



return of the native

CREATING A BUSH CUTTING GARDEN PUTS A UNIQUE SCULPTURAL RESOURCE RIGHT IN YOUR BACKYARD.

WORDS AND STYLING PIA JANE BIJKERK PHOTOGRAPHY CRAIG WALL

WHILE LIVING IN EUROPE I craved nature. I spent hours wandering the beautifully manicured Parisian parks during my months there, and in Amsterdam I rode my bicycle off the paved paths of the man-made forests to relish the sound of the crunching leaves under the wheels, inhaling the scent of countryside plants and gazing up at the tall elm trees. On the way home, I'd stop at the markets to buy bunches of delightful blossoms like peonies, dahlias and sweet peas to fill vintage jars and misshaped clay vessels dotted around my abode.

I enjoyed discovering the flora of Europe, but I missed the incredibly diverse and wild natural beauty of Australia. It wasn't until I moved overseas that I developed a deeper appreciation of the Australian bush. Now that I'm back, I'm preoccupied with learning more about the plants and flowers of my surroundings, and I'm particularly drawn to our natives. After much exploration of my local nature reserves, this season I'm focussing on my own garden.

Taking inspiration from the English style of cutting garden that dates back to the 16th century, I'd like to create a small one of my own with an Australian slant. It will have bush plants like wattle, paper daisies, and kangaroo paw nestled among large foliage plants that will look great displayed in my home as well as in the garden. Having a garden bed or two planted in this way means I will be able to cut striking native blooms all year long to adorn my kitchen table and mantelpiece as well as to create little bouquets for gifts.

I've long been enamoured with the work of the Sydney floral designer Tracey Deep, who makes the most spectacular sculptural displays using native

plants. Her creations, which often integrate seemingly ordinary items like twisted branches, pods, bark and moss, are breathtaking.

I recently spent a Saturday morning at one of Tracey's workshops, learning some of her techniques. I realised that to give visual impact she bundles foliage together rather than separating each stem. And what I found most interesting is that she isn't limited by the shape of a vessel — instead of first choosing a container, she creates the sculptural bouquet and, after trimming the ends of the thick stems and branches, then decides which receptacle is most appropriate. Tracey suggests using wide-necked vessels rather than tall slim vases and she loves to use rustic steel buckets and stone pots.

If you're inspired to create your own sculptures incorporating native plants from your backyard, we would love to see what you come up with via Instagram. Just tag @countrystylemag in your post. There's a fabulous collection of floral creations on Instagram too — check out #showmeyourflora. * Tracey Deep Floral Sculptures is at 59 Great Buckingham Street, Redfern, NSW. (02) 9318 1177.

INSPIRATIONAL LINKS

- 1 www.elementsofalchemy.blogspot.com.au
- 2 www.river-nest.blogspot.com.au
- 3 www.lotteandbloom.blogspot.com
- 4 www.iambecauseweare.com.au
- 5 www.saipua.blogspot.com.au

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PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHY OLGA BENNETT TURKISH STONE POTS AND SECATEURS FROM GARDEN LIFE, ALL OTHER PROPS, STYLING DOWN, FOR STOCKIST DETAILS, SEE PAGE 153