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Planting for Climate Change

Of course any plant will help to combat climate change by locking up carbon in its growing tissue. So why plant natives when any plant will do?

One of the major impacts of climate change is on biodiversity. Biodiversity is the variety of all living things. Before climate change was the “hot” topic in the environmental debate, the loss of biodiversity was internationally recognised as being the major threat facing the future of life on our planet. This threat hasn’t gone away, in fact climate change has only made combating this threat even more of a challenge.

Apart from the actions that we all must take to reduce our impact on the warming climate, it is vital that we act to help our native wildlife have the best possible chance of adapting to these changing conditions and not go down the path towards extinction.

One important activity is the creation of native corridors of vegetation to connect existing areas of intact bushland. Scientists predict that with a warming planet, many plants and animals will have to migrate (this would happen very slowly in the case of plants!) to find the conditions that will allow them to thrive - for example, moving gradually south or to higher elevations to find relatively cooler conditions as their original habitat warms. Unfortunately, for some species, this may not be possible. There is much concern for the Mountain Pygmy Possum, for example, that lives among boulder-strewn slopes high in the Australian alps.

Although we may not be able to save every species, there are some fantastically inspiring projects out there, devising continental-scale measures to combat these global challenges. One such example is the Great Eastern Ranges Initiative, connecting green corridors

from the Australian Alps in Victoria through to the Atherton Tablelands in Queensland - leading some to describe the concept as a Green Great Barrier-Reef in scale! Over in Western Australia a similar program is in place, called Gondwanalink.

www.gondwanalink.org

www.environment.nsw.gov.au/ger