



CLIENT HANDOUT · HABITAT GARDENING

Attracting Birds, Bees & Small Lizards

Want a garden that buzzes, chirps and scuttles? Here are five simple ingredients for small birds, native bees, butterflies and skinks. They work even in a courtyard.

1 Layers, and some prickles

Plant a mix of heights: a small tree, shrubs, grasses and groundcovers. Add some **small, dense or prickly shrubs**. That's where wrens, finches and thornbills hide and nest. Plant them in clumps, not dotted about.

💡 Did you know? A garden full of big nectar plants (like grevilleas) tends to suit **noisy miners**. They're native honeyeaters that love the suburbs and bully smaller birds away.

2 Clean, safe water

- Put a bird bath in dappled shade, with a perch nearby and thick shrubs close enough for a quick getaway. Keep it out of reach of cats (a pedestal helps).
- Change the water every day or so, and give it a regular scrub.
- Deep or slippery bath? Add a few pebbles or a stick so small birds and insects can climb out.

3 Somewhere for lizards to live

Blue-tongues and skinks need somewhere to hide and a sunny spot to warm up. Leave or add **rocks, logs, leaf litter and twigs**, with low plants nearby. Blue-tongues eat snails and slugs, so they're the gardener's best mate. Skip the snail pellets and other pesticides. All native reptiles are protected in NSW.

4 Food and homes for native bees

Australia has more than 1,700 kinds of native bee, and about 70% of them nest in the ground. So leave a **sunny patch of bare, well-drained soil** with no mulch on it. Blue-banded bees dig burrows in clay banks, soft sandstone and old mortar. They're "buzz pollinators": they buzz to shake pollen out of flowers such as blue flax-lily (*Dianella*), which rely on it. Plant for flowers in every season.

5 Keep it safe

- Cats:** keep them inside or in a cat run, especially at dawn and dusk. Bells don't reliably work.
- Feeding:** best avoided. Feeding tends to favour bigger, bolder birds (currawongs, magpies) over small ones. Never feed bread, mince or honey water.
- Nesting:** check shrubs for nests before pruning, especially in spring.
- Weeds:** small birds often hide in weedy thickets such as lantana. Remove them bit by bit and replant as you go.



Sweet bursaria: prickly shelter, summer flowers for butterflies · Photo: T. Hammer, CC BY (iNaturalist)

Small garden? Start here

- ✓ One prickly shrub (needlebush, prickly Moses, sweet bursaria)
- ✓ A clump of blue flax-lily and a few grasses
- ✓ A bird bath in dappled shade
- ✓ A log or a few rocks in a sunny corner
- ✓ A palm-sized patch of bare soil for bees



Needlebush: shelter for fairy-wrens · Photo: Nathan Odgers, CC BY (iNaturalist)

Habitat Stepping Stones is a free pledge program. Gardens that provide habitat get a plaque for the front fence. It's run independently of RF Horticulture, and I'm happy to help you meet the criteria.

Sources: Birds in Backyards (garden, bird baths, pets, feeding, noisy miner); ANPSA FAQ; NSW Environment & Heritage "Reptiles in Sydney"; Aussie Bee; Australian Museum; RF native-plants list.

12 plants that bring in the wildlife

All local natives. Mix shelter, nectar, seeds and caterpillar food, and there'll be something happening all year.



Photo: Max Campbell, CC BY (iNaturalist)

Prickly beard-heath

Leucopogon juniperinus
to 1 m • Full sun to part shade

Small prickly shrub; shelter and small fruit for birds.



Photo: Petra Holland, CC BY (iNaturalist)

Prickly Moses

Acacia ulicifolia
0.5–2 m • Full sun to part shade

Prickly shelter; flowers for bees.



Photo: Lucas Christofides, CC BY (iNaturalist)

Hairpin banksia

Banksia spinulosa
to 3 m • Full sun to part shade

Autumn–winter nectar for honeyeaters.



Photo: Caleb Catto, CC BY (iNaturalist)

Tick bush

Kunzea ambigua
to 3.5 m • Full sun
Masses of white spring flowers for insects.



Photo: Lucas Christofides, CC BY (iNaturalist)

Rice flower

Ozothamnus diosmifolius
to 5 m • Full sun

Small white/pink flowers for butterflies and bees.



Photo: John Tann, CC BY (iNaturalist)

Blue flax-lily

Dianella caerulea
Full sun to shade

Native bees buzz-pollinate it; blue berries.



Photo: Petra Holland, CC BY (iNaturalist)

Tussock grass

Poa affinis
Part shade

Clumping grass; seeds for finches.



Photo: Lucas Christofides, CC BY (iNaturalist)

Pastel flower

Pseuderanthemum variabile
15–30 cm • Part shade to shade

Caterpillar food for Varied Eggfly and Leafwing butterflies.

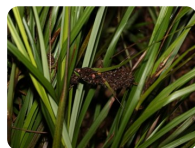


Photo: Greg Tasney, CC BY-SA (iNaturalist)

Rough saw-sedge

Gahnia aspera
Full sun to part shade

Caterpillar food for skipper butterflies. Sharp leaf edges!



Photo: Scott W. Gavins, CC BY (iNaturalist)

Coffee bush

Breynea oblongifolia
to 3 m • Part shade to shade

Berries for birds; grass-yellow butterflies.



Photo: ian_mcallan, CC BY (iNaturalist)

Variable-leaved goodenia

Goodenia heterophylla
to 40 cm • Full sun to part shade
Yellow flowers most of the year; native bees.



Photo: Nicole Kearney, CC BY (iNaturalist)

Spiny-headed mat-rush

Lomandra longifolia
Full sun to shade
Cover for skinks; skipper butterflies.

Wildlife jobs, season by season

Autumn	Best time to plant. Add prickly shrubs and groundcovers. Keep some leaf litter for skinks.
Winter	Banksias feed honeyeaters. A good time to install nest boxes before spring.
Spring	Nesting season: check for nests before pruning or trimming hedges. Leave seed heads on grasses.
Summer	Keep the bird bath clean and full. Leave leaf litter for lizards and insects.

Found an injured animal?

Contact a licensed wildlife rescue group (for example WIRES or Sydney Wildlife Rescue) or a local vet.

Want a wildlife garden planned for you?

Ask about my **native garden advice**. A written plan can match habitat to your garden: plant layers, water, lizard hideouts and bee patches. I can also install bird baths, nest boxes, frog ponds and rain gardens.

Call or text 0481 106 188 • rfhorticulture@outlook.com
Or see "Native garden advice" on my website.

Sources

BirdLife Australia, Birds in Backyards: Getting your garden ready; Bird baths; Domestic pets; Feeding birds; Noisy Miner profile. ANPSA FAQ (layered planting, noisy miners). NSW Environment and Heritage, "Reptiles in Sydney" (blue-tongues, refuges, pesticides, BC Act 2016). Aussie Bee (native bee numbers; ground nesting). Australian Museum, blue-banded bee (buzz pollination, nesting). RF Horticulture native-plants list (plant habitat notes). Habitat Stepping Stones (habitatsteppingstones.org.au).

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