Rewarding riches

Some wildflowers are showy but many are less obvious to the eye. When you do spot them, however, they will richly reward you with amazing colours and shapes.

Go for a walk in one of your local conservation reserves, part of the Wodonga Retained Environment Network, and look for rich purples and reds on pea flowers, cascades of yellow on silver wattles and the delicate pinks and striking blues of orchids.

Some wildflowers have fascinating traits. Sundews catch and eat insects, using sticky hairs on their leaves. The dainty Chocolate Lily takes its name from its unique fragrance. For Aboriginal people, berries on the Black-anther Flax Lily were a source of dye while the leaves were woven into baskets.

Spring and early summer are good times to go looking. Orchids, for example, flower from August to December. They include the yellow and brown Tiger Orchid and the pink Sun Orchid.
Some plants in the reserves are threatened species that have almost been wiped out. Little is known about the creeping Slender Tick Trefoil and spotting this tiny beauty is a special moment. The Small-leaved Bush Pea is now a rare species and is easily identifiable thanks to soft foliage made up of tiny, hairy leaves.

**Woodlands a rare treat**

Experience the eucalypts, grasses and wildflowers of one of Australia’s most endangered ecosystems.

Box-Gum Grassy Woodland is found in many of the network’s reserves, including some that are strips of land along former roads, as well as the reserve adjacent to Bears Hill, where land was not used for farming or cleared for other purposes.

This type of woodland was once widespread as a continuous band from Victoria to Queensland. Now only 5 per cent or less of the nation’s Box-Gum Grassy Woodland remains in good condition.

It is characterised by an open eucalypt canopy and an understory dominated mainly by tussock grasses such as Wallaby Grass. Wildflowers like lilies and everlasting daisies grow where woodlands are healthy.

In the past two decades the CSIRO, universities, community groups and farmers have worked to restore south-eastern Australia’s woodlands, with varied success.

**Give them a chance**

With so much at stake, anything you can do to give the native grasses, flowers, shrubs and trees a chance is vital.

Keep your gardening efforts within your boundary. Extending your garden into reserves, disturbing their soil or dumping your garden waste and lawn clippings will upset the delicate natural balance and may encourage weeds.

If possible, plant native plants rather than exotics, which can turn in to rogue plants that force out native species.

For more information see wodonga.vic.gov.au/local-reserves or phone (02) 6022 9300.