

Sydney Metro planting trials

Biodiversity loss is a pressing issue in contemporary cities. Protecting and adding to biodiversity should be an important priority in urban environments, especially in areas where little natural habitat remains. Studies have shown that the greatest biodiversity occurs in the ground and shrub layers of vegetation, as opposed to either lawns or the tree canopy above.

Access to beautiful, bio-diverse, floral landscapes has been shown to generate positive physical and mental health benefits.

The Hills Showground trial replaces the remaining ground level planting in the station plaza with a wide range of colourful flowering plants. The new planting is naturalistic in style and uses a variety of largely native plants. The planting mixes have been designed to achieve a biodiverse and beautiful ground level landscape with a relatively low level of regular maintenance. The progress of the planting is closely monitored to determine the most successful plants and plant mixes over time, with the intention that the results will inform the design of other public landscapes across Sydney.

Typically, low maintenance landscapes include a small range of robust plants with limited visual appeal and negligible biodiversity value. To improve the quality of low-input public landscapes and make our cities more attractive and biodiverse, we have designed these plantings as a novel, low-cost and resilient alternative to conventional plantings. The mixes are diverse shrub and herbaceous plantings maintained by coppicing (occasional hard pruning to 10-20cm high) to promote repeat flowering and vegetation density which in turn excludes weeds.

The existing handful of plant species in the Hills Showground Station plaza have been replaced in this planting trial with over 100 varieties of groundcover vegetation in 7 different mixes. These planting areas are the result of a design collaboration between Sydney Metro, our friends at the University of Melbourne and the design firm Hassell.

We look forward to hearing your views on the plants and this landscape as it grows, flowers and brings both people and pollinators to Hills Showground Station in 2022 and beyond. Perhaps you will be inspired to use some of these plants in your own backyard.



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