

Cottage Garden

Backyards for Wildlife Garden Design Fact Sheet

What is a Cottage Style Garden?

The cottage garden is an old-fashioned, charming garden style that originated in England. Plants are usually chosen for their pretty flowers, colours, shapes, textures and perfumes, as well as different heights, from groundcovers to climbers, and seasonal variety.

Traditional cottage gardens require a huge amount of water and lots of fertiliser, as well as regular pruning and trimming to look fabulous all the time. Therefore, it is one of the most time- and water-consuming garden styles.

However, it is not just a dream to create your cottage garden in the Adelaide area, even with the intense pressure of water restrictions. By using water-wise local native plants you can develop a cottage garden which requires much less water and little maintenance to thrive. What's more, imagine the colourful butterflies and birds sharing your garden drinking the nectar of your plants!



Examples of Adelaide native plants suitable for a cottage style garden:

Top (left to right): native flax, black-anther flax-lily, beaked hakea, silver banksia

Bottom (left to right): native lilac, white goodenia, running postman, Christmas bush

Create Your Cottage Garden Step by Step

You can easily develop your own cottage garden design by simply going into your garden and growing the local native plants you love. However, there are a few principles you need to know to match the style:

1. Strictly follow the frame you created for your cottage garden strictly. A cottage garden can easily become a messy hotchpotch of plantings if you are not careful with your frame work. Remember even an apparently relaxed disorder of country planting is in fact quite controlled. So never forget to follow a strong underlying framework.



2. Prepare the garden beds well before planting. Good soil preparation can ensure a successful survival rate. A well matured compost mix applied in your garden beds will increase the water-holding capacity of the soil, which benefits both plants and your water budget.

3. Select indigenous plants that are sourced from local provenance seeds. **Use a variety of plants that flower across the seasons** to provide food for fauna and colour for your garden.

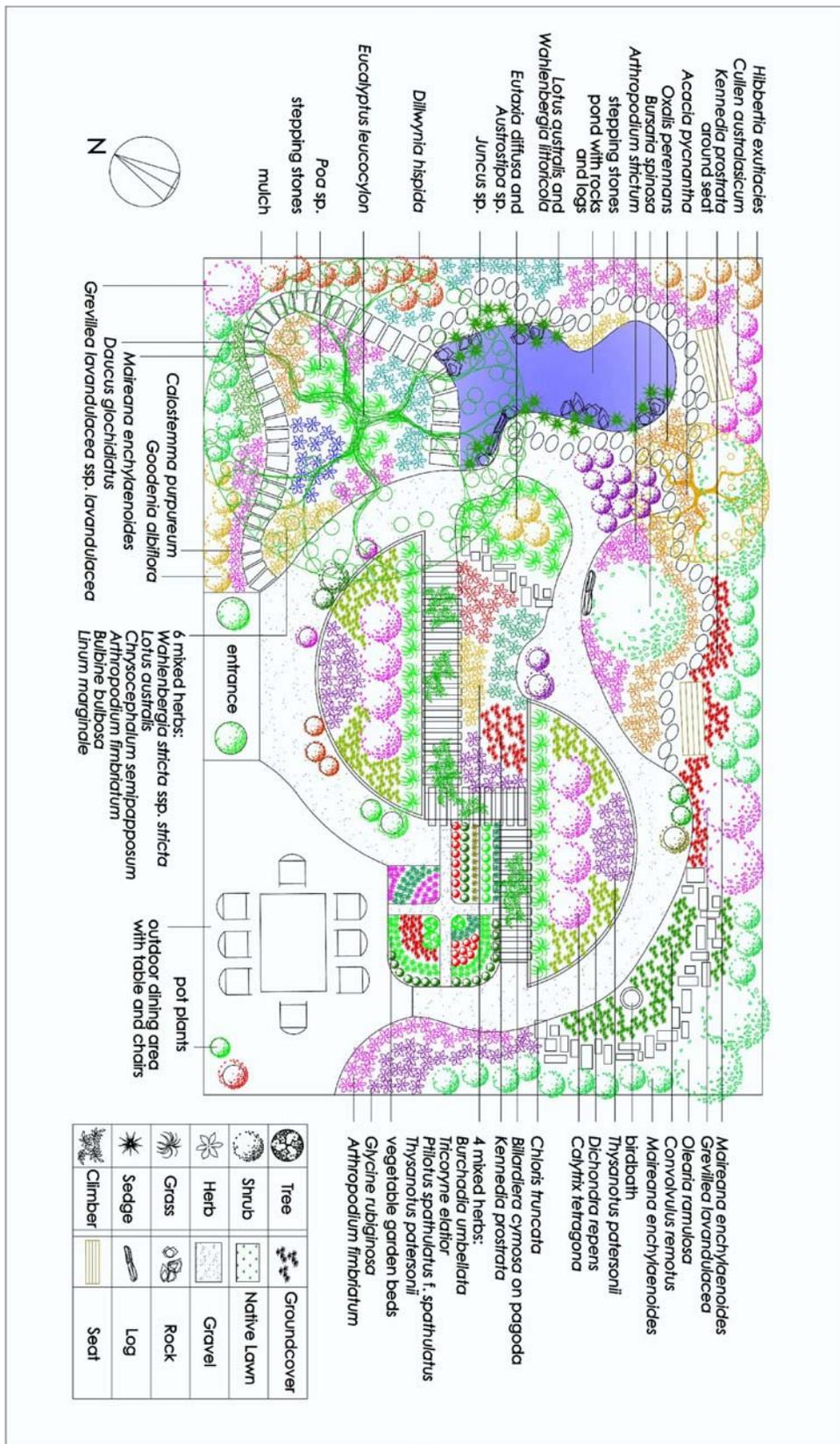
4. Arrange your plants informally but carefully. Mix and match your plants to create an **informal patchwork effect**. Unify your garden by **using plants in groups** instead of "one of everything", as this will make the garden spotty.

Try to plant some annual species amongst the perennial plants, so that they can announce their presence when the perennials finish blooming.

Put plants a bit closer than usually recommended, as cottage gardens are typically overgrown and crowded. Plants can grow up together quicker, and the garden will become full more quickly, leaving less bare ground.

5. Create a meandering path about 1m wide through your cottage garden in a natural material like gravel or sawdust. Border the pathways with low growing plants, and allow plants to overgrow the path.

6. Plants will benefit from a gentle trimming, particularly after flowering.

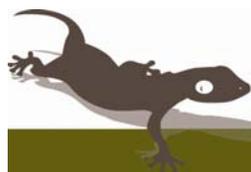


This is an example of a cottage garden for locations which were once originally Grey Box and Blue Gum Woodlands. The plant species selected for this design are based on a plant list of this vegetation association. **If you are not sure about the association of your area, please visit the BFW website to find your list.**

There are over 80 species lists for different vegetation associations in urban northern and southern Adelaide. There is also a Native Grower's List and both are available on the BFW website www.backyards4wildlife.com.au

Click on the interactive map or Nature Maps for your list. If you have a trouble finding your list, please contact the **Urban Biodiversity Unit** with your suburb.

You can also substitute plant species of each plant type with those on your species list if the plant you want is unavailable. Then you can create your own local native garden which benefits your local environment. If you would like to know more information about your local native plants, such as height and flowering time etc, please visit our **plant selector** through the BFW website.



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