

The Planty Atlas of UTS

UTS Library 2019 Creative in Residence - Alexandra Crosby and Ilaria Vanni, from the research studio **Mapping Edges**.



We acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, upon whose lands we stand and walk. We pay respect to the Elders past, present, and future, acknowledging them as the traditional custodians of knowledge for these lands.



The Planty Atlas of UTS installation,
UTS Library (Haymarket),
September–November 2019.

The Planty Atlas of UTS

If you went to the UTS Library in Haymarket between September and November 2019, chances are you walked into a small green oasis of plants and books about plants at the bottom of the stairwell. This green space was part of the UTS Library Creative in Residence program and it was titled *The Planty Atlas of UTS*. The installation travelled with the library when it relocated to UTS Central, where it created another green area for people to stop, sit in the company of plants, and browse the planty bookshelf we curated from the UTS collection. Selected from various disciplines, from ecology to photography to health sciences to history, the bookshelf offered ways to think and learn about plants from multiple perspectives. In the same period, we organized a series of walks around the old and new UTS Libraries, and we mapped our route, so that you can continue to walk in your own time.

This series of walks presents an opportunity to think about how plants shape the ways we look at, feel about, and imagine a place. In this project, we invite you to imagine a more 'planty' university campus, starting from our library, an important centre for transdisciplinarity, conviviality, play, and research. The library creates a much needed social space for people from all over the university who want to think differently about possible

futures and what we can do to shape them. The library is also a great place to start walking experiments.

But why walking? We are interested in finding out how people understand, contribute and relate to ecologies in cities. How do people tend to plants and support wildlife? How do they design for and with plants in their gardens, balconies, and verges? And, conversely, how do plants design our city and generate a sense of place? What kind of knowledge circulates among people who care for plants? How is climate emergency perceived and experienced by people thinking about plants? Can we expand the environmental stewardship practices already present in our city? How can we prompt more participation? To answer these questions, in our research, we use ethnographic and design research methods to map neighbourhoods such as our campus precinct.

Walking generates particular questions by engaging our bodies and senses, as well as our minds. These walks help us identify issues and characteristics, such as how the edges of streets can be cultivated with edible plants, tree-lined according to masterplans, or how plants develop small, spontaneous ecosystems. We are mindful that these landscapes are created together by people, plants, animals and objects. We recognise examples of stewardship in the way people cultivate plants to make green corridors, care for small parks and forgotten parcels of land, or, as in the case of the UTS precinct, how professionally designed green spaces border with

individual and vernacular gardens and planting. We usually think of this process as ‘walking with plants’.

For *The Planty Atlas of UTS* we designed three community walks, or ‘walkshops’, which followed the same route around the precinct starting in front of the old location of UTS Library at Haymarket, and finishing in front of the library’s new location at UTS Central. Each walk had a slightly different focus. To plan, we referred to permaculture principles, in particular ‘observe and interact’; ‘apply self-regulation and receive feedback’; ‘value the marginal and use edges’; ‘use and value diversity’; and ‘use small and slow solutions’.

Map of the

UTS Precinct:



Plant key

- UTS Haymarket campus—*Platanus plane* tree.
Darling Square—*Eucalyptus saligna* blue gum.
The Goods Line—*Salvia rosmarinus* rosemary.
Mary Ann St Park—*Rosa* rose.
Ultimo Community Garden—*Petroselinum crispum* parsley.
TAFE edible plants garden—*Rheum rhabarbarum* thubarb, *Salvia rosmarinus* rosemary, *Foeniculum vulgare* fennel.
TAFE ornamental garden—*Camellia sasanqua*, *Rhipsalis cereuscula* coral cactus, *Acacia spectabilis* Mudgee wattle.
UTS Alumni Green—*Philodendron xanadu*.
UTS Library—*Ficus macrophylla* Morton Bay fig or Australian banyan.
UTS Tower—*Eucalyptus pulverulenta* silver-leaved mountain gum, *Gardenia jasminoides* cape jasmine.
Central Park Mall—*Anemone* windflower.



Walk #1, September 2019.

Walk #1

The first walk in early September was about redirecting attention to the edges of the UTS city campus, and observing green pockets, gardens, parks, and spontaneous plants. We noticed the variety of plants and of planting, starting with the designed landscape of UTS Alumni Green and of the newly developed Darling Square. In contrast to these designed spaces, the UTS neighbourhood is also home to plants that have escaped from gardens. Carried by birds or bats or rats, or on the soles of our shoes and the seams of our clothes, seeds grow between buildings, around drains, and along rail lines. We observed the edible plants garden on the front steps of TAFE, The Ultimo Community Garden, and the established ornamental garden at TAFE, including its vernacular extension in the pots tended for by the students' collective. But we also took notice of how plants push through fences and across human-made borders, escaping and creating new edges and landscapes around the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences and along The Goods Line.



Walk #2, distributing seed balls from workshop, October 2019.

Walk #2

After the first walk we organized a seed ball workshop, collectively producing hundreds of seed balls containing kangaroo grass, parsley and pollinator-friendly flower seeds. On our second walk we retraced our steps and scattered these seed balls in verges, edges, and disturbed areas, as a form of interaction with the landscape.



Walk #3, a parsley plant growing in the shade of gum trees on a dead-end street, November 2019.

Walk #3

Finally after a month and half, we organized a third walk to see what had germinated. It became clear during the walk that climate change had an impact on our immediate environment: the drought, heat, and pollution from bushfires had created a dry, dusty and impoverished landscape, where even established gardens, unless equipped with an irrigation system, were withering away. We found evidence of only one of our seed balls germinating, a parsley plant growing in the shade of gum trees in a dead-end street.

Through these walks we set out to contextualize and question the understandings of UTS within its neighbourhood. We also expanded upon the possibilities of UTS Library to provide a place of discovery and reflection on environmental stewardship. With this map we invite you to participate in this ongoing project: walk at your own pace and let us know what you see, sense and think with the hashtag #mappingedges on Instagram or Twitter, or simply send us an email.

What is your vision for a planty campus?



Alexandra Crosby and Ilaria Vanni
among the plants and books,
The Planty Atlas of UTS installation,
UTS Library (Haymarket), 2019.

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This booklet has been designed by Megan Wong and Ella Cutler.

This project was supported by the Creative in Residence program at UTS Library.

