



Nature's (little) barometer

Clockwise from left: Pink Sunorchid pink *Thelymitra*, *Queen/Thin Lipped Spider Orchid* *Arachnorchis leptochila* ssp *leptochila*, *Fire orchid* *Pyrochis nigricans*, *Purple Cockatoo* *Glossodia major*, *King Spider Orchid* *Arachnorchis tentaculata*, *Maroonhood* *Pterostylis pedunculata*, *Blunt Greenhood* *Pterostylis curta* and *Wallflower Donkey Orchid* *Diuris orientis*.

Gardening is an important way to connect with nature that makes life more fulfilling for many. An even closer link with nature can be obtained by observing plants and animals in their natural settings and learning to recognise the threats to their wellbeing.

Gardens situated next to remnant vegetation will occasionally be colonised by native orchids such as Onion Orchids, Greenhoods and Donkey Orchids. Generally speaking, however, gardens are too disturbed to support native orchids due to cultivation, use of fertilisers, growth of incompatible plants and the effects of slugs and snails. Most native lilies can be easily propagated from seed and grown in gardens, but orchid propagation requires expertise and skill. However, the collection of native orchids and lilies (or even their seed) is prohibited and is one of the major threats to biodiversity, so propagation



for planting in home gardens is generally not an option. Instead, growing indigenous shrubs, herbs and grasses can provide a potential habitat for native lilies and orchids making colonisation from adjacent bushland possible if weeds and pests are controlled.

Native orchids are highly specialised and this makes them vulnerable to extinction. Their presence is therefore a vital indicator of the condition of native remnant vegetation and the local biodiversity. "Where native orchids occur it is vital that they be recognised and that the site is managed with their conservation in mind. Native orchids are always special treasures to those who know that they have them on their land," says Robert Lawrence, author of *Start with the Leaves*.

With more than 200 species of orchid occurring naturally in the Adelaide Hills and Plains, as well as a dozen native lilies, the task of identifying them can be daunting to the novice and expert alike. This is especially so because flowers are present

for only a brief period, sometimes just for a single day. *Start with the Leaves* has been prepared with these in mind. It is a simple guide that divides these plants into eight distinct categories based on their leaves. For each leaf category there is a different page colour and distinctive icon to make it easy to find the relevant pages. There is also a summary spread with all of the species at the start of each category with pictures and adequate information. Each species has a double page and is well illustrated with colour photographs, has relevant text and, importantly, has a life-size representation of the flowers.

Although it is a field guide, *Start with the Leaves* can be a supplement for gardeners, especially for those living in areas where native orchids and lilies still remain in their natural habitats. This book deals with the 50 most common native orchids in the Adelaide Hills and 20 other species that could be confused with orchids, including some common weeds. 🦋

Start with the Leaves
A simple guide to common Orchids and lilies of the Adelaide Hills

Robert Lawrence
Foreword by Chris Daniels

Start with the Leaves
By Robert Lawrence
www.heritagebushcare.com.au
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