SUPPORT YOUR WILD NEIGHBOURS

Here are a few ideas for supporting backyard biodiversity:

**NATIVE PLANTS OF DIFFERENT HEIGHTS**
Create dense areas of native trees, shrubs, climbers and groundcovers to form a variety of places for animals to live, from the garden floor to the tallest tree. Plant ‘stacking’, makes use of the vertical space in your garden, creating a variety of habitat in a relatively small area.

**KEEP THE CAT IN!**
Many native animals feed at night, making them easy prey for cats. A simple way to support your wild neighbours is to keep your cat inside at night and put bells on their collars to reduce their ability to sneak up on unsuspecting prey.

**BUILD A COMPOST**
Composting food and garden waste helps cultivate soil biodiversity, an important building block for a healthy ecosystem. Compost also provides an alternative to using chemical fertiliser in your garden making it safer and cheaper to look after! Check out Council’s Guide to Easy Composting for information on how to establish and maintain a home compost system.

**AVOID PESTICIDES AND HERBICIDES**
Some pesticides and herbicides can harm non-target species such as birds and frogs. Aquatic life in local waterways can also be harmed by polluted storm-water runoff from the garden. Using organic gardening principles helps to grow a garden that nurtures biodiversity, uses less water and is safer for wildlife and the family.
GARDEN WASTE
Exotic plant escapees are the biggest source of environmental weeds in Australia. Dumping garden waste in the bush, or over the back fence, is a sure way to introduce and spread weeds into the natural environment. Dispose of all garden waste responsibly either by home composting or at one of Council’s waste transfer stations.

INVASIVE WEEDS
Invasive weeds are a major problem for wet tropics ecosystems, many of which have escaped from home gardens.

To find out more about invasive weeds visit: www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/invasive/weeds

CONTROL ENVIRONMENTAL PESTS
Cane Toads: Go on a toad hunt. Collect all of the toads in your yard, freeze and then dispose via your waste bin. Keep watch for toad eggs in fishponds etc. It’s easy to identify toad eggs, they are the only ones laid in long clear strands like spaghetti. The eggs look like a row of little black dots. Destroy the cane toad eggs by taking them out of the water and leaving them to dry.

Indian Myna Birds: The Indian Myna bird has been declared the second greatest threat to Australia’s native birds after land clearing. First introduced to Australia to control insect pests, the Common Indian Myna (Acridotheres tristis) is extremely aggressive, outcompeting native birds and small tree dwelling marsupials for food and nests. Watch the video on the Green Thumb website to find out what Indian Myna birds look like.

Invasive Ants: Fire ants, electric ants and yellow crazy ants have all been detected in the Cairns region. These three invasive pests have the potential to severely impact the natural environment, our outdoor lifestyle and local agriculture. Report any potential ant sitings in your backyard or neighbourhood to Biosecurity Queensland www.daff.qld.gov.au

RELAX OUTDOORS
Why not set up a hammock or chair under the shade of a tree to enjoy your garden and observe what birds and animals are dropping by for a visit. Observing nature in your backyard is great for finding the inspiration for your next backyard biodiversity project.

JOIN IN
Why not get involved in a community tree planting day or a beach clean-up. Find out more at www.dosomethingnearyou.com.au

To help control the spread of Indian Myna birds you can:
• Restrict access to food: Indian Myna birds are particularly fond of dog biscuits and will come to your yard to feed if dog food is easily accessible. Restrict access to your dog’s food by placing it undercover or by bringing the bowl indoors during the day.
• Reduce nesting options: Block holes in roof and eaves and remove dead fronds from palms to reduce nesting options in your yard.
• Join a trapping program: Cairns Rotary Club coordinates a community trapping program that includes resources and advice on effective trapping and humane disposal of pest birds.

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK
Visit greenthumb.cairns.qld.gov.au to ask a question, post a comment and read what others are saying about backyard biodiversity and other sustainable living issues.