



Fact sheet - Creating your Flora for Fauna Garden

Recreating nature in your backyard

Information courtesy: *Gould League*

There is more to a forest or nature than trees!

Some parks, with only trees and lawn are devoid of any ground dwelling insect life and it is quite difficult to find the little creepy crawlies that all the bigger animals need to eat. Many birds, lizards and mammals need insects to feed on. Having a wide range of plants including trees, shrubs, ground covers and grasses will encourage a happy and healthy crop of tiny creatures. These small animals then become the staple diet for many other animals including the honeyeaters.



Most of us think of honeyeaters as only nectar feeders but they need to consume protein from insects and also feed tiny insects to their chicks.

Photo: Gary Lewis

When you next visit a nature reserve take a close look around. You might notice that in a small section of forest there will be only a few trees, many more shrubs and even more ground cover plants and grasses. To create your own little piece of nature it is wise to use the real thing as a blueprint. For example, in an area of 16 square metres of land you would probably only need to plant one tree, one or two larger shrubs, three or four small shrubs , seven ground covering plants and 18 grasses. Even then it could become a little crowded with shrubs.

Including a variety of shrubs and trees can also help as different plants flower in different seasons. A diversity of plants will also encourage a diversity of insects which again encourages lots of insect-eating birds. In the end this is just what you want, a tiny piece of nature doing its own thing your backyard.





Planting tips for attracting birds and other animals

Many birds like honeyeaters, parrots and finches will be attracted to specific plants, but others will be attracted to an assembly of flowering, fruiting and seeding plants because of the insects and other invertebrates living amongst them. So, it is a good idea to plant a range of trees, shrubs and grasses to mimic natural habitats. For example, Flycatchers like the Grey Fantail and Brown Thornbills need a range of flowering Eucalypts and Acacias so that they can feed on the insects that are attracted to these plants.

Many reptiles are dependent on the shelter and food supplies available among rocks, leaf litter and fallen timber. If you want to specifically attract reptiles to your garden then it is important to include these features. For example, skinks like to bask on rocks and will dart into the crevices when danger looms. Geckos will hunt for spiders and moths under loose bark of Eucalypts and Melaleucas.

Frogs

Frogs also rely on dense cover provided by many shrubs and grasses around water holes but, when breeding will rely on a range of emergent and floating water plants. Leaf and bark litter are also important shelter for frogs. If you are creating a frog habitat in your garden, you will need to include a water source, leaf litter, logs and grasses, reeds and other plants suitable for damp conditions.

Mammals

Although several mammal species can be attracted to specific trees and shrubs for their nectar, fruit and sap, many will also depend on the presence of a range of shrubs and trees that attract insects and spiders. The tiny marsupial mouse – *Antechinus flavipes* feeds both on nectar, a wide range of invertebrates and even house mice and snails.

Further Information:

- ▶ ***Attracting Frogs to your Garden***, Kevin Casey, published by Kimberley Press
- ▶ ***Attracting Butterflies to your Garden***, by Densy Clyne, Reed New Holland
- ▶ ***Attracting Birds to your Garden***, by John Dengate, published by New Holland

Go to the Links section of Flora for Fauna to find further references and useful websites

