> <li>- Pick with hand.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Crush and make a perfume or potion.</li> </ul>
Native Lilac ( <i>Hardenbergia violacea</i> )		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Suitable for growing at home.</li> <li>- Can be a shrub or climber depending on whether it has a structure or other plants to climb on.</li> <li>- Purple pea flowers and large broad green leaves.</li> <li>- Pick with hand.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Etchings with crayons.</li> <li>- Leaf pictures / collage.</li> </ul>
Banksia ( <i>Banksia Spp</i> )		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Suitable for growing at home.</li> <li>- When flowers dry, the pods can be cut off with secateurs.</li> <li>- Needs well-drained soil.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Characters.</li> <li>- Hair Brush.</li> <li>- Can be soaked in a bowl overnight to release edible nectar.</li> </ul>
Scurvy Weed ( <i>Commelina cyanea</i> )		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Suitable for growing at home.</li> <li>- Can grow in semi shade.</li> <li>- Stems grow 1-2 metres in length.</li> <li>- Attracts native stingless bees.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Wand.</li> <li>- Drawing in dirt.</li> <li>- Wind chime.</li> <li>- Weaving.</li> </ul>

<p>Dropping Sheoak (<i>Allocasuarina verticillata</i>)</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Suitable for growing in a backyard.</li> <li>- Grows up to 8 metres.</li> <li>- Commonly found in parks.</li> <li>- Long weeping green foliage.</li> <li>- Female of the species produces pods.</li> <li>- Collect fallen pods from ground.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Patterns on ground or on jute mats.</li> <li>- Characters.</li> <li>- Roll in play dough or clay for imprint.</li> <li>- Rolling downhill.</li> <li>- Listen to the sound wind makes through the foliage.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Tree Cookies</b></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cut branch into varying lengths from 1-8cm with saw.</li> <li>- Sand off rough edges.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Construction.</li> <li>- Rolling.</li> <li>- Counting.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Bark</b></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Collect from the ground.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Basket for collecting things.</li> <li>- Cubby building.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sticks</b></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Collect from ground.</li> <li>- Sand off rough edges.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cubby building.</li> <li>- Musical instrument.</li> <li>- Drawing in dirt.</li> </ul>



<b>Stumps</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ask a local tree arborist.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Stepping on.</li> <li>- Seating.</li> <li>- Act as a mini step ladder.</li> </ul>
<b>Feathers</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Collect from ovals, home gardens, and reserves.</li> <li>- Do not take feathers from a dead bird or a nest.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Head pieces.</li> <li>- Necklaces.</li> <li>- Wind catchers.</li> <li>- Drawing in dirt.</li> </ul>



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