Know Your Soils

By Jutta Hamilton

GGHR COMMUNITY NEWS DEC 2015
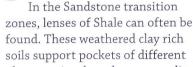
There is a strong link between the types of vegetation found in an area and the underlying rocks, because different kinds of rock weather to form various drainage patterns, topography and soil types. Knowing your soils, aspect and topography will help to make native revegetation plantings and native garden design a real success.

Hawkesbury Sandstone derived soils are mainly composed of quartz and little clay, they are usually shallow, well drained with low nutrient levels. The variety of habitats provided by the rugged sandstone topography has resulted in the evolution of diverse plant communities of many plant species. All of which have adapted to survive and reproduce in those specific conditions. Despite their poverty, these soils support a remarkable diversity of the most brilliant plants adapted to low nutrients, drying winds and frequent fires.

The topography affects available soil moisture, and slopes facing north and west receive more sunlight and dry out faster than those facing south east. South east slopes can be cooler, moister and often have a more fertile soil with a deeper leaf litter.

In the Sandstone transition zones, lenses of Shale can often be found. These weathered clay rich soils support pockets of different plant species than the surrounding sandstone soils.

The shale derived soils, have high clay content, are generally deeper with moderate to high fertility that can hold more moisture.

Western Sydney lies in a basin composed of deeply weathered clay soils. Most of the Cumberland Plain consists of undulating land of low hills and boggy depression. It again supports various different plant communities, with the different plant species thriving in their preferred habitats.

So if you're planting into native soils there will always be a local native plant that will suit whatever your location.

Your local Council might also be able to provide you with a guide or booklet for choosing the right plants for your soils and situation.

Contacts: www.stillcreeklandcare.com.au email Stillcreeklandcare@iinet.net.au or Nick Chartorisky 9653 2056

Still Creek Catchment Landcare Group