

NEIGHBOURHOOD FORESTS

INTRODUCTION

We want to create a city that looks after and expands out beautiful urban trees and green space that make Canberra the bush capital.

This vision for a 21st Century, green city is one that integrates ecosystems into our urban environment. By establishing a network of neighbourhood forests as part of our 30% tree canopy program, we can protect and grow one of the things that makes this city great.

Our integrated approach to urban trees will make Canberra a biodiversity sanctuary, providing a home for plants and animals being impacted by climate change, habitat loss, bushfires and urban sprawl.

WHY DO WE NEED A NEIGHBOURHOOD FOREST STRATEGY?

The way we are developing our city is not sustainable.

While thirty percent of Australia's threatened species occur in cities, they risk extinction due to sprawling urban development, climate change and inadequate resourcing of conservation.

It's a losing battle if we plant a million saplings while developers can still cut down hundreds of thousands of massive, mature trees that provide essential shade, habitat and food for the people and animals that call Canberra home.

That's why the Greens will take an ecosystems approach to our planning and looking after our urban trees.

THE GREENS PLAN FOR INCREASED CANOPY AND BIODIVERSITY COVERAGE WILL MAKE CANBERRA MORE SUSTAINABLE, LIVEABLE AND HELP REDUCE THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE. THIS PLAN INCLUDES:

1. A comprehensive plan to see 30% of Canberra covered by an urban tree canopy
2. Changing the laws to protect the trees we have and ensure all new developments establish and care for extensive urban green spaces
3. Planting a network of ecologically diverse neighbourhood forests
4. Installing 5000 nest boxes across Canberra, as part of a broader strategy to bring greater biodiversity to our city.

1. A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN TO SEE 30% OF CANBERRA COVERED BY AN URBAN TREE CANOPY

The Greens support the Living Infrastructure Plan target to reach 30% tree canopy across Canberra, making our city more liveable and reducing the impacts of the heat island effect. The tree canopy target incorporates greening our suburbs and buildings in a variety of ways, including increased on-ground vegetation as well as on roof gardens and living walls.

Our plan includes planting at least 500,000 urban trees to both replace the dying and dead trees in the existing urban forest and increase the overall size of the urban forest by 2045, by:

- starting with a \$21.5M injection into tree planting in the next 4 years
- creating neighbourhood forests across Canberra in appropriate public open spaces, with sites determined by guidance from Neighbourhood Democracy processes
- ensuring we have a sustainable plan for tree maintenance, not just planting
- planting more trees in wet years
- developing the ACT's first street orchard programs, for neighbourhoods who want them
- allowing people to plan edible fruit and nut trees on nature strips
- developing a strategic investment program for green and blue 'living infrastructure' across Canberra to coordinate rollout of projects that increase our urban forests and waterways projects

2. CHANGING THE LAWS AND RULES TO BETTER PROTECTING EXISTING TREES AND ALLOW FOR MORE GREENING OF OUR CITY

To reach our 30% canopy target, the Greens want changes to our planning and development system, as well as improved management of our existing urban open spaces.

The Greens will make the necessary changes to our planning and development system, including:

- providing government-appointed arborists under a fee for service arrangement to independently assess trees prior to DA or other such processes
- changing the Tree Protection Act and planning system to make it harder for developers to cut down our mature canopy trees during development
- making room for green space and trees in development by expanding "Living Infrastructure" Territory Plan changes to cover:
 - more residential development like 'mixed use' zones
 - more space for street and park trees in new suburbs
 - tree canopy in local shops and town centres

- amending the planning and development system to incentivise buildings to plant more rooftop and vertical gardens.

3. PLANTING A NETWORK OF ECOLOGICALLY DIVERSE NEIGHBOURHOOD FORESTS

Biodiversity is the key to a healthy environment. The Greens know that we need to build ecosystems, not monocultures, to ensure our urban trees are resilient to climate change, provide shade to cool our city, and food and habitat to the birds and animals wanting to call Canberra home. We want to build a city sanctuary for wildlife.

The Greens understand that trees alone do not make an ecosystem. We need more resilient urban ecosystems that support our wildlife and biodiversity to thrive in the face of a changing climate and reducing habitat.

As our city grows, our trees and green spaces are threatened by urban sprawl, development and human impact. Canberra is also threatened by the impacts of climate change - such as increased heat, drought and more severe storms. The Greens want our urban environment to improve amenity, improve climate change resilience, enhance and protect biodiversity and reduce negative impacts on our nature reserves.

To make the ACT a biodiversity hotspot and wildlife sanctuary the Greens will establish an urban wildlife and biodiversity corridors program linking to our nature reserves where possible, by:

- expanding local habitats, food trees, and accessible water through increased plantings and restoring our waterways
- aligning neighbourhood forest planting and waterways projects for improved biodiversity outcomes
- reducing the spread of invasive plants in our urban areas, and into our nature reserves
- better supporting our existing volunteer organisations and fostering new groups to adopt local urban open spaces and neighbourhood forests for biodiversity outcomes.

4. INSTALLING 5000 NEST BOXES ACROSS CANBERRA, AS PART OF A BROADER STRATEGY TO BRING GREATER BIODIVERSITY TO OUR CITY

We want to build a city sanctuary for wildlife. Sadly, our urban ecosystems currently do not contain the year-round food sources, nesting sites, water sources and wildlife corridors needed to support our biodiversity and become a bee-friendly city.

To support the ACT being a wildlife sanctuary the Greens will:

- roll out 5000 nesting boxes for birds and mammals across key urban open spaces, in neighbourhood forests and guided by citizen science group feedback
- create pollination corridors by planting bird- and pollinator- attracting plants across the urban environment.

To ensure that government land management activity works towards increased biodiversity, the Greens will improve management practices in our urban open spaces and around our neighbourhood forests, by:

- protecting trees with habitat hollows for wildlife habitat
- varying public space maintenance guidelines to adapt to the tree locations. For example, maintain trees in school yards at a lower risk level for safety purposes, but allow trees in unused urban open spaces to form habitat hollows
- protecting young saplings self-seeded from our remnant trees in public parks and open spaces
- strategically placing fallen logs to support bugs, birds and reptiles
- protecting the area surrounding remnant mature trees by creating mini-ecosystem pockets with for, grass and shrub plantings and fallen logs, this may be co-located with nature-play in appropriate areas. As well as improving biodiversity and amenity, this will also reduce mowing requirements and costs and will need education of urban rangers and mowing contractors
- better supporting our vital pollinators by:
 - ensuring that government urban tree and shrub planting lists include flowering seasons, to ensure year-round nectar availability for bees and birds; and
 - banning the use of “neonicotinoids” (a type of pesticide that harms bees) in Government land management, and to reduce other impacts - reducing the use of glyphosate and other pesticides wherever possible.