

Driveway Beds

by Leigh Murray

At both Tuross Head and Queanbeyan, our steeply sloping concrete driveways each have a central garden bed between two drivestrips. With a low-clearance car, only flat or very low-growing plants are suitable for these locations.

At Tuross, the only plant used is *Grevillea* ‘Poorinda Royal Mantle’. This has proved a great success. It is flat and dense and long-flowering, with pinky-red toothbrush flowers that birds adore. Both Red and Little Wattlebirds like to hop around on it, dining on the flowers. Regular car usage on one driveway keeps the plant neatly trimmed. On the other driveway – which is almost never used – the plant has been allowed to spread over much of the concrete.



At Queanbeyan, I’ve also planted 3 *Grevillea* ‘Poorinda Royal Mantle’ in the 20m long central bed. The plants look fairly healthy, and they flower, but they haven’t grown to cover a large area. So, some years ago, I added a variety of other flat plants, to see if any of them did better. The bed is now home to *Pelargonium rodneyanum*, *Grevillea confertifolia* prostrate, *Kunzea pomifera*, *Correa decumbens*, and *Carpobrotus modestus*. None of these are flourishing but they’re all doing OK, and provide a nice mix. The *Carpobrotus* sometimes gets eaten back by rabbits, and gets the odd bit of scale, but apart from that, all plants have been trouble-free. Over the years, I’ve tried a few other plants too, notably our naturally-growing, ultra-flat forms of *Einadia hastata* and *E. nutans*, which proved a major disappointment when they didn’t survive the tough conditions of the driveway, ditto *Brachyscome multifida*. The problem is that because the drive is west-facing and unshaded, it cops a good dose of sunbaking heat on summer afternoons.

A considerable advantage of central driveway garden beds for us is that they help to interrupt the rainwater that belts down our steep driveways during heavy downpours. This is especially important at Tuross, where it isn’t uncommon to get 150mm within a day or two. And central driveway beds provide what plain concrete doesn’t: an additional area for wildlife. We love to see wattlebirds or lorikeets popping about amongst the flowers, a whipbird raking through the mulch under the leaves, or a lizard diving into the foliage as a refuge.