

Planning and Infrastructure

December 2015

ITEM DESCRIPTION: Arid recommended plants

Assessment of your school's existing vegetation and the formulation of a plan for additional planting that provides both shade and screenings will ultimately provide a valuable asset for your school.

The tropical wet/dry climate of the Top End and the hot/dry climate of Central Australia are very different; however, the need for shade to protect people from the sun in both regions is the same.

A list of plant species recommended for planting in the grounds of arid area schools follows. The species have been selected as they have a proven growth performance record, are suited to local conditions and are not known to be poisonous or to cause allergic reactions.

Your local plant suppliers may have other suitable species that are not on this list, however, you should check that those plants are known to grow well in your area, are not poisonous, do not cause allergic reactions, have sharp spines, drop large limbs or have vigorous root systems. Additional local plant information is available from Greening Australia and the Herbarium in Darwin and Alice Springs.

FUNDING SOURCE

Grounds maintenance funds or fundraising may be used to purchase additional plants for school grounds.

RECOMMENDED PLANT SPECIES FOR ARID AREA SCHOOLS

TREES

Species (botanical name)	Species (common name)	To 1 metre/ climber	To 2 metres	To 3 metres	Small tree/ < 5 metres	Medium tree 5-10 metres	Large tree 10-20 metres	Very large tree > 20 metres (or has a very vigorous root system)	Comments
Acacia aneura*	Mulga					x			Shrubby tree with grey-green foliage to 8m high with a 6m spread. A common plant of Central Australian shrub lands it is hardy and drought resistant. Grows well in sandy or rocky soils.
Acacia cyperophylla*	Red Mulga				x	x			4-8m high with a 3-6m spread. Has bright orange to red curly bark. Suitable for rocky slopes.
Acacia pendula	Weeping Myall					x			An upright tree from western New South Wales with striking grey weeping foliage and yellow flowers. Will grow in most soils and can reach 10m high with a spread of 4m. A good tree for car parks.
Acacia salicina*	Cooba					x			A fast growing hardy tree to 10m with a spread of 3-5m. Cooba has weeping branches, profuse yellow flowers after rain and usually dense foliage. Good shade tree for car parks.
Brachychiton gregorii*	Desert Kurrajong				x	x			Has bright green dense crown and pale yellow flowers. Will reach 4-8m and has a spread of 2-4m. Straight trunk with the foliage well off the ground. Will grow in most soils except very rocky ones. An excellent shade tree.
Callistemon "Harkness"					x				Weeping hybrid bottlebrush 4-5m tall by 4-5m spread. Bright red brush flowers. Grows in full sun and is tolerant of wet or dry conditions.

Species (botanical name)	Species (common name)	To 1 metre/ climber	To 2 metres	To 3 metres	Small tree/ < 5 metres	Medium tree 5-10 metres	Large tree 10-20 metres	Very large tree > 20 metres (or has a very vigorous root system)	Comments
Callistemon "Kings Park Special"					x				Very hardy, fast growing, bushy small tree 3-5m tall by 3-4m spread. Deep red flowers. Responds well to pruning.
Callistemon vininalis	Weeping Bottlebrush					x			A hardy bottlebrush with a semi-pendulous habit 6-8m.
Ceratonia siliqa	Carob Tree					x			A dense spreading tree that will grow to heights of 7-9m with a canopy spread of 8m. This tree is slow growing but is hardy and produces deep shade. Prefers sandy and loamy soils.
Eucalyptus gillenii*	Mallee Red Gum				x				A hardy, bushy, quick growing mallee style eucalypt with smooth white or grey bark and grey-green leaves. Will grow in most soils especially rocky.
Eucalyptus kruseana					x				Decorative small shade tree with rounded leaves 3-5m with yellow flowers.
Eucalyptus mannensis*	Mann Range Wattle				x				Small eucalypt 3-4m high with shiny green foliage and pale grey bark.
Eucalyptus pachyphylla*	Red Bud Mallee				x				A small mallee eucalypt with bark that peels in ribbons at base, thick leathery leaves and attractive flowers. Will grow to heights of 1.5-4m and will grow in most soils.
Eucalyptus spathulata	Swamp mallee					x	x		A medium, evergreen tree 8-15m with fine deep green foliage, white flowers and a smooth, red/brown trunk. A fast growing tree that thrives in wet or dry situations.
Eucalyptus torquata	Coral Gum				x				A small, upright, evergreen tree with white-deep pink flowers. Will reach a height of 4-6m. A fast growing drought resistant shade tree.
Eucalyptus torwood					x				An evergreen hybrid variety of eucalypt with large showy bright yellow to scarlet flowers in summer. Will reach 4-6m and is a good shade tree suitable for car parks.

Species (botanical name)	Species (common name)	To 1 metre/ climber	To 2 metres	To 3 metres	Small tree/ < 5 metres	Medium tree 5-10 metres	Large tree 10-20 metres	Very large tree > 20 metres (or has a very vigorous root system)	Comments
Ficus Platypoda*	Native Fig				x				Local fig with lush foliage that grows to a height of 2-4m and has a spread of 3-6m. Suitable for rocky slopes. Plant at least 20m away from buildings and paved areas.

SHRUBS

Acacia jennerae*	Coonavittra Wattle				x				Fast growing shrub or small tree 2-5m tall with a spread of 2-7m. This wattle has prolific yellow flowers and red bark when young. Will provide shade and will grow in sandy or rocky soils.
Acacia kempeana*	Witchetty Bush				x				Rounded spreading shrub that is hardy, reliable and quick growing. Will grow to a height of 3-5m and has a spread of 2-3m. The roots of this plant are home to the witchetty grub. Provides good shade.
Acacia maconochieana*	Salt Wattle				x				Salt tolerant wattle with attractive silver foliage. Will grow to 3-5m and has a spread of 2-4m.
Callistemon pauciflorus*	Desert Bottlebrush		x						A local shrub to 2m with pale red flowers and a lengthy flowering time.
Dietes bicolour	Fortnightly Lily	x							A perennial plant that grows to 1m high and 1m wide. The leaves are bronze-green, sword shaped and clump forming. Flowers are a yellowish cream colour. A native of South Africa that prefers light to medium, well-drained soils in an open sunny position. This plant is drought and frost resistant. Best as a mass planting.
Dietes grandiflora	Wild Iris	x							A perennial plant that grows to 1m by 1m. The leaves are bronze-green, sword shaped and clump forming. The flowers are white with yellow and orange spots. Prefers light, well-drained soils in an open sunny position. This plant is drought and frost resistant. Best as a mass planting.

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Dietes iridoides		x							Clumping plant with stiff narrow leaves and white iris type flowers on branched stems. Best as a mass planting.
Melaleuca brachtiata*	Black Tea Tree				x				Quick growing, large spreading shrub to 4m tall. Fluffy creamy flowers and grey bark.
Melaleuca incana nana	Velvet Cushion	x							Low compact shrub to 1m with silver/green foliage.

GROUNDCOVERS

Convolvulus cneorum	Silver Bush	x							An evergreen rounded groundcover with narrow silky silver-green leaves 0.4m by 0.4m. A hardy groundcover that thrives in full sun. Large white flowers emerge from pink buds in spring to summer. Prefers moist, well-drained soils and is drought and frost hardy.
Enchylaena tomentosa*	Ruby Saltbush	x							Hardy, drought resistant groundcover 0.3-1m by 0.5-1.5m. Readily self sows and can be pruned hard if it becomes straggly.
Erigeron karvinskianus	Sea Side Daisy	x							Spreading groundcover to 0.3m high with small white daisy flowers. Full sun to part shade.
Gaura lindheimeri		x							Bushy, sun hardy perennial with white butterfly flowers.
Harnieria kempeana		x							Local ground cover with deep pink flowers. Prefers well-drained soils and will grow in rocky areas.
Rhagodia spinescens var. deltophylla	Creeping Saltbush	x							Dense spreading ground cover with silver-grey foliage. Suitable for all soils.
Themeda triandra*	Kangaroo Grass	x							Attractive clumping perennial grass 0.45 -0.7m tall. Ideal to mass plant.

*Denotes a Central Australian native.

Note that plant growth is dependent on growing conditions and the heights listed here are only a guide.

Other suitable species are available from local specialist suppliers. Refer to other Fact Sheet for [Plants not to be used in arid area schools](#).