

## Techno plants foil thieves

By [Kate Patterson](#)

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**THE same technology used to deter car thieves is stopping the theft of hundreds of plants from Brisbane's parks and streets.**

Microdot technology and signs warning it is in use have scared off raiders from council gardens.

Brisbane City Council environment and sustainability chairwoman Helen Abrahams said that before the Australian-designed DataDot DNA was used, plants were being stolen within 48 hours of planting.

"We would lose 30-50 plants from every planting that we undertook," she said.

The idea came from a council officer in Grange, who was fed up after a roundabout was robbed of plants three nights in a row.

"When people pinched plants, they walked all over and ruined the garden bed, the mulching and any weed control in place," Cr Abrahams said.

"There is nothing worse than preparing a lovely landscaped area only to see it be trampled and ripped up."

After getting the idea from a TV program, the officer decided to implement the DataDot technology – tiny polyester particles as small as a grain of sand that are etched with an identification number.

"The DataDots are mixed with water and sprayed on the plants, which won't wash off in the rain," Cr Abrahams said.

"If we suspected a plant has been stolen and is being sold off in the markets, for example, we could scan those plants and prove that it is property of the Brisbane City Council."

Ferns, bromeliads and palms were the biggest casualties, and cost about \$35 to replace.

Cr Abrahams said the DataDots cost \$2.20 a plant.

"We go to these lengths because people have to realise that it's public property and that ratepayers' money is going into it," she said.

Car manufacturers including Lexus, Lotus, Audi, Subaru and BMW use the technology.

Australian Institute of Horticulture Queensland president Arno King said affluent areas were often targeted by plant thieves.

"My experience is that plantnappers know about plants and want to put them in their gardens."

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DOTTY: Micro-chipped plants in the Brisbane Botanic Gardens are helping to catch thieves who pilfer plants.

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