

Importance of Native Vegetation

What is native vegetation?

Life depends on ecosystems that are healthy and functioning. Native vegetation is one way of ensuring a diversity of ecosystems will be around to provide for future generations. Native vegetation includes trees, shrubs, grasses, rocks, debris and soil that were present in Australia before European settlement.

Benefits of native vegetation

There are many benefits of native vegetation to people and animals in both the short term and longer periods of time. Native vegetation can:

- Add beauty and value to where we live.
- Provide a place for recreation activities such as hiking and fishing.
- Provide food, shelter, habitats for breeding and bush corridors for native wildlife.
- Maintain biodiversity and natural ecosystems as plant communities interact with each other.
- Affect the regional climate as the type and amount of vegetation has influence on temperature.
- Clean the air and filter water.
- Stop soil erosion by adding nutrients and providing stability to the soil.
- Adapt to weather events such as drought and fire.



Bee on Acacia flowers



Leafhoppers on a Eucalyptus tree

Threats to native vegetation

Unfortunately there are many activities people do which threatens native vegetation. These activities can include:

- Broad clearing of land for the purpose of agriculture and urban development. This can reduce and change natural ecosystems.
- Human need for vegetation products such as building materials, food and paper.
- Fragmentation and loss of native plant species and habitats for native animals.
- Invasion of introduced weeds which competes with the native vegetation.



Fungi found in Liverpool

What can I do to preserve native vegetation?

- Plant native species instead of introduced species to provide buffer zones to bushland, food and shelter to animals and stop the spread of introduced plants.
- Join an environment group and help by removing weeds and planting native species. For information on groups in your area visit Council's website www.liverpool.nsw.gov.au
- Report illegal dumping of garden waste to Council on 1300 36 2170. Illegal dumping is a common way that weeds spread through bushland.



Weed – Morning glory (*Ipomoea indica*)

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Cumberland Plain Woodland

The Cumberland Plain Woodland is an ecological community that is unique to western Sydney. It is distinguished by the shale derived clay soils, low rolling hills and a grass covered floor with widely spaced trees. While it looks like a thin and messy bush it is actually a varied, prosperous and important ecosystem.

Within the Cumberland Plain Woodland you will find mainly large eucalyptus trees, specifically the **Grey Box**, **Forest Red Gum** and **Narrow-leaved Ironbark**. Smaller shrubs such as **Blackthorn** offer food and shelter to wildlife, and **Kangaroo Grass** is very common. It is also home to threatened species such as the **Cumberland Land Snail**.

Human impacts on the Cumberland Plain

Today approximately 6% of the original Cumberland Plain area is left. Rapid population growth has resulted in heavy land clearing for agriculture and urban expansion, resulting in fragmentation of habitats. Fragmentation allows for the easy spread of weeds, one of the main threats to the Cumberland Plain Woodland, along with increased frequency of fire.

The Cumberland Plain Woodland is classified as an Endangered Ecological Community under the Commonwealth *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* (1999) and the NSW *Threatened Species Conservation Act* (1995). It is the first plant community that was recognised as being in danger of extinction. A Recovery Plan has been prepared by the NSW Department of Environment & Heritage.

The Australian Botanic Gardens at Mount Annan in western Sydney have remnants of natural Cumberland Plain Woodland for protection and scientific research. Open to the public, it provides a great opportunity for you to learn and see native western Sydney bushland.

What can I do to protect the Cumberland Plain Woodland?

- Do not remove any plants, logs or rock from bushland areas.
- Do not illegally dump rubbish or garden waste into bushland as this will cause the spread of weeds.
- Prevent animals such as cats and dogs from going into bushland as they can compete with native animals for food.

Acknowledgements

1. NSW Government Central West Catchment Management Authority
http://cw.cma.nsw.gov.au/literature_37454/Valuing_Remnant_Vegetation
2. Australian Government Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities
<http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/publications/cumberland.html>
3. Photos from Liverpool City Council unless otherwise indicated.



Cumberland Plain Woodland at Prospect Nature Reserve. Photographer: Lyndal Kaye, NSW National Parks & Wildlife Services



Cumberland Plain Woodland Interpretive sign at Leacock Regional Park in Casula



Red-flowering gum (*Corymbia ficifolia*)



Cumberland Land Snail (*Meridolum corneovirens*) Photographer: Lotte von Richter, Botanic Gardens Trust