

Native Garden Care Calendar

Your garden's to-do list, month by month · Sydney North Shore · rain: long-term averages, Pennant Hills (BoM 066047)

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BEST PLANTING

OK TO PLANT

PREPARE

HOLD OFF

January

~102 mm rain

PLANT? NO: WATER ONLY

Deep-water anything planted in the last 12 months

Weed after rain, before seeds form

Plan autumn planting

Flowering:

Old-man banksia, grass trees, grey spider flower; Christmas bush still red

My notes

February

~118 mm rain

PLANT? PREPARE BEDS

Prune NSW Christmas bush once the red bits drop

Prune bottlebrushes after flowering

Get clay beds ready; book autumn planting

Flowering:

Old-man banksia; sunshine wattle begins

My notes

March

~126 mm rain

PLANT? YES: BEST TIME

Main planting season starts: go for small tubestock plants

Mulch? Only if your site needs it (no set date)

Low-phosphorus, slow-release fertiliser at planting only

Flowering:

Old-man banksia; sunshine wattle

My notes

April

~104 mm rain

PLANT? YES: BEST TIME

Keep planting

Water new plants until the rain takes over

Follow-up weeding every 2–4 weeks

Flowering:

Heath and hairpin banksias begin; correas

My notes

May

~78 mm rain

PLANT? YES: FINISH EARLY

Last chance for autumn planting

No fertiliser before winter

Flowering:

Banksias and correas: honeyeater season

My notes

June

~112 mm rain

PLANT? SANDY SOILS ONLY

Hand-pull winter weeds while they're small

Don't dig or plant wet clay

Install nest boxes before spring

Flowering:

Banksias, correas, needlebush, fuchsia heath

My notes

July

~78 mm rain

PLANT? SANDY SOILS ONLY

Light shaping prune on mild days

Leave anything that has flower buds

Keep up hand weeding

Flowering:

Sydney boronia begins; banksias, correas

My notes

August

~66 mm rain

PLANT? PREPARE

Shape banksias as they finish (never below green leaves)

Watch new plants: the driest months are coming

Flowering:

Tantoon, grass trees begin; boronia

My notes

September

~56 mm rain

PLANT? YES: 2ND WINDOW

Main spring feed, low-phosphorus, if needed

Prune correas after flowering

Weed before seeds form; check for nests first

Flowering:

Flannel flower, waratah, boronia, flax-lily, lomandra

My notes

October

~71 mm rain

PLANT? EARLY ONLY

Test irrigation before summer

Feed waratahs after flowering

Flowering:

Waratah, flannel flower, turpentine, kangaroo grass

My notes

November

~79 mm rain

PLANT? AVOID BIG PLANTINGS

Light tip-prune of spring growth

Deep-water first-year plants

Flowering:

NSW Christmas bush (white flowers), Christmas bells

My notes

December

~92 mm rain

PLANT? NO: PLAN FOR AUTUMN

Prune bottlebrushes after flowering

Set up drip watering or a plant-sitter before the holidays

Keep the bird bath topped up in the heat

Flowering:

Christmas bush turns red; Christmas bells, tantoon

My notes

Sources: Bureau of Meteorology (Pennant Hills 066047); Sydney Wildflower Nursery; ANPSA FAQ, fertiliser & waratah notes; APS NSW (Christmas bush, clay soils); APS Victoria pruning guide; Birds in Backyards; Sydney Water; PlantNET flowering periods (wild plants; garden timing varies). Some timing tips are RF Horticulture practice.

The golden rules (all year round)

Planting

Plant mainly in **autumn (March–May)**. Warm soil and winter rain build roots before summer. Early spring is the next best time. Skip big plantings in summer unless you can water reliably: many young natives die in their first summer.

Pruning

Prune **after flowering**. Take off about a third of the new growth, and always leave green leaves. Don't prune while buds are forming, or in very hot, cold or wet weather. Never cut banksias below the lowest green leaves.

Watering: Sydney Water's Water Wise rules

- Hand-held hose (with trigger nozzle), sprinkler or watering system: **before 10am or after 4pm** only.
- Drip and smart irrigation systems may run at any time.
- New gardens may be watered at any time for **28 days after planting**, following the installer's instructions.
- No run-off onto paths or roads. Rainwater from a tank (not topped up from mains) is exempt.
- First year: water **deeply and less often**, especially through the first summer. How often depends on your soil and site.

Weeds and wildlife

Remove weeds bit by bit and replant straight away, especially where birds hide in them. Check for nests before pruning in spring. Every NSW landholder has a legal duty to manage weeds, called the "general biosecurity duty" (see my *Weeds to Worry About* booklet).

Mulch

No mulching by the calendar. Whether a bed needs mulch, what kind and how deep is worked out on a visit. That way I don't pile on too much, rob new plants of nitrogen, or leave the soil soggy. Where I do mulch: **coarse only** (no fine mulch, and no fine layer underneath), typically **50–75 mm**, kept clear of stems and trunks.

Trees and fire season

- Pruning or removing larger trees usually needs council approval (Ku-ring-gai: 5 m tall, or a 150 mm trunk at ground level). See my tree sheet.
- Bush fire danger period: usually **1 October–31 March** (the dates can change). No burning without a permit. I never burn garden waste.
- Thinking of 10/50 clearing? Check the NSW RFS online tool on the day, and read the rules yourself first.

Feeding

Go easy, and choose **low phosphorus**. Look for about **10:3:6** on the bag (that's N:P:K: nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium). Too much phosphorus can harm banksias, grevilleas, hakeas and waratahs. Slow-release is best. Keep chook (fowl) manure and mushroom compost away. Feed in spring on wet soil and water it in. Plants growing well? Skip it. Never feed just before winter.

Rather hand over the to-do list?

My **monthly and quarterly care visits** follow this calendar for your garden. New plantings get **Establishment Care** for the first three months: watering checks, weeding, replacing any losses and early shaping.

Get in touch for a quote: 0481 106 188

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Climate snapshot: Pennant Hills (BoM station 066047)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Rain (mm)	101.9	118.3	126.2	103.8	77.8	112.1	78.0	65.6	56.0	71.1	79.3	92.2
Mean max (°C)	27.6	27.3	25.5	22.2	19.1	16.3	15.8	17.9	20.9	23.4	25.1	27.0
Mean min (°C)	16.1	16.1	14.8	11.8	8.6	6.3	5.2	6.1	8.1	10.8	13.1	15.0

 **Did you know?** Our wettest months are February–March and June. The driest are August–September, just as spring growth kicks off, so keep an eye on new plants then. (Rain averages 1900–2020; temperatures come from an older 1907–1943 record.)

Flowering months come from PlantNET and APS/ANPSA records for wild plants; in gardens they shift a few weeks with aspect and season. Temperature/rain figures are long-term averages and a rough guide only.

Sources: Sydney Water, Water Wise Guidelines; ANPSA FAQ & "Using fertilisers in the native garden"; APS NSW clay soils guide; APS Victoria pruning guide; Birds in Backyards; NSW RFS (bush fire danger period, 10/50); Ku-ring-gai Council tree rules; NSW general biosecurity duty.