

Planting and enhancing Koala habitat

Introduction

Koalas like trees and spend most of their life in trees. They eat about ½ kilo of leaves a day, sleep up to 18 hours and move from tree to tree in a very large area called their home range.

Research shows Koalas like eating young healthy trees making young stands of trees an important food source.

Planting trees and encouraging the natural regeneration of trees can improve the habitat for Koalas particularly in areas where habitat has been fragmented through agriculture and development.

Koala habitat

Koala habitat is made up of trees that serve three main functions:

- food (Koalas like the leaves from some trees more than others, these trees are known as preferred feed trees)
- shelter (consider shade trees especially in paddocks) and
- corridors to other habitats.

Risks to Koalas

Consider the risks to Koalas when planting. How will the planting design minimise risks to Koalas? The biggest risks are:

- dog attacks
- motor vehicle accidents when crossing roads
- bushfires destroying or damaging their homes, and
- habitat clearing for new houses and industry.

Considerations

Consider the aims of the planting. Is it for food, shelter or movement? How will it fit in with the broader landscape i.e. does it connect areas of habitat? A planned approach with clear objectives is much better than the random planting of trees.

- Plant in corridors or clumps or around existing native vegetation to link the patches. This will minimise dog attack risk and provide linkage between habitat patches.
- Link ridges with creek areas to provide habitat during seasonal movements of koalas.
- Eucalypts grow large.

How to plant

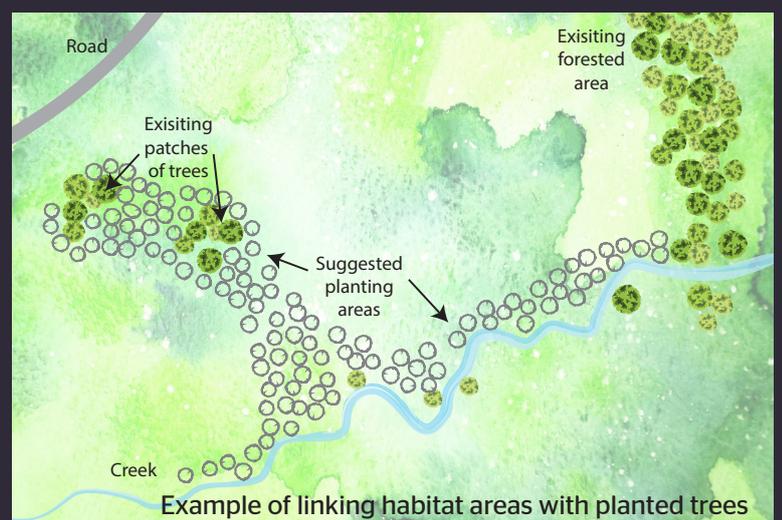
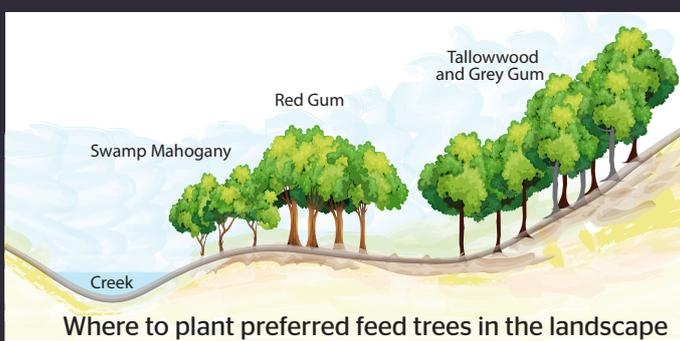
- A spacing of 3m x 4m between trees is a good planting density that will help suppress grass competition around trees
- As the trees age give the best trees space to grow by removing lesser trees to a spacing of 7m x 7m between tree trunks (around age 5).
- Round or square shaped plantings are better than narrow, but a narrow linking corridor allows access to other mature patches of trees.

Tree maintenance

- Controlling grasses and weeds is important to assist the growth of trees
- Planting trees in rows is a good option as it makes mowing and weed control easier

When to plant

- After rain when soil is moist
- Late summer/autumn is best and avoid times with extreme temperatures



Preferred feed trees

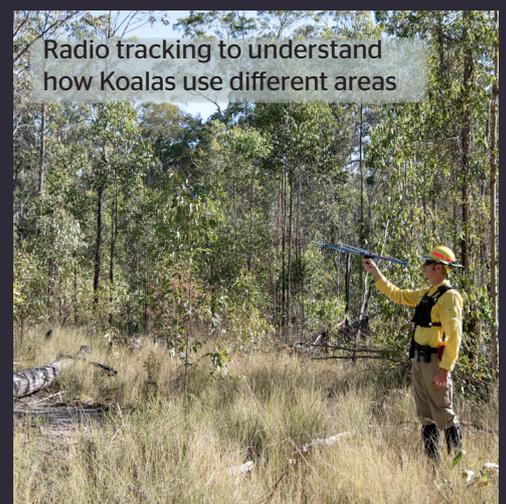
Species	Description	Planting conditions	Region
 <i>Eucalyptus microcorys</i> (Tallowwood)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium-tall forest tree to 40m • Thick crowned tree that retains lower branches and bark • Good shade and windbreak tree 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prefers fertile, moist soils (not boggy) • Dislikes heavy frost 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most areas with good rainfall
 <i>Eucalyptus propinqua</i> (Grey Gum)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium-tall forest tree to 40m • Quick growing • Attractive mottled bark which sheds in large plates or flakes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grows well on ridges and slopes of low to medium fertility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prefers coastal to the lower slope areas of the mid-north coast
 <i>Eucalyptus robusta</i> (Swampy Mahogany)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spreading tree with a heavy crown growing to 16m • Fast growing with large leaves and creamy/white flowers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best in moist or boggy soils but will tolerate drier soils (not sand). • Dislikes frost 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grows along the coast and lower slopes
 <i>Eucalyptus tereticornis</i> (Forest Red Gum)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tall forest tree to 40-60m • Large spreading crown • Good timber, shade and windbreak tree 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prefers fairly rich alluvial soils, sandy and clay loams loams or gravelly terraces, moist but not waterlogged 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grows in a range of habitats and soils from the coast to the tablelands up to 1000 metres.
 <i>Eucalyptus agglomerata</i> (Blue Leaved Stringybark)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fast growing forest tree to 40m • Leaves are a bluish/green colour and shiny with thick, fibrous grey/brown bark 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grows naturally on moderate to steep slopes on sandstone based soils with subsoil moisture • Prefers a warm humid climate but will tolerate frosts to -2°C 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suitable for NSW coastal and tableland slopes and particularly the south coast • Grows within 120km from the sea



Tracey in White Mahogany



Sleepy Dazza in Turpentine



Radio tracking to understand how Koalas use different areas