

November 2021

# LET'S SCALE UP! URBAN GREENING IN THE PRIVATE REALM: ENGAGING AND MOTIVATING COMMUNITY

Earthwatch Australia, a delivery partner for Living Melbourne: our metropolitan urban forest strategy

## Acknowledgment of Country

We respectfully acknowledge Aboriginal people as Australia's First Peoples and the local Traditional Owners as the original custodians of the land and water on which we rely and operate, and we pay our respects to Elders, past, present and future.

The metropolitan Melbourne urban greening community engagement programs identified in this report are delivered on the lands of Wurundjeri, Wadawurrung and Bunurong peoples, and we pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

We acknowledge the continued cultural, social and spiritual connections that Aboriginal people have with the land and waters and recognise and value that Traditional Custodians have cared for and protected these lands and waters for thousands of generations. We recognise and value the essential and continuing contribution of Aboriginal people to the region.





**Community connection to the urban forest is essential for its protection, enhancement and growth. We need to understand what has been successful in mobilising this connection and then scale it.**

# Snapshot

Urban greening community engagement, education and behaviour change programs are **powerful tools to connect people with nature**, to their green space and to each other.

Collectively, we can achieve the vision of a greener Melbourne. Across metropolitan Melbourne, councils and other partners are delivering over 70 highly successful urban greening engagement, education and behaviour change programs. This report shines a spotlight on these programs to support councils and other practitioners in making informed decisions about delivering, adopting and expanding their urban greening programs.

Four exceptional programs well suited to scale across Melbourne are presented.

**My Smart Garden** – A sustainable gardening program inspiring and supporting residents to turn their outdoor spaces – backyards, front yards, balconies, courtyards or pots – into productive and thriving gardens.

**Gardens for Wildlife** - A wildlife gardening program made up of a network of local community-council partnerships working to involve and empower residents and community to improve habitat on private land and spaces.

**Council coordinated wildlife gardening programs** – These programs support residents transforming their private space into a habitat garden. The program model implemented by City of Boroondara in their Backyard Biodiversity Program, Hobson's Bay City Council's Habitat Gardens Program and Wyndham City Council's Habitat Heroes Program is highlighted.

**Schools for Nature** - A targeted school engagement and education program supporting schools and students to connect with nature, create wildlife habitat gardens at school and to continue their urban greening journey into the home garden.

## WHAT IS URBAN GREENING?

The urban forest is made up of native and exotic trees, shrubs, grasses and other vegetation across the public and private realm. Urban greening are those activities expanding the urban forest, with community able to influence this in their private spaces, backyards, courtyards, balconies and pots, and public spaces such as nature strips and school grounds.



# Contents



1

## Ecosystem Map

Snap shot of urban greening community engagement, education and behaviour change programs across Melbourne



2

## Secrets to Program Success

What makes urban greening community engagement and behaviour change programs great and suited to scale?



3

## Designing an effective engagement journey

Five key elements to take people on the journey from engagement through to action in urban greening



4

## Let's Scale Up!

A shortlist of programs well suited to scale across metropolitan Melbourne



5

## The whole package of programs

The longlist of Melbourne's urban greening community engagement, education and behaviour change programs

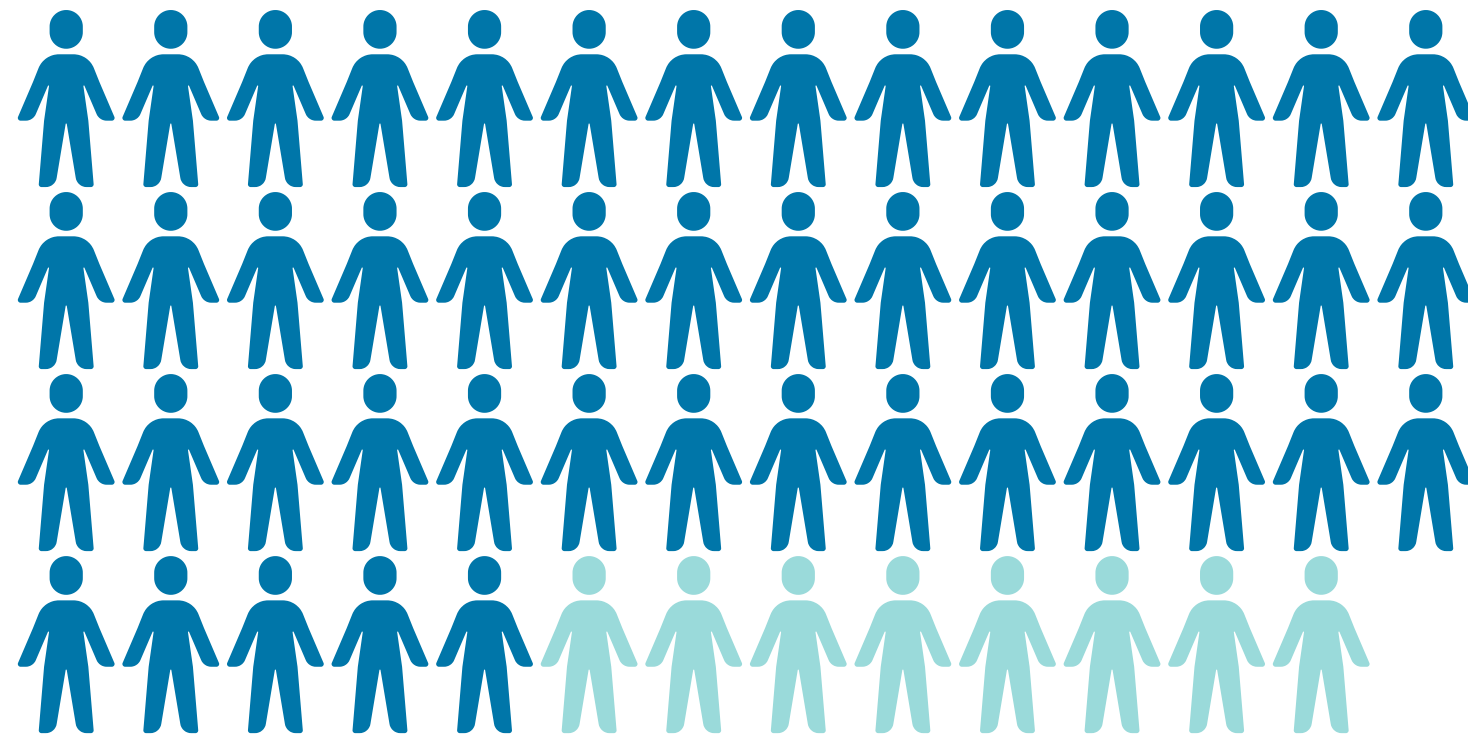


# WHAT YOU TOLD US:

Results from a survey of over 55 council staff representing a majority of Councils across metropolitan Melbourne

## 92%

would benefit from having a recommended program model for taking to scale



## 83%

identified a need for increased support to drive community engagement and behaviour change in urban greening



— 1 —

# ECOSYSTEM MAP OF EXISTING PROGRAMS



# Mapping the programs

Councils around metropolitan Melbourne are delivering an array of highly successful community engagement and education programs related to urban greening. This report presents over 70 programs which captures a snap-shot in time. Successful projects had common themes. Councils have identified which project styles and motivators were most effective in delivering outcomes in Section 4 of this report.

## What we did

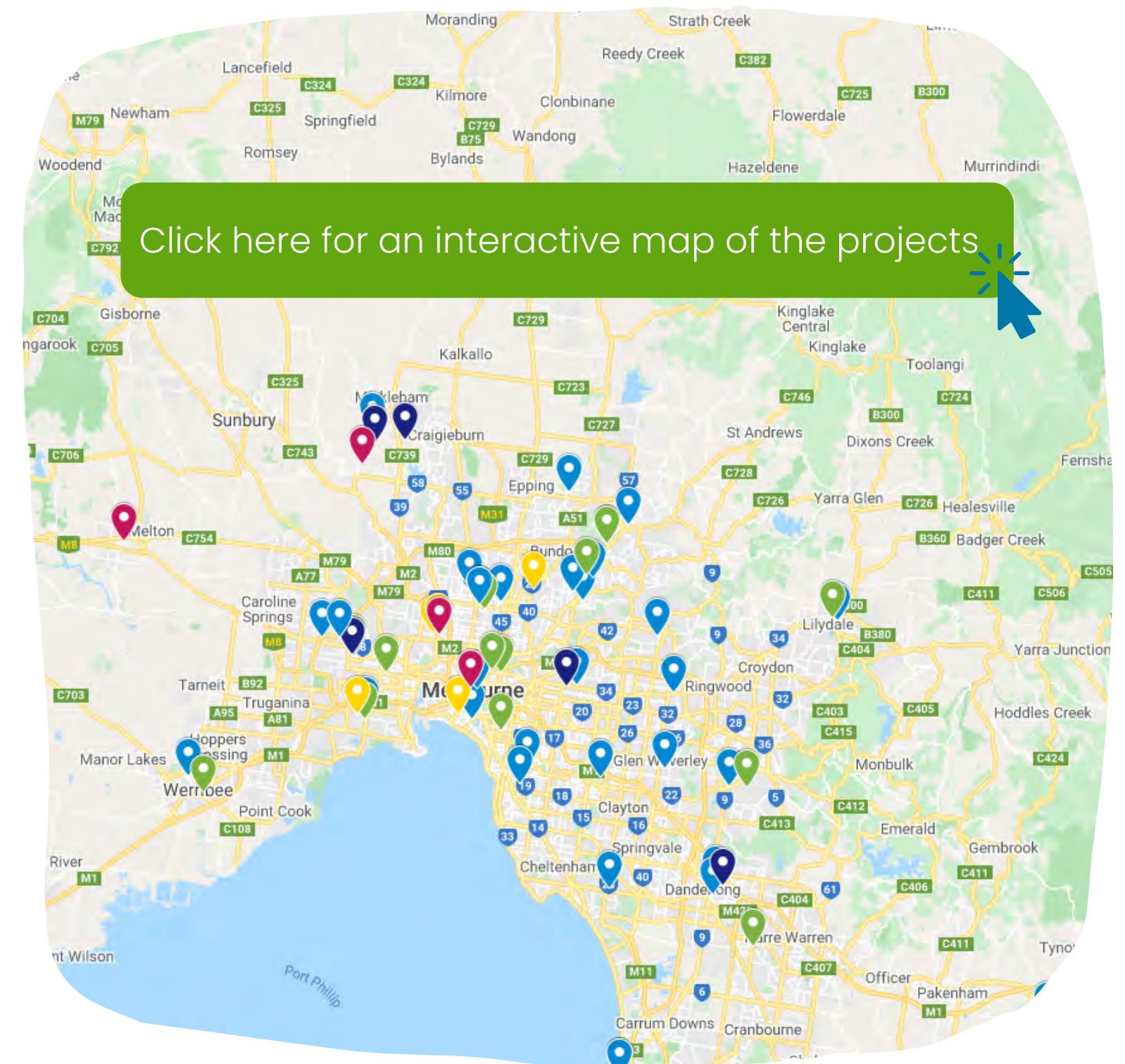
**Public facing information:** we collated publicly available information from councils and other partner websites and social media. This provided a true reflection of information that is available to interested members of the community.

**Collaboration:** a [Working Group of Council representatives](#) provided an avenue to guide the program.

**Expand the reach and test the results:** surveyed over 55 council staff representing a majority of councils from across metropolitan Melbourne via two workshops and select in-depth interviews. This informed our program success factors and tested our ecosystem map of existing programs.

### What we didn't include:

Programs that did not have full support of the council, a dedicated community engagement and education journey, such as projects primarily focused on capital works, or centred on single events or solely a grant or free tree give-away. While we recognise these types of projects are critical components of the broader urban greening activities, they are not the focus of this report.





# Program themes

Community engagement and education programs related to urban greening come in many forms. Across Melbourne, councils have designed programs capitalising on different motivators, targeting different segments of the community and promoting urban greening activities on different land spaces.

## Home Harvest

Enticing people with the motivator of gardens being a productive space and a provider of food and other services

## Wildlife Gardening

Motivating people to plant and garden to create habitat to help species thrive

## Children's Spaces

Connecting with kids through environmental education and the development of green spaces at schools

## Embrace the Nature Strip

Expanding private care and greening to public nature strips

## Neighbourhood Gardening

Community gardening networks

## Nature Stewards

Building local champions and stewards to drive future projects and change

Want to know more?

Refer to our appendix here.



— 2 —

# SECRETS TO PROGRAM SUCCESS





We spoke to councils from across metropolitan Melbourne to hear of their experiences in delivering place-based urban greening community engagement education and behaviour change programs, and asked them what makes a program great.

**The most commonly identified elements of success relate to effective design of a community engagement and education journey, and aspects to support smooth program management and delivery.**

"Co-design with the community to ensure it meets what they want"

"Creating connection & building community"

"Good promotion, communication and marketing. A known program brand with reputation and demonstrated success"

"Matched funding for habitat grants and urban forest funds have been successful as the recipient is committed financially"

"Good project management, project plans, clear outcomes, budgets and a comms plan"

"Non-prescriptive, people can do as much or as little as they are able with no limitation to being involved"

"Good evaluation approach so can report & celebrate program successes"

"Available resources, tools, templates and education material, that are accessible with clear simple language"

"Gardening is a hook to get people interested in broader sustainability issues"

"Ability to put new knowledge into action - e.g. access to free plants"

"Enabling local community champions"

"Network groups for collaboration and support"

"Support from Council e.g. dedicated Council officer, to talk to about the program"

## The following success factors were used to evaluate programs well-suited to bring to scale

**Effectiveness:** demonstrated success in achieving program goals

**Reach:** opportunity to reach and influence the community

**Structured engagement and education journey:** to support community from initial motivation, through a learning and education journey to build skills and knowledge, to connect with others, and then effective communication and celebrating of their success

**Ability to put knowledge into action:** provide access to enabling factors that allow the community to implement their new knowledge and skills

**Adaptability/transferability:** simplicity to run, governance, available resources, flexibility and cost

Learn more of the attitudes, behaviours and context of different population segments and what motivates them to green their private space through the Greener Spaces Better Places Report (2021).

**Let's Grow: Motivating community support for private land urban greening.**



— 3 —

# DESIGNING AN EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT JOURNEY

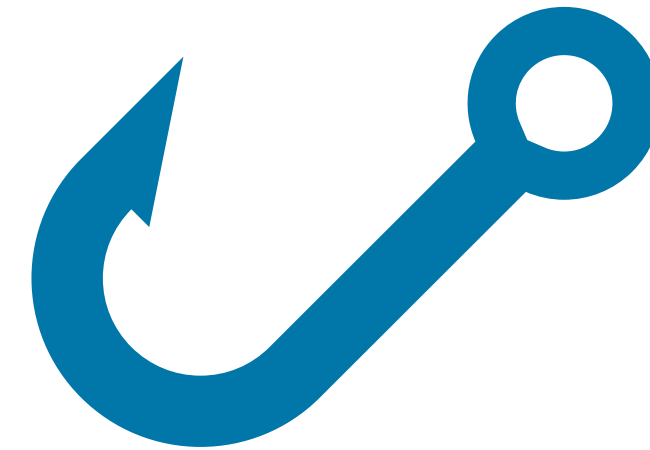


# Designing an Engagement and Education Journey

1

## The Hook

Get people interested in the program and motivated for action. Councils successfully use diverse motivators, from attracting charismatic species like butterflies and creating urban wildlife habitat, to connecting people to their backyard through a desire for home grown produce.



2

## The Upskill

Design the education journey to build people's knowledge and skills. This includes the supply of education and 'how-to' resources, the delivery of community workshops and skilled advice and opportunities to learn from each other through garden visits.

# Designing an Engagement and Education Journey



3

## The Tools

Provide the tools and make it easy for people to put new knowledge and skills into action. These enablers could include access to free plants, or grants/subsidies to access materials such as compost bins or planting resources.

4

## Create a Community

Support the connection of like-minded people to share the journey and create a community. Councils use diverse activities such as community workshops, site and garden visits, food swaps and virtual forums such as social media groups where success can be celebrated.



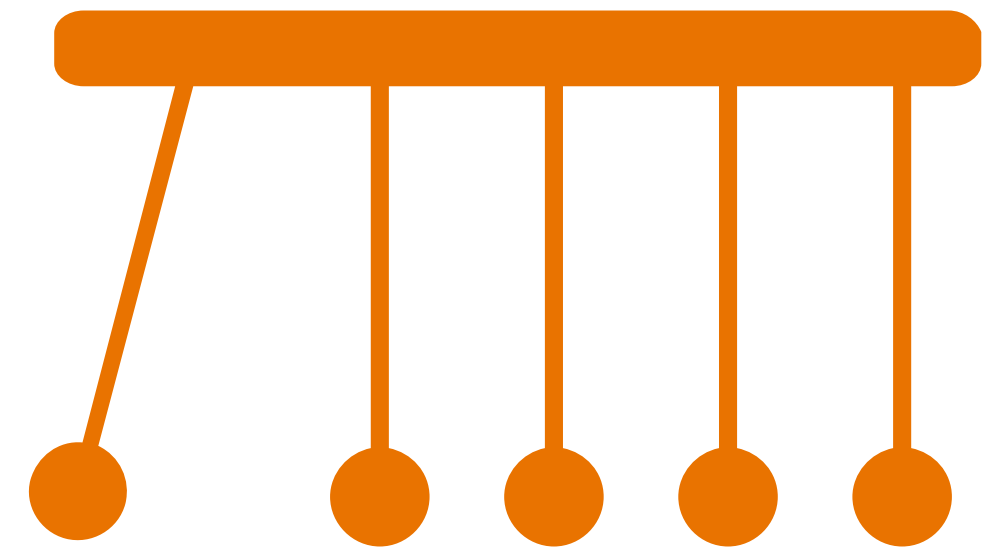


# Designing an Engagement and Education Journey

5

## Maintain the momentum

Keep the conversation going, and allow the community to grow with the program. Councils use a range of forums including established communication channels, re-occurring events and linking people to community organisations such as through a nursery visit.



— 4 —

**LET'S SCALE UP!**





In this section, we present a shortlist of community urban greening programs that are highly successful at engaging, educating and empowering people to get their hands dirty and undertake urban greening activities. These programs align with the success factors and provide excellent opportunities for expansion across metropolitan Melbourne.

## My Smart Garden

A sustainable gardening program inspiring and supporting residents to turn their outdoor spaces – backyards, front yards, balconies, courtyards or pots – into productive and thriving gardens. With adaptation to climate change and mitigation as key drivers, the program focuses on five themes for how residents can use their gardens to grow food, shelter their home from wind and sun, create homes for wildlife, use water wisely and recycle waste.

Gardening provides an enticing hook for residents to join the program and grow their skills and experience through a semi-structured curriculum of engagement and education activities. With skill-based workshops, access to gardening how-to guides and advice from experts and participants, residents are invited to begin and continue their gardening journey as part of a community of sustainable urban gardeners.

Established as a partnership between Sustainability Victoria, Hobsons Bay City Council and Moonee Valley Council in 2011, My Smart Garden has grown, and is now delivered and collectively managed by eight Councils across metropolitan Melbourne. It is a freely available program to residents of these Councils.

VISIT THE  
WEBSITE HERE



Brimbank City Council, Hobsons Bay City Council, Maribyrnong City Council, Moonee Valley City Council, Moreland City Council, City of Stonnington, Wyndham City Council, Yarra City Council





**VISIT THE  
WEBSITE HERE**



## Governance and resources required to deliver

My Smart Garden has an established collective governance structure. Each member council's program coordinator becomes part of the My Smart Garden program administration group. This administration group meets regularly to allow for overall program oversight, knowledge and resource sharing and strategic planning. The shared governance structure provides a network of support to individual council staff and the program can access the collective knowledge and experience of all participating councils.

While the program provides coordination and management of shared resources, it is also deliberately flexible to allow councils to adapt the program delivery to their own objectives and schedule, through tailored events. As councils become part of the network, they have access to the shared resources, and commit to contributing, supporting and growing the program.

### **What resources do Councils need to commit to deliver the program?**

Staff resources, of one to two days per week, to support the shared program administration and program delivery in their own council.

Budget to deliver events and resources in their council area.



## Suitable for scaling up?

My Smart Garden is a program well suited for taking to scale. It has demonstrated program effectiveness, and success at being scaled up. In addition, the recognised brand, with a dedicated website and existing resources makes it highly transferable and well placed for further expansion.

It must be noted however, that the program administration group identify that if the program is taken to scale, this will need to be done sensitively to ensure the program effectively manages growth while retaining the core program features. This would need to be driven by the existing Councils, and with investigation of new governance structures and increased resources to support the program with IT, marketing and communications.

**Read the My Smart Garden program evaluation**



## Gardens for Wildlife Victoria

Gardens for Wildlife Victoria is a wildlife gardening program made up of a network of local community-council partnerships working to involve and empower residents and community to improve habitat on private land and spaces. The program has clearly defined goals, with a focus on both environmental and social outcomes. The program aims to build community knowledge and skills around the importance of wildlife gardening and creating habitat for local fauna. It also aims to empower participants to translate this knowledge into on-ground action. Gardens for Wildlife Victoria is also strongly focused on nurturing people's connection to nature and each other, and recognising that this has many and diverse benefits, including creating a sense of community, wellbeing and social benefits.

The Gardens for Wildlife Victoria program provides avenues for participation for residents with diverse garden spaces, including backyards, courtyards and balconies. It aims to connect and position people's green spaces within the broader landscape and highlight how residents taking care and improving their own habitat can contribute to Melbourne's overall biodiversity outcomes.

Banyule Council, Cardinia Shire Council, Darebin Council, Frankston City Council, Greater Dandenong Council, Hume City Council, Kingston City Council, Knox City Council, City of Melbourne, City of Monash, Moreland City Council, Mornington Peninsula Shire, Nillumbik Shire Council, Whitehorse City Council, Yarra Ranges Council

[VISIT THE WEBSITE HERE](#)



Image credit: Gardens for Wildlife Victoria





**VISIT THE  
WEBSITE HERE**

## Gardens for Wildlife Victoria

Gardens for Wildlife Victoria currently has operating affiliate programs and programs in development across 15 local council areas of Melbourne.

It is a freely available program to residents of these Councils.

A participant's engagement and education journey is supported by access to educational resources across both the central Gardens for Wildlife Victoria website and local council programs. These include how-to wildlife garden guides, species specific resources and general gardening tips and tricks.

While the design of the program is tailored to each region, core activities include delivery of workshops and educational training sessions, access to resources and how to guides and visits to new participant gardens by trained volunteer guides who provide site specific information and support.

Individual affiliate programs have avenues for residents to connect directly with each other and create community connections through events, volunteering opportunities, social media networking and sharing of success stories.



## Governance and resources required to deliver

A core principle of Gardens for Wildlife Victoria is community-council collaboration. To establish a program within a council area, a council agrees to the program principles including committing to a community-council governance structure and co-design process. This allows a focus on creating and building skills, knowledge sharing and fostering confidence and stewardship for the program with all members. These locally designed and delivered programs become affiliates to the state-wide Gardens for Wildlife Victoria.

The collaborative program design and program establishment journey takes time. This is needed to build trust and capacity in program co-design principles and effective program delivery, to tailor the program to the local areas' conditions and to provide training for program partners.

### **What resources do Councils need to deliver this program?**

Staff resources, this varies between councils but may be up to one day per week, to support program establishment and genesis of the shared governance model. The lead-in time may take six to twelve months of supporting community involvement and active working group establishment, through to the development of resources and training of volunteers.

Resources to support participation are also needed, such as gardening guides, videos and workshop design. Many councils already have material that could be incorporated into the program.



## Suitable for scaling up?

Gardens for Wildlife Victoria is an established program that has already demonstrated success at being taken to scale, with programs currently in various stages of affiliate partnership development across 41 of the 79 council areas in Victoria, including 15 councils across metropolitan Melbourne.

It is a program well placed for further expansion, for those councils seeking a joint community partnership governance and delivery model. The known brand, and reputation within the council and community space provides a good springboard for further growth.





## Council delivered wildlife gardening programs

Councils across metropolitan Melbourne deliver a raft of highly successful wildlife gardening programs. In this section, we highlight the engagement and delivery model used by the City of Boroondara in their [Backyard Biodiversity Program](#), Hobson's Bay City Council's [Habitat Gardens Program](#) and Wyndham City Council's [Habitat Heroes Program](#). These programs have similarities in their design which make them highly effective urban greening engagement and education programs and well suited for expansion.

These three programs encourage and support residents to learn about using local indigenous plants and to translate this knowledge into action by transforming their private space into a habitat garden. They aim to strengthen landscape habitat connectivity, with residents' gardens being invaluable stepping stones across Melbourne's urban environment.

## Council delivered wildlife gardening programs

The City of Boroondara, Hobson's Bay City Council and Wyndham City Council programs offer 20-40 households the opportunity to be part of a shared habitat gardening learning journey. Councils offer one or two rounds per year. Common features of these programs include:

- A structured learning journey, across 3-6 months, with the cohort of residents progressing through the program together, supporting the creation of a community and network of learning.
- A curated series of skill building workshops covering key topics to get them started, such as soil health, habitat gardening fundamentals and garden design.
- An onsite consult with a professional landscape designer, who visits their property to formalise their bespoke garden design and native plant species selection.
- Events such as a tour of an indigenous plant nursery, guided visits to local residents' gardens (such as prior participants) and/or a planting event with a local community group. These events support connection to the local community to encourage ongoing engagement after the formal end of the program.
- Free plants, between 20-40 per resident, to put their new knowledge and garden plan into action.
- Sign up to the council newsletter and/or past participant social media groups to continue the sharing of knowledge and sharing of photos of successful gardening.





## Council delivered wildlife gardening programs

These councils report excellent participant feedback. Underpinning the effectiveness is the curated building of skill and knowledge, the structured engagement model of progressing through the program with a cohort of like-minded people and the defined time frames of the workshops, landscape designer consults and nursery visit which supports accountability and completion of the program.

The availability of free plants, expert advice and supporting resources also assists in removing barriers for implementing and translating residents' new skills into tangible gardening outcomes.

## Governance and resources required to deliver

These programs have a defined council coordination and delivery model, with overall program governance provided by the council staff.

### What resources do Councils need to deliver this program?

For a program delivering one round per year for approximately 30 households, councils estimate the following resources required:

- Staff resources to provide program coordination, with this expected to average 1 day per week for the year, although the peak demand will fall over a 4-6 month period covering participant recruitment, delivering the program and immediate follow up.
- Budget for capital expenses such as to provide free plants (20-40) for each participant and any printed resources such as garden guides or a resident welcome pack.
- Budget to cover a garden consult with a landscape designer (1-2 hrs each garden).
- Budget for the delivery of events which could include; garden visits to see wildlife gardening in action, skill building workshops, a nursery tour and a local community planting day.





### Suitable for scaling up?

These programs are well suited for expansion and delivery in other council areas. They have a simple governance and program management structure that is well matched to council service delivery operations, with program coordination able to be provided by council staff. Many councils already have a number of the key elements of this program which could be incorporated, such as free plant give-aways, skill building workshops and education resources.

## Schools for Nature Program

Hume City Council's targeted school engagement and education program supported schools and students to connect with nature, create wildlife habitat gardens at school and to continue their urban greening journey into the home garden. This program was delivered in 2020 through support from a Department of Environment Land Water and Planning grant.

The Schools for Nature Program used charismatic animals to connect with students and motivate them to nurture nature and get involved in active gardening and urban greening. Schools could focus garden design around creating habitat to attract and support: butterflies, bees and bugs through creating a pollinator garden, bee hotels and bug bungalows; lizards and other reptiles through creating lizard lounges; frogs through incorporating a frog bog, and attracting a bounty of small birds through planting dense shrubs to provide shelter.

Schools that signed up for the program had flexibility to tailor the program to their needs and capacity, being able to select different program elements. These provided a structured engagement and education journey for schools to progress throughout the program. Biodiversity audits were completed by council staff at schools to support them and understand their baseline biodiversity on site. These, combined with the desired species theme, informed garden design and plant species selection.







## Schools for Nature Program

Schools and students received planting guides and other 'how-to' resources to assist with garden design and site preparation. Incursions and workshops/webinars were delivered to build knowledge and skills on gardening, species and habitat creation. Schools completed the planting, supporting their students to create their gardens.

The program successfully expanded the gardening journey into the private garden, by providing three free seedlings to students to take home and plant in their home garden. This consolidated the lessons from the program by allowing them to share and implement their new knowledge and skills with their family in their home garden. The children were encouraged to submit photos of their home garden to share with the school community.

Schools were able to connect with each other and celebrate their success through a Nature Summit (planned for in-person however pivoted to virtual as a result of COVID safe requirements). This event created inter-school and student connection and a sense of community of young habitat gardeners.

To continue their learning and engagement with their new gardens, students were introduced to nature-based monitoring via a diversity of citizen science programs including the [Great Aussie Bird Count](#), [Melbourne Frog Census](#), [Wild Pollinator Count](#) and the [Victorian Biodiversity Atlas](#). These supported them to monitor their gardens, learn of local wildlife needs and evaluate their success at attracting desired species.



## Governance and resources required to deliver

The Schools for Nature program had a defined council delivery model, with overall program governance provided by the Hume Council's Urban Biodiversity Officer. Delivery of the program in schools was undertaken in partnership with each school, with the internal school delivery being coordinated via dedicated school representatives.

### What resources do Councils need to deliver this program?

This program had exceptional reach, being delivered across eight schools and engaged with over 1,400 students in one year. To deliver a program of this scale required:

- Staff resources, of one to two days per week, averaged over the year, to provide program coordination, school outreach and recruitment, engagement and school incursions.
- Budget for capital expenses to produce and print gardening field guides for distribution to students; free plants for school planting and for students to take home.
- Budget for education and event delivery such as school incursions and workshops/webinars (these could be delivered in-house by Council staff, or outsourced for delivery by organisations such as [CERES](#), [STEM Catalyst](#) or other environmental education providers), and a celebratory Nature Summit for schools to share and report on their great work.





### Suitable for scaling up?

While this was a unique one-year program, the structured engagement journey, developed education and supporting resources and the clear project plan make it well suited, adaptable and a fantastic model for broader application.

# — Appendices —



## — Appendix 1 —

# LONG LIST OF MELBOURNE'S URBAN GREENING BEHAVIOUR CHANGE PROGRAMS

Over seventy distinct community engagement and behaviour change urban greening programs are delivered across metropolitan Melbourne.

### Home Harvest

Enticing people with the motivator of gardens being a productive space and a provider of food and other services

### Wildlife Gardening

Motivating people to plant and garden to create habitat to help species thrive

### Children's Spaces

Connecting with kids through environmental education and the development of green spaces at schools

### Embrace the Nature Strip

Expanding private care and greening to public nature strips

### Neighbourhood Gardening

Community gardening networks

### Nature Stewards

Building local champions and stewards to drive future projects and change



Program	Description	Council (click to visit program page)
My Smart Garden	A sustainable gardening program targeted to turn residents' outdoor spaces – backyards, front yards, balconies, courtyards or pots – into productive and functional gardens. Focused around five themes to assist residents to grow food, shelter their home from wind and sun, create homes for wildlife, use water wisely and recycle wastes. My Smart Garden program provides a range of new educational and practical resources for local residents and community. The My Smart Garden program provides skills-based workshops, best-practice gardening resources and builds community connections around sustainable urban gardening. Through the My Smart Garden website, residents will have the resources and advice they need to create local productive and thriving gardens.	<a href="#">Brimbank City Council</a> <a href="#">Hobsons Bay City Council</a> <a href="#">Maribyrnong City Council</a> <a href="#">Moonee Valley City Council</a> <a href="#">Moreland City Council</a> <a href="#">City of Stonnington</a> <a href="#">Wyndham City Council</a> <a href="#">City of Yarra</a>
Gardens for Harvest	The program encourages residents to grow their own food in their backyard. Participants have access to 'how to' resources, education webinars and resources, workshops and a welcome kit and connection to the group via newsletters and social media. The program is run in partnership between Knox City Council and Yarra Ranges Council.	<a href="#">Knox City Council</a> <a href="#">Yarra Ranges Council</a>
Home Harvest Program	This program celebrates home grown produce and local food. There are events, with education aspects and an annual festival and community picnic. Opportunity to join the community through dedicated social media. Seed libraries, with instructions on how to save and share seeds have been established. This program is a partnership between Banyule Councils and Nillumbik Shire Council.	<a href="#">Banyule Council</a> <a href="#">Nillumbik Shire Council</a>
Sustainable Gardening Program	A sustainable gardening umbrella program supporting residents to create productive gardens. Gardening guides, resources and new landowner kits are available. A subsidy program for compost and worm farms and freely distributed packets of vegetable seeds provide an avenue for community to put their new knowledge into action.	<a href="#">Mitchell Shire Council</a>

Program	Description	Council (click to visit program page)
Sustainable Gardening	A broad umbrella program with access to diverse activities, events, news updates on broad sustainability issues. Sustainable gardening, reducing impact, exploring composting, access to gardening resources and advice for how to put new knowledge into practice.	<a href="#">Moonee Valley City Council</a>
Growing Food in Yarra	A program to stimulate the community growing food, either at home or in community gardens. It includes events, workshops and how-to tips and tricks and necessary guidelines to get people started with a community growing space, including laneways and community gardens.	<a href="#">City of Yarra</a>

Program	Description	Council (click to visit program page)
Gardens for Wildlife Victoria	Caring for nature through community partnerships. A community wildlife gardening program co-designed & delivered through public agency – community partnerships. The program supports residents to create a garden habitat and wildlife corridors for native wildlife through education, assistance and plant give aways.	<a href="#">Banyule Council</a> <a href="#">City of Casey</a> <a href="#">Cardinia Shire Council</a> <a href="#">Darebin Council</a> <a href="#">Frankston City Council</a> <a href="#">Greater Dandenong Council</a> <a href="#">Hume City Council</a> <a href="#">Kingston City Council</a> <a href="#">Knox City Council</a> <a href="#">City of Melbourne</a> <a href="#">City of Monash</a> <a href="#">Moreland City Council</a> <a href="#">Mornington Peninsula Shire</a> <a href="#">Nillumbik Shire Council</a> <a href="#">Whitehorse City Council</a> <a href="#">Yarra Ranges Council</a>
Biodiversity Initiative	Local schools and community groups work with council to strengthen the biodiversity of local wildlife corridors by planning outcomes and establishing a planting and maintenance program. The program provides free local indigenous seedlings for schools or community groups to increase biodiversity and the reach and connectivity of wildlife corridors.	<a href="#">Banyule Council</a>



Program	Description	Council (click to visit program page)
Green Shoots Program	An overarching program to support the delivery of various actions under the Urban Biodiversity Strategy. Programs include Skink Link, Bush Kinder spaces, schools, preschools, corporate and residential Gardens for Wildlife programs. These programs enable residents to connect with nature, improve and increase awareness with local biodiversity corridors and appreciate the value of trees. Helpful resources to help attract and support local fauna including bees, skinks, frogs and birds.	<a href="#">City of Monash</a>
Skink Link project	The project was formed by City of Monash, local residents and educational organisations to protect skinks by reestablishing the original habitat along Scotchmans Creek. The Skink Link Project is an opportunity for the community to get involved in monitoring the skink population, planting around their habitat and other improvement activities. The program enables residents to connect with nature and improve and increase awareness of local biodiversity corridors.	<a href="#">City of Monash</a>
Habitat Gardens	This program encourages and supports residents to use local indigenous plant species in private gardens which results in broader ecosystem connectivity with conservation reserves. It is available up to 30 households annually. Residents learn more about local flora and fauna and how they can create a backyard stepping stone for native wildlife to move between conservation sites. It includes a tailored workshop and a nursery tour with up to 30 free plants.	<a href="#">Hobsons Bay City Council</a>
Habitat Heroes	This program aims to help Wyndham City Council residents learn about using locally native plants in their gardens and to create a small garden for wildlife. Residents apply to be part of the program which includes a structured series of workshops, a visit from a landscape designer to plan the garden and collect species, an indigenous nursery site visit and free plants to put their new knowledge & plan into action. It has included tours of past participants gardens.	<a href="#">Wyndham City Council</a>

Program	Description	Council (click to visit program page)
Neighbourhood Sustainable Gardening Program	This program is available to residents, schools, community groups and businesses. Creating a gardening community with webinars, regular gardening tips, workshops and tours.	<a href="#">Glen Eira City Council</a>
Backyard Biodiversity	Encourages residents to enhance a section of their garden with indigenous plants and other wildlife-friendly features to create valuable stepping stones for native wildlife. Includes resources and events. Residents apply to be part of the program which includes a structured series of workshops, a visit from a landscape designer to plan the garden and collect species, an indigenous nursery site visit and free plants to put their new knowledge and plan into action. It has included tours of past participants gardens.	<a href="#">City of Boroondara</a>
Seeds from the Streets	A project which supports a resident community to plant out their nature strip with locally indigenous wildflowers, look after them and then collect seed which is used by Friends of Iramoo and Cairnlea Conservation Reserve Committee of Management to restore wildflower diversity in local grasslands.	<a href="#">Brimbank City Council</a>
Community Gardening in Brimbank program	Supports residents to establish their own garden, or link in with a community garden program. This is supported by a calendar of environmental events across the council and information on how to get involved, education webinars, school sustainability resources and how to access grants and other enabling actions.	<a href="#">Brimbank City Council - Community Gardening</a> <a href="#">Brimbank City Council - Schools Education</a>
Sustainable Gardening in Whittlesea	Education resources on species selection, planting and community gardening. Opportunity to sign up to a newsletter and information on local environment groups.	<a href="#">City of Whittlesea</a>

Program	Description	Council (click to visit program page)
Growing Biodiversity	An umbrella program focused on engaging with community in the protection and enhancement of biodiversity on private and public land. Includes species focused resources to increase biodiversity in your backyard, regular newsletters, event promotion and access to other biodiversity programs.	<a href="#"><u>Greater Dandenong Council</u></a>
Waterway management committees	Community organisations focused on protecting and supporting community to connect to a local waterway. Regular events such as planting days and education programs to build skills. Darebin Creek Management Committee and Merri Creek Management Committee are long standing examples.	<a href="#"><u>Darebin Creek Management Committee</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>Merri Creek Management Committee</u></a>

Program	Description	Council (click to visit program page)
Community Garden Program	A program supporting a network of community gardens across the council area. Provides information on how local residents and groups can become involved to meet new people, grow fresh, healthy food and develop their gardening skills. The dedicated website promotes events and shares resources (hints and tips) on gardening, recipes and associated subjects.	<a href="#">City of Casey</a>
Community Gardens Program	There are four community-run community gardens in Glen Eira City Council. They provide a pathway to bring people together to grow food, connect with nature and offer a regular food swap.	<a href="#">Glen Eira City Council</a>
Little Seeds and Reads Libraries	Little Seeds and Reads Libraries have been established across Glen Eira City Council area. They are similar to a traditional community library, but also include seeds and other gardening materials. This links with Glen Eira City Council's community gardens, Neighbourhood Sustainable Gardening Program and their Sustainable Living webinars. Developed in partnership with community groups.	<a href="#">Glen Eira City Council</a>
Sustainable Gardening Program	A sustainable gardening umbrella program supporting residents to create productive gardens. Gardening guides and resources and new landowner kits are available. A subsidy program for compost and worm farms and distribution of free packets of vegetable seeds provide an avenue for community to put their new knowledge into action.	<a href="#">Mitchell Shire Council</a>
Moreland Food Gardens Network	A program run by a network organisation that supports a network of community food gardens across the council area. It provides information on how local residents and groups can become involved to grow fresh, healthy food, develop their gardening skills and meet new people. The dedicated website identifies local community gardens, promotes events including food swaps and shares resources (hints and tips) on gardening, recipes and associated subjects.	<a href="#">Moreland City Council</a>

Program	Description	Council (click to visit program page)
Moreland Community Garden Network	A program run by a volunteer based not-for-profit organisation that supports a network of community gardens across the council area. Provides information on how local residents and groups can locate and become involved with community gardens. The dedicated website promotes events and shares resources on gardening and associated sustainability topics.	<a href="#">Moreland City Council</a>

Program	Description	Council (click to visit program page)
Biodiversity programs for schools and kindergartens	Access to learning and education resources, information on excursion sites and access to a voucher for 50 indigenous (locally native) plant tubes for planting on school grounds.	<a href="#">City of Boroondara</a>
Sustainability and the environment programs for schools	Programs focused on both schools and kinder. Ecolink delivered environmental science excursions are offered. For kinders, Animals of Oz incursions are offered, where a wildlife carer brings native animals to the kinder to support learning of the connection between native animals, habitat and the suburban backyard. Kids then put this new knowledge into action and through supported planting of indigenous plants that are habitat for the native animals.	<a href="#">Cardinia Shire Council</a>
Seeds from Schools	A program supporting schools to plant out areas within their school with locally indigenous wildflowers, look after them and then collect seed which is the used by Friends of Iramoo and Cairnlea Conservation Reserve Committee of Management to restore wildflower diversity in local grasslands. The project is designed around the curriculum and involves incursions and excursions.	Brimbank City Council
National Tree Day - schools	National Tree Day is a call to action for all Australians to put their hands in the earth and give back to their community. Planet Arc have lessons plans and toolkits available to support school engagement in environment initiatives. Mitchell Shire Council provides access to grants to support schools to participate.	<a href="#">Mitchell Shire Council</a>
Seedlings for Schools	Annual application process for schools to apply for indigenous seedlings. School plantings are supported through advice on site selection, preparation, species selection and garden design - biodiversity audits and citizen science linkages are also included. With 20-30 schools involved each year, Council has donated over 40,000 trees since 2014.	<a href="#">Hume City Council</a>

Program	Description	Council (click to visit program page)
Schools for Nature Project	A targeted school engagement and education program to support schools and students create wildlife habitat gardens. Access to education and planting resources to enable them to implement gardens at school and home.	<a href="#">Hume City Council</a>
Adopt a Park Program	Local kindergartens partner with Council to work together in adopting a local park. This includes access to education resources, incursions and support from Council staff to plant indigenous tube stock in Nature reserves.	<a href="#">Greater Dandenong Council</a>
Kinder Biodiversity Program	Council supports Early Learning Centres to access kinder incursions delivered by Animals of Oz. In these visits wildlife carers talk of native animals and the connection between habitat and how it supports these animals. Kids then put this new knowledge into action through supported planting of indigenous plants to provide habitat for native animals.	<a href="#">Cardinia Shire Council</a>

Program	Description	Council (click to visit program page)
Cool Streets	Cool Streets is an initiative coordinated by an external organisation aimed to empower communities to cool the planet, one street at a time. Combining scientific research with public engagement to support planting street trees in the most heat affected areas.	<a href="#">Hobsons Bay City Council</a>
Nature strip Beautification	A policy and associated information and application guidelines for residents to plant out their nature strip. Some information provided on how to get involved.	<a href="#">Darebin Council</a>
Garden Beds on Nature Strips	Residents can plant on their nature strips after seeking permission from council. Residents can access advice on plants, location and gardening.	<a href="#">City of Port Phillip</a>
Adopt a Tree	Residents can adopt a street tree in this program to look after. Residents who adopt a tree are asked to water the tree on a semi-regular basis	<a href="#">Moonee Valley City Council</a>
Personalise your Nature Strip	Residents can personalise their nature strip with their own plantings. This is supported by a wildlife friendly gardening guide.	<a href="#">Moonee Valley City Council</a>



Program	Description	Council (click to visit program page)
Greening our Future	Council runs six monthly series of environmental sustainability events, designed to help residents live more sustainably. A variety of topics are offered to help people reduce their environmental impact and actively enhance the biodiversity and amenity of our local environment.	<a href="#">Frankston City Council</a>
Spring Outdoors Program	An annual program of events encourages residents to connect with nature and support their gardening. Delivered in partnership with Manningham Council, Nillumbik Shire Council Sire and Banyule Council City Council. Events include educational workshops, site tours, gardening tips and tricks and celebrating successful community environmental programs.	<a href="#">Manningham Council</a> <a href="#">Banyule Council</a> <a href="#">Nillumbik Shire Council</a>
Enviro Champions Program	A 10 weeks training program to build capacity to run local environmental projects. Throughout the training, participants are encouraged to develop local projects and are provided support. It has resulted in numerous on-ground projects.	<a href="#">Hume City Council</a>
Nature Stewards Program	A 10-week training program delivered by Outdoors Victoria, focused on supporting the community to learn more about the local environment.	<a href="#">Melton City Council</a> <a href="#">City of Whittlesea</a>
Sustainability Champions	A 10-week training program to build capacity to run local environmental projects. Throughout the training, participants are encouraged to develop local projects and are provided support. It has resulted in numerous on-ground projects.	<a href="#">Moonee Valley City Council</a>
Junior Rangers Program	Kids can sign up to be a Junior Ranger, and with access to the Junior Ranger kit (either print at home, or borrow from the local Library) they embark on an outdoor adventure to discover and record local flora and fauna.	<a href="#">Moonee Valley City Council</a>
Citizen Forester	Volunteers are trained and empowered to grow the urban forest and improve urban ecology. Activities include habitat planting, tree genetic sampling, tree assessments and biodiversity surveys.	<a href="#">City of Melbourne</a>
Whittlesea Youth Environment ACTION Group	A council led initiative for young people to get involved in environmental action, including participating in planting days to teach young people about revegetating urban areas.	<a href="#">City of Whittlesea</a>

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is a delivery partner for Living Melbourne: our metropolitan urban forest strategy.

Earthwatch is a global environmental charity aiming to create a society that lives in balance with nature. We believe that sustainability will be achieved when people from all sectors of society are taking action for a nature positive future. Our aim is to empower people to save the natural world, and the work described in this report undertaken by councils, individuals, schools and communities demonstrates a pathway to achieve this, where behaviours are changed and collectively these actions increase biodiversity and regreen our cities. At Earthwatch, we deeply connect people to nature by providing an experience that is inclusive, educational and meaningful, empowering long term behaviour change in individuals and organisations for a sustainable future.

For more information please visit

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