

INTRODUCTION TO ECOSCAPING YOUR GARDEN

Ecoscaping your garden is the natural way to go—honouring the life around us and facilitating its survival. Botanists, horticulturalists and permaculturalists have had a stranglehold on gardens since time immemorial but their time has come to move over and make room for more than just plants and food. We, as human beings living as part of ecosystems and not separate from nature as we have thought for so long, can now recognise our responsibilities to all the life around us and take action in our own backyards. I am sure we would all like to save the world but that is rather a big ask. However, we can do a lot to save the indigenous life around us and there lies a great and wonderful opportunity.

I believe that the four rivers of Eden are symbols of the flow of wildness and essential services from the heart of our natural areas, to the rest of the planet. On that flow depends the health of the whole planet, even those parts of it most shaped by human hands. Yet our human hands are blocking that flow.

Not content with reducing the size of natural areas, we are keeping what is left of it in boxes, and now we realise that even they are becoming too small and subject to damage. We need natural areas and wildness.

Our natural areas should function not just as boxes, but as vital organs—hearts, lungs, kidneys—from which wildness and essential services circulate. So there must be arteries as well: corridors of wildness embracing our urban bushland and parks, roadsides, railway easements, industrial surrounds, school yards and backyards, going right down and touching every cell of civilisation in our community with wildness. This would begin to make our natural areas not just a thing or a place but a process and a function and thus maintain and facilitate the flow of essential services and integrate them with our backyards.

Every ecosystem is a model of the biosphere each with its own vital organs. How do we look after the heart and lungs of our surroundings? The local flow is most important of all for us and we must be careful not to harden its arteries too much with destruction of vegetation, damming animals especially insects as pests, with concrete, with chemicals, with embolisms of litter and weeds.

We can very effectively contribute to the health of the world by caring for our local environment. Our primary responsibility is at the local level. We must pay attention to the world in our own backyard and conserve and integrate its unique wildness into our community heritage. We would do well to recognise the opportunity that the small remnants of these communities still left provide to integrate our ‘civilised’ community with our natural areas and protect our vital organs of nature essential for life. We become greater human beings for recognising these things and bringing life back into our community through conserving our local natural heritage and ecoscaping our environment especially our backyard.

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