

Safe ways to remove trees

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NEWS

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ENVIRONMENT



HAVE you been thinking of 'tidying up' your garden over the winter by removing a few trees?

With the continuing loss of native bushland, urban vegetation is increasingly important to native wildlife.

This means the trees in your garden, whether they are native or exotic species, could be serving as important habitat.

Before removing a tree, consider that a native animal may rely on it for food or shelter.

Consider why you would need to remove the tree. Is it unsafe? Does it pose a threat to people or structures?

If you just want to remove it for aesthetic reasons, a simple pruning may be a far more cost-effective option and give you an all-round better result.

Some trees should never be removed and will be impossible to replace in the short or medium term.

Even dead trees can be valuable as the hollows they develop provide important habitat for animals.

Find out if the tree is native to your

area or is part of an important ecosystem.

Some older trees can also have heritage listing or other protections, so check with your local council if you're unsure.

It's not only native species that are important to wildlife.

Many exotic plants provide nectar and other food sources which native birds and animals find just as delectable as those from indigenous species.

Bushes and shrubs that grow densely or have spiny thorns can provide important nesting habitat for small birds and a place for them to quickly escape from cats and other predators who dare not follow them into a prickly thicket.

If a tree has to go, keep the impact to a minimum.

The more trees you remove at one time, the greater the impact on wildlife.

A small copse of trees could represent the entire habitat range of some native animals.

With this in mind, remove only the minimal amount of vegetation.

If you must remove a whole group of trees, stagger their removal by taking out only one or two a year.

This can allow fauna time to adapt and find other habitat or food

sources.

Plant a selection of replacement trees — some that will grow quickly and some that will grow slowly — for longer term use by wildlife.

These should be appropriate, preferably indigenous trees that provide food sources for wildlife.

Compensate for the removal of trees in the short term by installing nesting boxes in the remaining trees.

The best time to remove trees is from mid-summer to early autumn.

Winter may seem like a good time of year to catch up on odd jobs like tree removal, but it's probably the most inconvenient time for wildlife.

Food is generally in its shortest supply from late autumn through winter and many reptiles will be hibernating in winter.

Spring is the time when most birds are nesting, so if you must remove trees at this time, check that they don't have eggs or young in the tree you are planning to fell.

Animals like possums can be badly injured or killed when backyard trees are removed.

Make sure no animals are living in the tree when you cut it down.

Inspect the tree one more time just before removal and specifically instruct tradespeople to take extra care not to harm wildlife.