

On her farm at Eumundi, behind Queensland's Sunshine Coast, Lynn Scott is experimenting with alternative gardening ideas. Driven by a commitment to nurture local wildlife and vegetation communities, she is equally determined to help her property resist drought and fire.

The former environmental geographer and her husband bought the 30 ha property to retire to in 2014, after an exacting search. "Mount Cooroy towers over everything and we live on top of a little volcanic hill surrounded by paddocks, with a creek that runs all the way around us," says Scott. "I especially wanted a riparian zone where I could hear and see the birdlife." Critically, it is a sanctuary for her small herd of horses, most of them rescues, to run free.

The Scotts built a simple, one-bedroom home that was architect designed to not only capture the view and lifestyle they wanted, but to allow the horses access to the verandas that surround it. "We wake to the joy of horses staring into the bedroom," says Scott. There are no wire fences; Scott is exploring alternatives such as wetland sedge (*Ghania*) that keeps the horses out of the creek and provides habitat for frogs, bandicoots, birds and snakes. Near the house, simple lillypilly hedging helps manage horses' access.

The garden is just two years old, but Scott is working on two major landscaping concepts. She describes the first as integration of pasture management with corridors and mosaic plantings of native vegetation. "I chose to not just replant the original rainforest but to work from the birds, insects and wildlife that cohabit the farm now," she explains. "The small wildlife needs shrub shelter to survive, not canopy trees, so I have mosaics of sedges, grasses and rare wallum plants like Emu Mountain she oak (*Allocasuarina emuina*), candlesticks (*Banksia attenuata*) and *Banksia aemula*. Additionally, I provide a seed and plant bank for the endangered ecosystems being cleared for Noosa housing estates." She also nurtures specific plants for wildlife such as Monarch butterflies, migratory Latham snipes and pale headed rosellas.

Exotic flowers have a place too, for colour and the European bees that have natural hives in the large fig trees nearby. Scott maintains the rainforest garden the previous owners created under these trees, "out of respect for the property's history". For the same reason, she kept the 1918 cottage, now a

guest house for family and friends. Throughout the garden are sculptures of animals on the property, which the couple commissioned directly from artists.

Scott's second line of experiment is based on her observations of how wild plants grow in communities. Having started with flowing garden beds and mass plantings, she now lets many of the native plants like emu foot (*Cullen tenax*), fan flower (*Scaevola*), yellow buttons (*Chrysocephalum*) and ruby saltbush (*Enchylaena*) "expand their territory" as they self-seed. "The rare native begonia died in a display bed but thrived when allowed to grow in between kangaroo grass. Our weeding program now targets only undesirable weeds," she says. "It takes self-control to stop one's desire for order but I've learned to find pleasure and visual wonder in what nature creates. And I'm too old to be a slave to the garden," Scott laughs.