



## **CREATING LOW-ALLERGY GARDENS**

***Are you one of those unfortunate people who cough, sneeze and wheeze every time you go outdoors. If so, why not consider creating a low allergen-garden, using plants which don't produce a lot of aggravating pollen.***

Wind-pollinated plants are the main offenders because they produce large amounts of pollen which is spread widely through the air, causing problems for asthmatics and those prone to hayfever. Many of the cases of so-called "flu" which we experience at certain times of year are in fact hayfever, but the symptoms of bronchial irritation, cough, sneezing, blocked up nose, sore eyes, aching limbs and much else besides do strongly resemble those of influenza.

Plants pollinated by birds and insects are far less troublesome and it is possible to create gardens using only these plants... and possibly persuade your neighbours to do the same. Why bother, you might ask, when pollen can be blown into your garden by the wind. However, pollen is heavy and rarely travels far, so that the worst problem is probably right in your garden itself. Also, planting a screen of tall shrubs or trees which are not wind-pollinated will effectively trap much of the pollen carried on the wind. So many householders find their pleasure in the garden spoiled by asthma and hayfever attacks that it is worth trying to create an environment which, at worst, will significantly reduce the amount of troublesome pollen.

Australians usually think of the ubiquitous wattles (*Acacia* spp.) as the main culprits but though a percentage of these trees and shrubs do create problems when in flower, by far the worst offenders are ordinary lawn grasses. Cyresses are another surprising source of wind borne pollen in large amounts. Other problem plants include casuarina (a real baddie), spinach, sweet corn, alder, ash, birch, *fraxinus griffithii*, liquidambar, mulberry, maple, olive, plane tree, poplar, privet and willow - and some people have proved allergic to plants in the Asteraceae family (such as daisies and marigolds).



*Mandevilla 'White Fantasy'*



*Bougainvillea*



*Bottle Palm*



**Here are some simple steps for creating a low-allergen garden:**

- Plant a screen of non-allergenic trees or tall shrubs around the boundary. These will trap pollen blown in from outside which will help reduce the pollen count in your garden.
- Dense hedges can harbour dust mites and mould spores which are also a problem for asthmatics and hayfever sufferers. Use fences or walls instead.
- Do away with the lawn or plant only low-pollinating grasses such as Greenlees Park couch, buffalo, kangaroo (Themeda triandra) or rice (weeping) grass (Microlaena stipoides). The last two are native grasses which only need to be mown 3 or 4 times a year.
- Keep all plants which produce large amounts of pollen well away from windows.
- Keep the garden weed free because many weeds have high pollen counts.
- Home-made compost can be a problem because it contains allergenic mould spores.
- Select low-allergen plants such as most annuals and herbs.

A low-allergen garden can be a great source of pleasure to those whose allergies prevent them enjoying other outdoor activities. It is still a wise precaution, however, to avoid gardening on hot, still days when pollen hangs in the air, or else on very windy days when pollen is blowing about. For further information talk to your local garden centre. Also, look for plants bearing special low-allergen labels.

## SOME LOW-ALLERGEN PLANTS

### **Trees:**

Bauhinia, callistemon, citrus, eucalyptus, ginkgo, hakea, jacaranda, lilly-pillies, magnolia, palms, silky oak, pistacia, poinciana.

### **Shrubs:**

Abelia, abutilon, azalea, baecckia, banksia, boronia, brunfelsia, camellia, escallonia, gardenia, ixora, leptospermum "Pink Cascade", pentas, plumbago, rhododendron, rose, marmalade bush (*Streptosolen jamesonii*), viburnum, westringia.

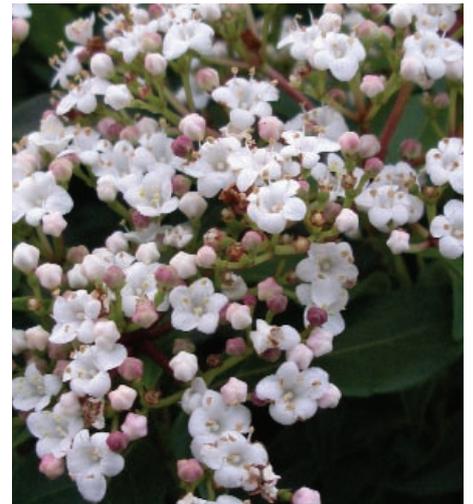
### **Climbers:**

Allamanda, bougainvillea, banksia rose, campsis (bignonia), cardinal creeper, clematis, dipladenia, mandevilla, pandorea, passiflora, pyrostegia, rose (climbing), *Solanum jasminoides*, wisteria.

### **Ground covers and small plants:**

Viola hederaceae, Geraniums, Juniper, Thyme, "Flower Carpet" roses  
Most culinary herbs (not chamomile).

A low-allergen garden should also exclude plants which cause contact dermatitis. Common offenders are primula, polyanthus, primrose, ivy, poinsettia, mango, Rhus tree, foambark tree (*Jaghera pseudorhus*), Grevillea "Robyn Gordon" and related hybrids, large-leaved philodendrons.



Viburnum



Wisteria