

What to grow in a garden visited by kangaroos

Choose what you plant

For thirteen years my husband and I have shared our garden with kangaroos in the Perth Hills. We have, through trial and error, managed to develop a beautiful native garden full of flowers and still have the kangaroos visit daily. However, every garden is different and kangaroos are different, so please experiment to find out what works for you.



Photo: Kangaroos in the garden

Roses are out. Kangaroos love roses. Trying to keep the kangaroos off the roses will only make you get stressed, so avoid them unless you are willing to share them with the kangaroos. Instead, plant a selection of Western Australian plants that the kangaroos are less likely to eat.

Factors to consider in selecting plants

1. Like humans, kangaroos have individual tastes. We've had one Western Grey male who loved salt bush (*Rhagodia*) when no other kangaroo ever touched it.
2. Almost any plant with lovely juicy new buds or flowers on them, says, "come eat me," to a kangaroo, so protect all young plants.
3. Joeys will experiment with eating different shrubs, even the ones their parents don't eat.
4. Kangaroos expand their plant repertoire during droughts, e.g. eating citrus tree leaves.
5. Kangaroos eat kangaroo paws to the ground in our experience. We no longer grow them.

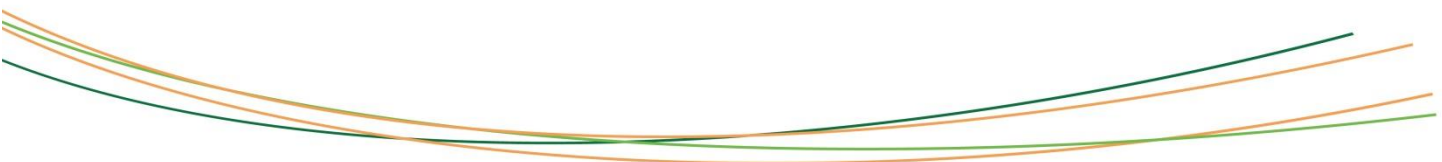


6. Kangaroos love lawns because grass is their preferred food. Expect your lawn to be eaten and have kangaroo poo on it. Our neighbours have chicken wire across their lawn to protect it; we use shade cloth screens.
7. Be relaxed about sacrificing some plants to the kangaroos; sharing your garden is part of the wonderful experience.

Which West Australian plants can you grow with kangaroos in the garden?

In our experience, there are many bird and butterfly attracting colourful flowering plants that kangaroos are less likely to eat. For example (photos in Table 1 below):

1. ***Eremophilas***: We have at least ten different types of *Eremophila* and none have been eaten. They flower throughout the year and come in all sizes from ground covers to small trees.
2. ***Hakeas***: We have many hakeas, e.g. *Hakea multineata* (stunning pink flowers), *Hakea petiolaris* (a food source for black cockatoos), *Hakea lissocarpa*, *Hakea orthorrhyncha* (bird beak hakea which has a mass of red flowers), and more.
3. ***Melaleucas***: We have *Melaleuca fulgens* in abundance. A local plant with different coloured flowers: peach, red with gold tips or magenta. One of my favourite Melaleucas is *Melaleuca filifolia*, its beautiful purple, gold tipped flowers have a long flowering period.
4. ***Hypocalymma angustifolium***: This beautiful local shrub has a mass of sparkly white or pink flowers. They make a beautiful hedge.
5. **Red and pink flowering plants**: e.g. *Kunzea baxteri*, *Calothamnus rupestris* and *Callistemon phoeniceus* (local lesser bottlebrush), and *Darwinia oldfieldii*.
6. ***Verticordias***: such as *Verticordia plumosa* and *Verticordia chrysantha*, a stunning show of purples and yellows.
7. ***Acacias (wattles)***: We have many local species including *Acacia pulchella*.
8. ***Billardiera fusiformis* (formerly *Sollya*)**: We use this native bluebell creeper on our fences.
9. ***Eucalyptus erythrocorys* (Illyarrie)**: The birds like its bright yellow flowers; the kangaroos don't.



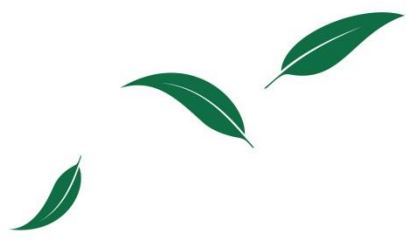


Table 1: Plants kangaroos avoid eating.

No.	Plant Name	Plant Name
1.	 <i>Eremophila spp.</i>	 <i>Eremophila spp.</i>
2.	 <i>Hakea multineata</i>	 <i>Hakea petiolaris</i>
2.	 <i>Hakea lissocarpa</i>	 <i>Hakea orthorrhyncha</i>
3.	 <i>Melaleuca fulgens</i>	 <i>Melaleuca filifolia</i>
4/5.	 <i>Hypocalymma angustifolium</i>	 <i>Kunzea baxteri</i>
5/6.	 <i>Darwinia oldfieldii</i>	 <i>Verticordia plumosa</i>
6/7.	 <i>Verticordia chrysantha</i>	 <i>Acacia pulchella</i>



Which plants do kangaroos like to eat?



There are some members of a genus which kangaroos prefer and others that are less likely to be eaten. For instance, some *Grevilleas* are regularly eaten while others are not. Here are some examples:

1. Kangaroos will push our cages down to get at *Grevillea preissii* (Seaspray) when it is relatively young; but it is very unusual for them to touch *Grevillea Robyn Gordon*, a hybrid, which flowers for at least nine months of the year and is bird attracting. The green form of *Grevillea thelemanniana* isn't touched, but the grey form is. The kangaroos will also demolish *Grevillea biternata*.



Grevillea preissii

Grevillea Robyn Gordon

2. *Grevilleas* which are less likely to be eaten by kangaroos include *Grevillea bipinnatifida*, *Grevillea vestita*, *Grevillea olivacea* (a small tree with abundant flowers which requires virtually no water at all), *Grevillea crithmifolia* (a ground cover), *Grevillea georgiana* (rare but stunning), *Grevillea synaphae* (local ground cover with a mass of creamy pendulous flowers) and *Grevillea Ellendale Pool*, which flowers throughout the year.



Grevillea olivacea

3. There are over 340 native species of *Grevillea* to try in your garden. *Grevilleas* are a waterwise plant; some requiring no additional water once established. Pruning regularly will increase flowering and enhance their appearance.

We have had little success with banksias and dryandras because the kangaroos find them irresistible, especially when the plants are young.

There are an abundance of plants to use in your garden. You just need the patience to find the right ones. You really can have the most beautiful garden AND kangaroos.

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