Local Plant Guide for sandstone soils of Castlecrag and Willoughby





Castlecrag's flora, 'the cleanest most delicate and varied native ligneous evergreen perpetually blooming flora extant'* was the inspiration for Walter Burley Griffin to integrate suburban housing with bushland.

Griffin recognised its hardiness during drought and the need to respect the soil. Castlecrag soils are derived from nutrient-poor Hawkesbury Sandstone. They are richer in the gullies than on the ridgetop and slopes.

Our bushland now exists mainly in reserves. Most ridgetop vegetation has been lost to housing and the bushland interface suffers from run-off and weeds.

Using local plants helps maintain the bushland character of Castlecrag and nearby suburbs. It helps recreate the natural environment and habitat where it has been lost. Whether in formal, informal or cottage gardens local plants suit local conditions best. Maintenance, water use and need for fertilizer are minimised. A well-mulched native garden of appropriate plants is not onerous to maintain. However growth will vary with soil, aspect and microclimate and most shrubs respond to tip-pruning after flowering.

Gardening gives visual pleasure and recreational interest. The plants in this guide are reasonably available and easy to grow. They will start you on your journey of discovery of our local native plants and give you lots of enjoyment.

Legend

Sh creates shelter for fauna

N nectar plants

I insect attracting plants

Be native bee plants

Bu native butterfly plants

S seed plants

F fleshy fruit plants

H hardy

Note: Heights are not absolute. Some people are allergic to red-flowering and/or prickly or spikey plants.

* Griffin quoted in Benson et al (1990) p148.

Large Trees



Sydney Red Gum (Angophora costata) Beautiful contorted limbs. Smooth pink bark shed in summer exposing salmon colour. Leaves opposite and aromatic. Creamy blossoms in October-January. Ribbed fruit. Sun. Fast-growing. Sandy soil. To 25m. N, I, S. (AK)



Coachwood (Ceratopetalum apetalum)
Erect tree of rainforest gullies. Smooth
grey bark mottled with lichen. Large
serrated green leaves, pinkish new growth.
Small white flowers in Spring followed by
showy red calyx early Summer. Sheltered
position. Moist soil. To 25m. I. (AK)



Grey Gum (Eucalyptus punctata)
Beautiful gum with matt steel-grey bark with patches of pink, orange or cream.
White blossoms December-April. Sun.
Sandy soil often on clay interface.
10-25m. I, S. (AK)



Silvertop Ash (Eucalyptus sieberi)
Coarse dark bark on trunk, smooth white upper branches, young branchlets red.
White blossoms September-December.
Sun. Well-drained soil. 6-25m. I, S. (AK)



Red Bloodwood (Corymbia gummifera)
Tree with rough scaly brown bark on
all limbs. Produces red resin (kino) from
injured parts. Large cream 'perfumed'
blossoms Summer-Autumn. Large
urn-shaped 'gumnut'. Full/partial sun.
Poor sandy soil. To 25m. N, I, S. (AK)

Medium Trees

Lillypilly (Acmena smithii)

Cinnamon coloured bark. Dense foliage. Shiny dark green leaves, tapering to a point. Pink new growth. Clusters of whitish flowers in Spring. Attractive pink-purple fruit in Winter. Sun to shade. Moist soil. 7-12m but to 20m in rainforest gullies. Sh, S, F. *(AK)*

Coastal Banksia (Banksia integrifolia)
Erect tree with rough grey bark. Dark
green leathery leaves, whitish and hairy on
under-surface. Lemon-yellow flower spike
mainly January-June, followed by woody
cone. Sun. Sandy soil. Tolerates salt spray.
To 16m. N. I. S. (AK)

Scribbly Gum (Eucalyptus haemastoma) Smooth white to yellowish bark with grey mottling and 'scribbles' from moth larvae. White blossoms Autumn-Spring. Sun. Fast-growing. Sandy soil. To 15m. I. S. (AK)

Sydney Peppermint (Eucalyptus

piperita) Graceful tree with grey roughbarked trunk, smooth white limbs, dangling strips of bark. Leaves have strong peppermint smell. White flowers early Summer. Sun. Sandy soil. To 15m. I, S. (AK)

Cheese Tree (Glochidion ferdinandi)
Tree of sheltered gullies. Soft shiny dark green leaves, minute green flowers, pale green to pink lobed fruit resembling tiny cheeses, ripe December-April. Sun/shade. Fast-growing. Moist sandy soil. 8-15m. S, F. (JM)











Small Trees



Black She-Oak (Allocasuarina littoralis) Graceful tree with fissured, corky bark, fine grey-green foliage. Male and female flowers on separate trees. Cylindrical flat-topped woody cone. Fast-growing. Full/partial sun, sandy soil. 4-10m. S. (LP)



Dwarf Apple (Angophora hispida)
Large rounded grey-green leaves, new growth reddish with red hairs. Dense clusters of large cream blossoms
November-January. Sun. Sandy soil.
3-5m. N, I, S. (AK)



Grey Myrtle (Backhousia myrtifolia)
Graceful, pendulous small tree. Aromatic leaves dull green, new growth pinkish, hairy. Small cream blossoms November-December. Partial sun/shade. Sandy soil. 4-10m. (MC)



Heath-leaved Banksia (Banksia ericifolia) A beautiful rounded shrub or small tree with dense foliage. Tiny crowded dark green leaves. Large orange perfumed flower spikes with red-black styles April-August. Winter food for honeyeaters. Full/partial sun. Sandy soil. 2-5m. N, I, Be, S. (AK)



Old Man Banksia (Banksia serrata) Gnarled, contorted tree. Large grey-green aromatic flower spike December-March, then woody cone. Leaves leathery, serrated, paler green undersurface. Full/partial sun. Sandy soil. 4-10m. Sh, N, I, S. (AK)

Black Wattle (Callicoma serratifolia)
Attractive large spreading rounded shrub or small tree. Leaves dark green, toothed, whitish below, bronze young growth.
Flowers cream fluffy balls October-November. Sun/shade. Sheltered. Moist sandy soil. 5-10m. I, Bu. (WCC)

Mueller's Cyprus (Callitris muelleri)
Slender Cyprus, dense dark green foliage.
Woody male and female cones. Full/
partial sun. Sandy soil. 3-8m. Sh, S. (AK)



Blueberry Ash (Elaeocarpus reticulatus)
Erect small tree, dark green toothed
leaves which turn red before falling.
Pretty fringed white flowers NovemberDecember. Attractive shiny blue berries
Autumn-Winter. Sun/part shade. Moist
sandy soil. 4-IOm. I, S, F. (AK)

River Lomatia (Lomatia myricoides)
Erect with dense drooping foliage. Leaves slender, often toothed. Flowers creamy white December-January. Sun/part shade. Sandy soil. To 4m. N, I (JH)











Tall Shrubs over 3m



Pink Spider Flower (*Grevillea sericea*) Rounded shrub. Stiff leaves with pointed tips and fine silky hairs underneath. Attractive pink flowers July-November. Full/partial sun. Well-drained sandy soil. 2-4m. I, H. (*JH*)



Finger Hakea (Hakea dactyloides)
Attractive rounded tall forest form has narrow stiff grey-green leaves. Tiny white flowers in clusters in leaf axils September-October. Woody fruit. Full/partial sun. Sandy soils. To 4m. S, H. (JH)



Tick Bush (*Kunzea ambigua*)

Tall spreading shrub. Tiny crowded leaves. Fluffy white flowers October-November. Full/partial sun. Sandy soils. Typical ridgetop plant. 2-4m. Sh, N, I, Bu. (*JH*)



Graceful Bush-Pea (Pultenaea flexilis)
Beautiful erect tall shrub, leaves small flat
and soft. Showy small yellow pea flowers
with red markings August-October. Part
shade. Sandy soil. To 4m. I, Be, Bu. (JH)



Pine-leaf Geebung (Personia pinifolia)
Spreading shrub with crowded pine-like leaves. Golden-yellow flowers along stem at ends of branches which droop gracefully March-May. Branches of edible green (tart) to purple fruit. Full/partial sun. Sandy soil. 2-4m. I, Be, F, H. (LP)

Medium Shrubs 1.5 - 3m

Sunshine Wattle (Acacia terminalis) A beautiful open shrub. Leaflets dark green. Flowers showy pale yellow balls in clusters late Summer and Winter.

Attractive red-brown seed pods. Full/ partial sun. Sandy soil. 1.5-2 or 3m. I. S. (AK)

Prickly Moses (Acacia ulicifolia) Wiry rounded shrub with small fine

prickly foliage. Solitary cream flower heads. Autumn-Winter. Partial sun. Sandy soil. 1.5-3m. Sh, I, S. (AK)

Hair-pin Banksia (Banksia spinulosa)

Rounded shrub. Tough narrow leaves finely toothed at apex. Golden-yellow to orange flower spikes with red-black styles. March-September. Sun to shade. Sandy soil (prefers moist). To 2m. N, I, Be, S. (AK)

Narrow-leaved Bottlebrush

(Callistemon linearis) Erect with stiff rough narrow leaves. Bright red bottlebrush flowers in October. Full/ partial sun. Moist sandy or clay soils. 1.5-2m. N, I, S. (AK)

Eggs and Bacon (Dillwynia retorta)

Erect or spreading shrub. Short fine twisted leaves. Yellow pea flowers with red markings July-September. Full/partial sun, Sandy soil, 1.5-2m, 1.5-3m, I, Be, Bu, (WCC)













Grey Spider Flower (*Grevillea buxifolia*) Erect shrub, small stiff hairy grey leaves. Beautiful flowers, grey (rusty hairs outside, grey inside) in dense terminal heads at end of stems. August-November. Sun. Sandy soil. To I.5m. N, S. (*AK*)



White Spider Flower (Grevillea linearifolia) Graceful spreading shrub with long narrow leaves, silky hairy below. White pendulous flowers July-October (but most of year). Very hardy. Sun. Sandy soil. To 2m. N, H, S. (JM)



Red Spider Flower (Grevillea speciosa)
Erect to spreading shrub. Variable leaf
colour grey to mid-green, hairy below.
Drooping bright crimson flowers JuneSeptember. Sun. Sandy soil. 1.5-2m.
N, H, S. (JH)



Drumsticks (Isopogon anethifolius)
Erect shrub with thin finely-divided leaves.
Yellow flower head (of tiny flowers surrounded by bracts) September-November. Round woody cones. Sun.
Sandy soil. I.5-2m. I, H. (AK)



Mountain Devil (Lambertia formosa)
Open, spreading shrub. Stiff slender
olive-green leaves with sharp points.
Spectacular terminal cluster of red tubular
flowers attractive to Eastern Spinebills.
September-May (and most of year).
Woody fruit with two horns. Sun/part
shade. Sandy soil. 1.5-2m. Sh, N, H. (AK)



Paperbark Tea-tree (Leptospermum trinervium) Beautiful tea-tree with flaky bark. Small mid-green leaves. Large white flowers in Spring. Woody capsule. Sun/part shade. Sandy soil. To 3m. I, Be. (JH)

Scaly Phebalium (Phebalium squamulosum)
Lovely erect or spreading shrub. Leaf form
variable, shiny above, brownish scales and
silvery hairs below. Scented cream-pale
yellow flower heads in Spring. Full/partial
sun. Sandy soil. 1.5-2m. (AK)

Large-leaf Bush-Pea (Pultenaea daphnoides) Erect shrub, wedge-shaped leaves with pointed tips. Dense heads of yellow pea flowers with red markings, Spring-early Summer. Partial sun/shade. Sandy soil. 2-3m. I, Be, Bu. (AB)

Fine-leaf Bush-Pea (Pultenaea stipularis) A most beautiful erect shrub, crowded long slender leaves. Brown stipules on stem. Dense terminal heads of yellow pea flowers August-October. Partial sun/shade. Sandy well-drained soil. To 2m. I, Be, Bu. (IH)

Woolly Pomaderris (Pomaderris lanigera) Erect or rounded shrub. Leaves dull green, silvery hairs above, rusty below. Rusty hairs on branches, leaf stalks and inflorescences. Tiny yellow flowers borne in clusters above leaves. August-September. Partial sun/shade. Moist sandy soil. 2-3m. I, Bu. (AK)

Common Hop Bush (Dodonaea triquetra) Erect shrub with broad soft mid-green leaves. Very attractive three-winged fruits, red or (mostly) green in Spring and Summer. Full/partial sun. Sandy soil. To 2m. S. (AK)

Everlasting, Paper Daisy (*Ozothamnus diosmifolium*) Erect shrub with small dark green leaves. Dense clusters of tiny white flowers surrounded by white papery bracts. Spring-Summer. Sun/light shade. Sandstone and clay soils. Good cut flowers. To 2.5m. Bu, Be, H. (*AK*)













Herbs and Shrubs to 1.5m



Sweet-scented Wattle (Acacia

suaveolens) Slim, open shrub, grey-green foliage with angular stems, scented cream fluffy balls in Winter. Attractive blue-green seed pods. Full/partial sun. Sandy soil. To I.Sm. I, S. (JH)



Flannel Flower (Actinotus helianthi)

Attractive grey-green divided leaves. Tiny flowers in centre knob surrounded by white petal-like bracts. Whole plant covered with fine hairs. Spring flowering. Treat as an annual. Sun. Dry sandy or rocky soil. 0.5-I m. I. (AK)



River Rose (Bauera rubioides)

Dense shrub, small dark green leaves hug tangled stems. Flowers mostly bright pink (can be white, pale or deep pink). Spring-Summer. Sun/part shade. Moist sandy soil. To 1.5m. J. (LP)



Pinnate Boronia (Boronia pinnata)

Dark green, divided aromatic leaves, lovely pale to deeper pink flowers (4 petals), Spring. Sun/part shade. Moist sandy soil. To I.5m. I. (AK)



Crowea (Crowea saligna)

Small slender erect shrub, leaves aromatic, shiny mid-green. Pretty rose-pink flowers (5 petals). January-June. Full/partial sun. Well-drained sandy soil. To 1.0m. S. (MC)

Dampiera (Dampiera stricta)

Scrambling or erect herb, leaves thick rough and slightly toothed, mauve to blue flowers with yellow throat. Suckers. Spring-early Summer. Partial sun/shade. To 40cm. (*JH*)



Rusty Petals (*Lasiopetalum ferrugineum*) Small erect shrub with dense rusty hairs beneath dark green leaves sheltering clusters of cream flowers. The petals are covered with rusty hairs outside and cream hairs inside. Spring. Full/partial sun. To 1.5m. (AK)

Rice Flower (Pimelia linifolia) Graceful erect shrub, soft thin leaves, tiny white flowers in dense terminal heads. July-October. Sun. Sandy soil. 50cm-1 m. I, Bu. (JH)

Black-eyed Susan (*Tetratheca ericifolia*) A small rounded shrub with linear leaves in whorls around stem. Pretty, drooping rose-pink flowers with dark centre, Spring. Partial sun. Sandy soil. To 50cm. (*AK*)











Climbers (fences) and Scramblers (ground cover)



Apple Berry (Billardiera scandens)
A light climber with pale green hairy leaves. Cream bell-like flowers in Spring. Green oblong furry fruits ripening to purple. Partial sun/shade. Sandy/clay soils. N, S, F. (LP)



Native Grape (Cissus hypoglauca)
Vigorous woody vine with large waxy
dark green leaflets. Tiny yellow flowers
in Summer. Black edible grape-like fruit.
Suit fences, pergolas. Partial sun/shade.
Moist soils. Sh, S, F, H. (AB)



Wombat Berry (Eustrephus latifolius)
A light climber with zigzag wiry stems, light green leaves. Insignificant white flowers in Spring. Bright orange berries. Partial sun/shade. Moist sandy soils. F, H. (JH)



False Sarsaparilla (Hardenbergia violacea) A scrambler or climber with tough dark grey-green leaves and small deep purple pea flowers in Spring. Best in full sun on sandy or clay soils. Suit fences. Sh, I, Be. (AK)



Twining Guinea Flower (*Hibbertia dentata*) A beautiful weak climber, dark green leaves which are bronze when young. Bright yellow flowers in Spring and early Summer. Sheltered position on sandstone and clay soils. I. (*AK*)

Golden Guinea Flower (Hibbertia

scandens) Vigorous climber or scrambler. Mid-green slightly fleshy leaves, large golden yellow flowers in Spring and Summer. Red fruits. Resists salt spray. Full sun/shade. Rich or sandy soils. I, Bu, F, H. (JH)

Dusky Coral Pea (Kennedia rubicunda)

Vigorous climber, with rusty hairs on underside of leaflets. Large bright red pea flowers in Spring and Summer. Full sun/shade. Sandy soil. Suit fences, or ground cover. N, I, Be, H. *(JH)*

Wonga Wonga Vine (Pandorea

pandorana) Vigorous climber with woody stems, for fences, pergolas. Dark green divided leaves. Beautiful sprays of creamy tubular flowers with mauve throats. Partial sun/shade. Sandy soil. Sh, I, H. (*LP*)







Tufted Plants



Blue Flax Lily (Dianella caerulea) (local species, var. producta, has dark green leaves arising from sprawling woody stems). Long flowering stems bear dark blue flowers with yellow stamens, then deep blue berries. September-November. Sun/shade. Sandstone and clay soils. To I.Om. Sh, S, F. (AK)



Saw Sedge (Gahnia spp.)

Large leafy sedge to 2m, sharp leaf edges. Tall flower spike with attractive small nuts. *G. erythrocarpa* – red-brown nut in blackish spikelet. Dry sandy soil. *G. melanocarpa* – black nut in red-brown spikelet. *G. sieberana* – red nut in dark brown spikelet. Both moist sandy soil. S, Bu. (AK)



Common Rush (Juncus usitatus)

Dense clump of arching cylindrical stems. Small cream flowers and red-brown nutty capsules. A range of moist soils. Full/partial sun. To I.Om. May regenerate naturally. Sh, S, Bu. (AK)



Mat Rush (Lomandra longifolia)

Deep green long strap-like leaves with rough ends. Prickly flower spikes with lots of tiny fragrant cream flowers in Spring. Full/partial sun. To I.Om. Sh, I, Bu, S, H. (WCC)



Leafy Purple Flag (Patersonia glabrata)

A tufted herb of stiff grass-like leaves, with short-lived bluish-purple iris-like flowers in September. Full/partial sun. 20cm. I, Bu. (JM)

Grasses and ground covers

Not all Ground Covers are prostrate. See also Ferns, Tufted Plants and Scramblers. Some shrubs are also dense to the ground.

Kidney Weed (*Dichondra repens*)
A creeping herb with kidney-shaped leaves. White flowers in Spring and Summer. Likes shady positions on a range of soil types. (*AB*)

Weeping Grass (Microlaena stipoides) A slender grass with nodding spikelets to 70cm. dark grey green with rough feel. A lawn substitute but may become invasive. Sun/shade. Sandstone and clay soils. S, Sh. (AK)

Basket Grass (*Oplismenus spp.*)
Light green spreading grass. Very soft.
A lawn substitute but very invasive.
Sun/shade. S, Sh. (*AK*)

Kangaroo Grass (Themeda triandra formerly australis) Attractive tufting grass to about 1.0m. Leaves slender, light green. Long flowering stems with clusters of brown and purple spikelets. Full/partial sun. Sandstone or clay soils. Sh, Bu, S. (JM)









Ferns



Bird's Nest Fern (Asplenium australasicum) Long green fronds radiating from the centre. Ephiphyte growing on logs, tree trunks or rocks. Shady protected positions. (AK)



Gristle Fern (Blechnum cartalagineum)
A harsh fern forming tufts to I.Om high.
Young fronds are a pretty pink. Has short creeping rhizome. Protected positions on sandstone. Sh, H. (AK)



False Bracken Fern (Calochlaena dubia) Graceful soft light green fronds (Bracken is dark green and stiff) to I.5m. Sheltered positions. Moist soils on sandstone. Fronds used by Ringtail Possums to build their dreys (nests). Sh, H. (MC)



Rough Treefern (Cyathea australis)
A very slow growing tree fern with a stout dark brown trunk. Wiry projections at base of stalk. A gully species. (MC)



Rasp Fern (Doodia aspera)
An erect fern growing in tufts of harsh dark green fronds to 40cm high. Young fronds are rosy pink. Short creeping rhizome. Mainly protected positions.
Sh, H. (MC)

Further information

BOOKS

Robinson, Les. 2003. Field Guide to The Native Plants of Sydney. Revised 3rd edn. Kangaroo Press, Kenthurst.

Fairley, Alan. 2001. Wildflowers of Sydney and Adjoining Areas. Bloomings Books, Melbourne.

Wrigley, John W. & Fagg, M. 2003. Australian Native Plants. 5th edn. Reed New Holland, Australia.

Peate, Natalie, Macdonald, G & Talbot, A. 2006. *Grow What Where*. 3rd edn. Bloomings Books. Melbourne.

Benson, Doug & Howell, J. 1990. Taken for Granted: The Bushland of Sydney and its Suburbs. Kangaroo Press, Kenthurst.

Burton, Andy. 2004. *Birds of Willoughby: Survey Update 2004.* Willoughby City Council.

WEBSITES

Australian Plant Society (APS) austplants.com.au

Australian Museum Birds in Backyards Program birdsinbackyards.net

Your Hidden Native Garden sydneyweeds.org.au/wp-content/ uploads/2018/03/Your-Hidden-Garden-08.pdf

Sydney Weeds Network sydneyweeds.org.au

Australian Native Bee Research Centre aussiebee.com.au

BOOKSHOPS

For plants and gardening books: Royal Botanic Gardens Bookshop.

For fauna books: Australian Museum Shop.

See also the Sustainability Section at Willoughby City Library, The Concourse, Chatswood.

GARDEN VISITS

Open Garden Scheme myopengarden.com.au

Bushland Reserves in Castlecrag, Middle Cove, Northbridge and Castle Cove.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This brochure has been produced by the Castlecrag Progress Association, with the assistance of an Envirofund Grant from Willoughby City Council.

Information was compiled by Gay Spies. Plant details were sourced from Robinson (2003), Wrigley et al (2003) and Peate et al (2006). Photographs supplied by Adam Burrowes (AB), Adrienne Kabos (AK), Jude Morris (JM), Jacqui Hickson (JH), Lyndall Pickering (LP), Mosman Council (MC), Willoughby City Council (WCC). Designed by Amanda Lo.



Sources for Native Plants

Harvest Seeds and Native Plants 281 Mona Vale Road, Terry Hills Phone (02) 9450 2699

Indigo Native Nursery* 57 Wattle Road, Ingleside Phone (02) 9970 8709

Ku-ring-gai Wildflower Nursery In Ku-ring-gai Wildflower Garden 420 Mona Vale Road, St Ives Phone (02) 9424 0353

Sutherland Council Community Nursery* 345 The Boulevarde, Gymea Phone (02) 9524 5672

All the above nurseries specialise in tube stock.

Sydney Wildflower Nursery 9 Veno Street, Heathcote Phone (02) 9548 2818

Check stock lists online. The latter two nurseries stock is from the southern Sydney region but include many of the same species as local nurseries.

*M-F only

Ideally, to preserve genetic integrity, native plants for local gardens should be grown from local seed and cuttings (ie locally indigenous).

At present only a few local plants are sourced from local material, although some nurseries will grow to order. Asking for locally indigenous plants, or for particular species, will encourage nurseries to grow them.

If your garden abuts or includes bushland any planting should use plants of local provenance.

Consider bush regeneration and/ or pile burns to stimulate dormant seed (talk to Council about this).

For information about environmental or noxious weeds, non-local native plants which may be invasive or the BushCare Program, contact Council on (02) 9777 1000.

There are many more native plants, local and non-local, which are suitable for Castlecrag and other gardens on sandstone soils.

3RD EDITION, 2025