

'Homegrown
bananas are lovely.
They're so lovely.'



Walk 1—
Mapping Edges:
Marrickville



'My garden is a
mess, but there are
always bananas'

Banana trees form
canopies in the back
streets of Marrickville.

Walk 1: Bananas

Bananas look so tropical that in many visual systems they symbolize the tropics. Many parts of the plant are used: the leaves to package and serve food, the flowers, the fruit as a super food with its own waste-free packaging and as offerings. These practices travel with people as they settle and create the city, as we found out in our wanderings through Marrickville, where bananas are abundant. They are found in many cuisines and are central to cultural and religious rituals, but they also do their own thing, taking over abandoned landscapes and forming very lush thickets.





Spilling out over
fences bananas
cross over and
redefine the
boundaries of
gardens.

As we followed bananas, we began learning more about them. Bananas are not true trees. The stems are made from layers of tightly packed leaf bases, and each new leaf comes up through the centre of the stem. They send out suckers that then escape gardens. They escape from cultivation in the backyards to occupy a wild grove along the train line

from Sydenham to Marrickville stations, where they reclaim an already disturbed landscape. Once there, they protect taro, papaya, fennel and other species that dwell closer to the ground. For as long as they are left alone, they keep spreading, untended. Humans are also part of the banana network, and some insert themselves in this plant's migration, collecting particular species of bananas from the internet, or swapping with neighbours, or sharing suckers and hands of bananas after their harvest. Many of the gardeners we interviewed grow bananas. They have a lot to say about them:

**Banana leaves?
Yeah, I chop and drop. So nothing in the bin'**




In Sydney's climate,
bananas grow
wild without much
attention from
humans.

'I had my first banana crops this winter. Yeah. It was like someone had invented banana. It was interesting. So much more bananary than what you get at the shop.'

'All of my bananas are dwarf Cavendishes. Two of them are red Cavendish. The fruit is pink. They don't grow more than two and a half metres, so they are manageable as well.'

Banana plants often become climbing poles for sweet potato vines. In turn the leaves of the sweet potato function as living mulch, keeping the soil around banana plants cool.





'This is another trick from my mother. You never throw banana skins away. You put them around plants, especially fruit bearing plants and roses.'

'I grow a banana tree in a pot on the roof of my warehouse. It hasn't fruited yet, but it reminds me of the tropics.'



'I have taught people cooking using banana leaf.'

Mapping Edges – Marrickville

Mapping Edges is a transdisciplinary research studio at The University of Technology Sydney. Dr Ilaria Vanni Accarigi is in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and Dr Alexandra Crosby is in the Faculty of Design Architecture and Building. More information at www.mappingedges.org

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