

Gardening for native bees

1. Cut back on the mulch

Gardeners love mulch, and it does have its benefits. But half of our native bees dig nests in the soil, and a layer of mulch will discourage them from taking up residence in your garden. Leave a few suitable areas (see under 4) free of mulch for the bees.

2. Minimise your use of weed barriers

Barriers of black plastic or landscape fabric may be an easy solution for keeping the garden weed free. But bees can't tear through these barriers to reach the soil surface, so rethink your weeding strategy. If you must use a barrier, try laying down newspapers instead – they'll biodegrade over time.

3. Plant a range of native plants that flower from early spring to late autumn

Native bees prefer native plants, but they won't wait around until your garden is in flower. Bees need pollen and nectar to live, and if they can't find flowers in your garden, they won't settle in. Furrow bees begin foraging as soon as spring arrives, while resin bees and leafcutter bees often become active in summer. Plant a variety of locally native plants that provide flowers from early spring to late autumn, and you'll keep native bees happy all year. Yellow and blue are bee colours by eminence. Eucalypts, hakeas, peas and eremophila are very attractive.

4. Plant buzz pollinated plants

Honeybees cannot use buzz pollinated plants, so by providing them, you provide an edge for native bees. Senna, fringe, flax and chocolate lilies, Hibbertia, Solanums (including tomato!) and Lasiopetalum are all buzz pollinated. Make sure there are nectar producing plants close by (Scaevola, blue flowering Eremophilas, Christmas bush, Boobialla are all good!).

5. Leave some areas of your garden free of vegetation

Many native bees nest in the ground; these bees usually seek out slightly compacted soils, not too dry, not too wet, with at most light traffic, that are free of vegetation. Yes, they are picky! Look for existing nests, and leave or make a few patches of bare soil around, so they can burrow, and they won't have to travel so far to pollinate your flowers. Remember, ground nesting bees like morning sun and afternoon shade!

6. Plant plants with pithy vines or canes

Dwarf carpenter bees, which grow to just 8 mm, spend their winters nestled inside hollowed out canes or vines. Come spring, the females expand their pithy burrows and lay eggs. When pruning dead branches with pithy centres, leaving a stretch of 10 cm or more above the node can allow bees to construct a nest.

7. Limit pesticide use

Chemical pesticides, particularly broad spectrum pesticides, can negatively impact native bee populations. Use pesticides conservatively, or better yet, not at all. By doing so, you'll also encourage beneficial predators to stick around and feed on your insect pests. For aphids on trees, try using sticky stuff on the trunk to remove the access by ants. This will allow beneficial predators and parasitic wasps to get the problem under control!

8. Leave dead wood for wood nesting bees

Resin bees often use old beetle bores in dead wood!

9. Don't mow your lawn so often

Many weeds provide good sources of nectar and pollen. Mowing trims these flowers. Try to let your lawn grow a little longer before you mow.

10. Install some artificial nests for resin, masked and leafcutter bees

Resin, masked and leafcutter bees make tube-shaped burrows, in which they lay their eggs. These bees don't usually excavate their own burrows, preferring to find existing cavities and build within them. Fill a tin with a bundle of waxed paper drinking straws, mount it to a fence post in a shaded area, as artificial nest. You can also drill some holes in a block of wood, or poke holes in drying clay



Plant Native Plants for Native Bees

Plant local native plants for gardens, hedgerows and windbreaks that will thrive without much attention (water them over the first summer after planting).



Bees generally prefer white, yellow, blue and purple flowers, but planting a diverse range of flowers and having flowers throughout the year is the objective.

Try these plants:



Trees:

Gum trees

Eucalyptus species

Bottle brushes

Callistemon sp, eg *C. sieberi*

Wattles

Acacia species



Shrubs:

Honey myrtles

Melaleuca sp. eg *M. decussata*

Tea trees

Leptospermum species

Christmas bush

Bursaria spinosa

Emu bushes

Eremophila species

Bush peas

Pultenaea sp., Daviesia sp.,

Platylobium obtusangulum

Eutaxia microphylla

Native Lilac (climber)

Hardenbergia violaceae

Daisies

Olearia species



Smaller plants:

Goodenias

Goodenia species, eg *G. ovata,*

G. albiflora, G. blackiana

Boobiolla

Myoporum parvifolium

Fan flowers

Scaevola species

Australian bluebells

Wahlenbergia species

Bulbine lily

Bulbine bulbosa

Native Flax

Linum marginale

Native buttercup

Ranunculus lappaceous

Daisies

including *Xerochrysum* species

Chrysocephalum species

Vittadinia species



To encourage Blue Banded Bees and other buzz pollinating bees, plant:

Shrubs:

Cassia

Senna species

Velvet bush

Lasiopetalum species



Smaller plants:

Flax lilies

Dianella species

Chocolate / Vanilla lilies

Arthropodium species

Guinea flowers

Hibbertia species

Fringe lilies

Thysanotus species

Pink-eyed Susan

Tetraloche pilosa

