

## Planning and Infrastructure

December 2015

### ITEM DESCRIPTION: Tropical recommended plants

Assessment of your school's existing vegetation and the formulation of a plan for additional planting that provides both shade and screenings will ultimately provide a valuable asset for your school.

The tropical wet/dry climate of the Top End and the hot/dry climate of Alice Springs are very different; however the need for shade to protect people from the sun in both regions is the same.

A list of plant species recommended for planting in the grounds of tropical area schools follows. The species have been selected as they have a proven growth record, are suited to local conditions and are not known to be poisonous or to cause allergic reactions.

Your local plant suppliers may have other suitable species that are not on this list, however, you should check that those plants are hardy proven performers, are not poisonous, do not cause allergic reactions, have sharp spines, drop large limbs or have vigorous root systems. Additional local plant information is available from Greening Australia and the Herbarium in Darwin and Alice Springs.

### FUNDING SOURCE

**Grounds maintenance funds or fundraising may be used to purchase additional plants for school grounds.**

## TROPICAL AREA SCHOOLS RECOMMENDED PLANT SPECIES

### TREES

| Species (botanical name)       | Species (common name)                         | To 1 metre/ climber | To 2 metres | To 3 metres | Small tree < 5 metres | Medium tree 5-10 metres | Large tree 10-20 metres | Very large tree > 20 metres | Recommended by Greening Australia for cyclone areas | Comments  |
|--------------------------------|---|---------------------|-------------|-------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|---|---|
| <i>Aidia racemosa</i>          | Aidia   |                     |             |             |                       |                         | x                       |                             | x   | Attractive shrub or small tree with a layered growth habit. Flowers are cream, strongly scented and borne in small clusters along the branches. Fruit are oval, about 1cm long and bright red. Attracts birds and butterflies.                                    |
| <i>Albizia lebbek</i> *        | Albizia                                       |                     |             |             |                       |                         | x                       |                             |   | Spreading, hardy, fast growing, deciduous tree. Provides good shade and has cream and green flowers in Sept/Oct. After several years establishing should perform well with little water.  |
| <i>Allosyncarpia ternata</i> * | Allosyncarpia                                 |                     |             |             |                       |                         | x                       |                             | x   | Spreading shade tree with a dense evergreen canopy. Responds well to regular water and mulching. Suitable for planting around playgrounds, basketball courts, pedestrian links, school boundaries, ovals and ecological areas.                                    |
| <i>Alphitonia excelsa</i> *    | Soap Tree,<br>Red Ash,<br>Leatherjacket       |                     |             |             |                       |                         | x                       |                             | x   | A splendid shade tree when planted in a well drained position in warm moist conditions. Small cream flowers.  |
| <i>Canarium australianum</i> * | White Beech                                   |                     |             |             |                       |                         |                         | x                           | x   | Shade tree developing a dense crown which spreads to 5m. Flowers yellow, green or white. Common local species in Northern Australia and found along stream banks or in rainforest.  |
| <i>Carillia brachiata</i> *    | Carillia,<br>Freshwater Mangrove,<br>Corkwood |                     |             |             |                       |                         | x                       |                             | x   | Naturally occurs in coastal areas from Broome to Townsville on the margins of streams and swamps, in coastal vine thickets, monsoon forest and on sand dunes. Trunk is occasionally buttressed; flowers are white, cream or green; branches are widely spreading. |

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| <i>Cordia subcordata</i> *   | Cordia                |                     |             |             | x                     |                         |                         |                             | x   | Orange flowers, grows in coastal areas.   |
| <i>Eucalyptus herbertiana</i> *                                      | Eucalyptus            |                     |             |             |                       | x                       |                         |                             |   | Slender tree with smooth white or grey trunk that sheds to reveal a salmon-pink colour. Grows well in sandy well-drained soils.   |
| <i>Euodia elleryana</i> * (also known as <i>Melicope elleryana</i> ) | Euodia                |                     |             |             |                       |                         | x                       |                             | x   | Fast growing slender, semi-deciduous, open branched tree. Requires ample moisture and suitable for ecological plantings.  |
| <i>Ficus benjamina</i> *   | Weeping Fig           |                     |             |             |                       |                         |                         | x                           |   | Spreading shade and screening tree with weeping branches. Grows in well-drained soils. Plant at least 30m away from buildings and paved areas. Suitable for ovals and school boundaries.  |
| <i>Ficus racemosa</i> *  | Cluster Fig           |                     |             |             |                       |                         | x                       |                             | x   | Spreading crown. Fruits are borne in clusters on the trunk and branches and are edible.   |
| <i>Ficus virens</i> *  | Banyan                |                     |             |             |                       |                         |                         | x                           | x   | Spreading tree that requires ample moisture for steady growth. Plant at least 30m away from buildings and paved areas. Suitable for ovals and school boundaries.  |
| <i>Leptospermum madidum</i> *  | Weeping Ti Tree       |                     |             |             | x                     |                         |                         |                             |   | Fast growing, graceful tree with weeping foliage and prefers ample moisture. Suitable for screen and ecological planting.   |
| <i>Maranthes corymbosa</i> *   | Maranthes             |                     |             |             |                       |                         | x                       |                             |   | Spreading evergreen shade tree suitable for well-drained soils. Requires ample moisture and can be under pruned to create shaded areas. Suitable for planting around playgrounds, bike parking areas, basketball courts and pedestrian links. |

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| Mimusops elengi*                | Mimusops                 |                     |             |             |                       | x                       |                         |                             | x   | Erect evergreen tree with tall trunk and dense crown. Slow growing and suitable for planting in courtyards and around buildings.   |
| Polyalthia longifolia           | Indian Mast Tree         |                     |             |             |                       |                         | x                       |                             | x   | Compact, hardy and slow growing with rich green mature foliage.  |
| Polyalthia longifolia "Pendula" | Weeping Indian Mast Tree |                     |             |             |                       |                         | x                       |                             |   | Compact, hardy and slow growing with rich weeping foliage.   |
| Pterocarpus indicus "Pendula"   | Weeping Indian Rosewood  |                     |             |             |                       |                         | x                       |                             |   | Hardy shade tree with weeping foliage and fragrant yellow flowers. Flower may be messy but is short lived. Prefers well-drained soils with ample water and mulching. Plant at least 10m away from buildings and paved areas.   |
| Sterculia quadrifida*           | Peanut Tree              |                     |             |             |                       |                         | x                       |                             | x   | Natural habitat is the dry rainforest. Handsome, ornamental tree that is deciduous in cooler areas. Requires good drainage.  |
| Syzygium armstrongii*           | Syzygium                 |                     |             |             |                       |                         | x                       |                             | x   | Evergreen fast growing shade and shelter tree with dense foliage and a full crown. Has a columnar canopy and is most suitable for courtyard plantings but should be planted at least 10m away from buildings and paved areas. Also suitable for planting around playgrounds, bike parking areas, basketball courts and pedestrian links. |
| Syzygium forte*                 | Syzygium                 |                     |             |             |                       |                         |                         | x                           |   | Spreading shade tree suitable for ecological plantings, school boundaries and ovals.   |
| Syzygium nervosum               | Small Red Bush Apple     |                     |             |             |                       |                         | x                       |                             | x   | Slow growing, deciduous tree that has red apple sized fruit at the beginning of the wet season. Suitable for garden bed plantings.   |

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| Tabebuia pallida         | Pink Trumpet Tree     |                     |             |             |                       |                         | x                       |                             |   | Hardy tree with pink trumpet like flowers. |

## SHRUBS

|                                   |                                 |                  |   |   |   |  |  |  |  |   |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------|---|---|---|--|--|--|--|---|
| Acalypha wilkesiana               | Acalypha                        |                  |   | x |   |  |  |  |  | Fast growing, screening or hedge plant that comes with yellow, green or red foliage. Prefers light, well-drained soils in a protected shaded position. Can be kept pruned to lower heights. |
| Callistemon spp.                  | Bottle brush                    |                  |   |   | x |  |  |  |  | Weeping foliage and red or pink flowers that attract birds.   |
| Hibiscus rosa-sinensis            | Hibiscus                        |                  |   | x |   |  |  |  |  | Shiny leaves and large flowers that vary in colour depending on the variety chosen. Requires regular watering and pruning to keep its compact shape.  |
| Ixora minima "Pygmy Pink"         | Ixora                           | x                |   |   |   |  |  |  |  | Candy pink flowers. Plant as a low hedge and keep well pruned. Prefers full sun.  |
| Ixora minima "Sunkist"            | Ixora                           |                  | x |   |   |  |  |  |  | Bright orange/red flowers year round. Keep well pruned. Prefers full sun.   |
| Jasminum nitidum                  | Angelwing Jasmine/ Star Jasmine | x                |   |   |   |  |  |  |  | Climber or groundcover with glossy green leaves and fragrant white star like flowers. Keep well pruned to encourage dense, bushy growth.  |
| Melaleuca linarifolia "Pink tips" |                                 |                  |   | x |   |  |  |  |  | Evergreen dense screening shrub with white brush flowers. Plant as a hedge.   |
| Murraya paniculata                | Orange Jessamine                | x - see comments |   |   | x |  |  |  |  | Evergreen shrub that prefers moist well drained soils in a protected sunny position. Can reach 5m, however can be kept pruned to 1-2m.  |
| Murraya paniculata "Min-a-Min"    | Minature Orange Jessamine       | x                |   |   |   |  |  |  |  | Evergreen shrub that prefers moist well drained soils in a protected sunny position. Can reach 1m, however can be kept pruned to 0.5m.  |

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| Phyllanthus multiflora   | Waterfall Plant       | x                   |             |             |                       |                         |                         |                             |   | Very hardy, low spreading shrub/groundcover. Will grow in full sun or full shade and generally to about 500mm high but will grow to 1m with ideal conditions. Plant on 300mm centres. |

**PALMS**

|                    |                  |  |  |  |   |  |  |  |  |   |
|--------------------|------------------|--|--|--|---|--|--|--|--|---|
| Cyrtostachys renda | Lipstick Palm    |  |  |  | x |  |  |  |  | Neat clumping palm with scarlet leaf bases and shiny green leaves. Will grow in full sun or shade and prefers regular watering. Suitable for screen planting. |
| Dypsis lutescens   | Golden Cane Palm |  |  |  | x |  |  |  |  | Multi-stemmed, clumping palm prefers a sunny position in well-drained soils. Quick growing and provides good screening.                                       |

**GROUNDCOVERS**

|                     |                      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |   |
|---------------------|----------------------|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|---|
| Cuphea compacta     | Cuphea               | x |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | Neat groundcover to 300mm with flushes of purple tubular flowers. Grows in sun or part shade and prefers well-drained soil. Ensure regular watering. For best effect mass plant on 400mm centres. |
| Gardenia radicans   | Dwarf Gardenia       | x |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | Groundcover to 300mm with white fragrant flowers. Ensure regular watering. For best effect mass plant on 400mm centres.   |
| Lomandra longifolia | Long Leafed Mat Rush | x |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | Groundcover to 600mm with rush like foliage that contrasts well with other plants. Will grow in sun or part shade. Grows in a wide variety of soils but does best in a moist position.            |

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| Nephrolepis oblitterata<br>"Kimberley Queen" |                       | x                   |             |             |                       |                         |                         |                             |   | Hardy, fast growing, clumping ground fern with pale green leaves. Mass plant in a cool, moist position.   |
| Ophiopogon japonicus                         | Mondo Grass           | x                   |             |             |                       |                         |                         |                             |   | Low growing grass-like groundcover to 150mm. Will tolerate most soils and grow in full sun or full shade. Also a dwarf variety that grows to 100mm. |

\*Denotes a Top End native.

Note that plant growth is dependent on growing conditions and the heights listed here are only a guide.

Trees listed in the > 20 metre column may have a vigorous root system.

Other suitable species would be available from local specialist suppliers. Refer to other Fact Sheet for [Trees not to be used in school grounds](#).