



## How to make a Wildlife Friendly Garden

We can all improve our backyards to support wildlife and also make it more attractive for ourselves. A good wildlife garden is more than just a garden left to grow wild. Think of the benefits your garden can make into creating a safe place for wildlife to come to. It's kind of like having your own personal nature reserve and you are the supervisor. The benefits can be huge for both you and the wildlife attracted to your backyard.

**Design** Make your garden more like a clearing in a forest. Surround an open grassy area with dense multi-layered plantings. Include a mulch layer, groundcovers and tussocky grasses, bushy shrubs and trees. The more layers you have, the more creatures will come. Make sure you include lots of native plant species like some of the following: Banksia, Eucalypts, Hakea, Acacias and Grevilleas.

If you're starting your garden from scratch, plant all the layers at once, and space plants 1-2m apart. If you have an established garden, add to the soil level (away from stems and trunks) and plant extra layers, including an understorey and canopy.

**Food and water** Although it is not recommended to feed wildlife, providing food in the form of Native plants can benefit wildlife greatly.

Native plants are the natural supply of food. Just five foods - leaves, nectar, seeds, fruit and insects - satisfy almost every native bird and animal. Don't be tempted to put out honey and water or other foods, as this can lead to diseases and nutrient deficiencies.

Provide as much water as you can by having birdbaths and bowls of different depths set at different levels around the garden. Ponds also supply drinking water. Scrub water bowls regularly and organise someone to top up water whenever you're away.



**Providing shelter** All wild animals need shelter - somewhere to sleep away from predators, the sun, wind and rain. The best shelters include prickly shrubs, dense climbers, hollow trees and logs, piles of rock, and plants which are bushy to ground level. Nest boxes made of untreated timber and attached to trees are also appealing to birds and small animals. A wide metal band around the tree base deters climbing predators, like cats.

### Simply irresistible lures for...

**Lizards:** Provide deep leaf litter, dense prickly bushes, low spreading plants and grassy tussocks, then watch the lizards come. Flat rocks in sunny spots are sunbaking heaven! Make your lizards a bolt hole by laying out a piece of terracotta pipe in a shrubbery or secluded spot and covering one end with soil. Avoid using snail pellets or pesticides, as the lizards will eat the poisoned snails and insects and die.

**Birds:** Plant natives, including bushy shrubs with spiky or thorny leaves, and provide water for the birds to drink and bathe in. Don't use pesticides as the birds will eat the poisoned insects.

**Possums:** Provide dense bushes, hollow logs, nest boxes. Their favourite food is fruit, insects, nectar and new shoots. Don't feed them bread and jam! Forget using pesticides as you may poison your possums.

**Frogs:** Attract frogs by building a pond or semi-permanent pool planted with native aquatic plants and grasses. Moist, mossy areas are frog havens and in the wet season you will find a lot of different species of frogs calling to breed.

### **Somewhere to breed**

- Grow climbers against walls to provide shelter and roosting and breeding sites for birds.
- A thick, well-developed, thorny shrub bed or hedge provides nest sites and shelter for wildlife.
- A bat box provides roosting sites for bats, a pile of leaves may be used by a number of frogs, lizards and even tiny marsupials and a bird box provides somewhere for finches and other small birds to raise their broods.
- Leave tidying of borders and shrubs until late winter or early spring to provide shelter for insects through winter.
- Dead wood is good for beetles and other specialist beneficial insects, fungi and mosses.

### **Somewhere to forage and feed**

- Early and late flowering plants provide nectar for insects at critical times - just after emergence or prior to hibernation.
- Fruiting bushes are a great source of food for birds and mammals during the autumn and part of the winter.
- Annual plants and grasses that produce many seeds in late summer are a good source of seed for birds through autumn into winter.
- Many baby birds need insects - a good source of protein - if they are to grow strong and healthy and survive the winter. A variety of garden plants encourages these insects.



### **Sustainable gardening**

Many of our actions have an impact on wildlife beyond our gardens. Consider this when choosing or using your materials when creating your wildlife garden.

Save rainwater for watering your garden and only top up your pond when necessary.

Avoid using peat and use alternative forms of compost – peat extraction destroys vital wildlife habitats.

Plant natives instead of exotic plants and when planting native plants, ensure they are of genuine native stock and not of continental origin. Also, ensure 'wild flowers' have been cultivated from legally collected seed and not dug-up from the wild (unless you have a permit from DEC).

The aim of habitat gardening is to try and win back some space in our backyards for the disappearing Australians, our local plants and animals. It's a form of gardening for wildlife that involves restoring, protecting or recreating the kinds of habitat that once covered your local area.

Basically it is about:

- Planting your garden with local native species.
- Recreating the layers and complexity of natural habitat (e.g. logs, leaf litter, ground coverings, native bushes and trees)
- Not overwatering
- Using alternatives to pesticides and weedicide
- Minimising the impact of domestic pets by keeping them inside at night.

It is up to you how you plan your garden – but you might want to consider alternatives to lawn such as planting wildflowers, using native groundcovers and plants, or mulching and planting with shrubs and bushes.

<b>Food plants good for Wildlife</b>	<b>Shelter plants good for Wildlife</b>
Wattle	Wattle
She-oak	Red Gum
Saltbush	Eucalyptus
Bottlebrush	Silky Oak
Fox Tail	Grevillea
Eucalypt	Hakea
Figs	Tea Tree
Grevillea	Paperbark Tree
Tea Tree	Banksia
Tussock Grass	Bottle Brush
Spinifex	Dryandra
Cockatoo Grass	Screw Palm

