Gardening for native bees

1. Be careful with mulch and don't use weed barriers
Mulch has large benefits. But half of our native bees dig nests in the soil, and a layer of mulch or plastic weed barriers 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. Plant a range of native plants that flower from early spring to late autumn
Most native bees only live for a few weeks. They need pollen and nectar to reproduce. If they can't find food in your garden, they won't settle in. Plant a variety of locally native plants that provide flowers from early spring to late autumn, and you'll keep different species of native bees happy all year. Eucalypts, hakeas, Banksia, peas and Eremophila are very attractive.

3. 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 and Lasiopetalum are all buzz pollinated. Make sure there are nectar producing plants close by (Scaevola, Goodenia, Eucalypts, Christmas bush, and Bottlebrush are all good).

4. 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, often on a bit of a slope. 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.

5. Plant plants with pithy vines or canes
When pruning dead branches with pithy centres, leaving a stretch of 10 cm or more above the node can allow reed, masked and resin bees to construct a nest.

7. Limit pesticide use
Chemical pesticides, particularly broad spectrum and systemic insecticides, can negatively impact native bee populations. Use pesticides conservatively, or better yet, not at all. That way, you'll also encourage beneficial predators to stick around and feed on your insect pests.

8. Leave dead wood for wood nesting bees
Resin bees often use old beetle bores in dead wood. Leaving dead trunks or branches will help them.

9. Don't mow your lawn so often
When you don't have many native plants yet, weeds can provide nectar and pollen when nothing else is flowering. 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. Having a small bee hotel will allow you to observe them provisioning their nest. But remember: you won't get many residents in your hotel if it doesn't have a restaurant…So start by planting bee food.

Australian Government
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AgriFutures™ Securing Pollination

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Food for native bees

Photo: davidavid

in Adelaide and the Mount Lofty Ranges

Katja Hogendoorn

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	common name	*latin name*	spring	summer	autumn	winter
	trees					
*	Blackwood	*Acacia melanoxylon*				
	Drooping She-oak	*Allocasuarina verticillata*				
*	Silver Banksia	*Banksia marginata*				
*	River Red Gum	*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*				
*	Pink Gum	*Eucalyptus fasciculosa*				
*	SA Blue Gum	*Eucalyptus leucoxylon*				
*	Grey Box	*Eucalyptus microcarpa*				
	Eucalypts	*Eucalyptus spp.*				
	Short-leaf Honey-myrtle	*Melaleuca brevifolia*				
	Dryland Tea-tree	*Melaleuca lanceolata*				
	small trees					
	Wattle species	*Acacia spp.*				
	Quandong	*Santalum acuminatum*				
	larger shrubs					
*	Sweet Bursaria	*Bursaria spinosa*				
*	Bottlebrush	*Callistemon spp.*				
	Common Fringe-myrtle	*Calytrix tetragona*				
*	Tall Scurf-pea	*Cullen australasicum*				
	Tar bush	*Eremophila glabra*				
	Clasping Goodenia	*Goodenia amplexans*				
	Holly-leaf Grevillea	*Grevillea ilicifolia*				
*	Hakea/Needlewood	*Hakea spp.*				
	Slender Velvet-bush	*Lasiopetalum baueri*				
	Prickly Tea-tree	*Leptospermum continentale*				
	Silky Tea-tree	*Leptospermum lanigerum*				
	Heath Tea-tree	*Leptospermum myrsinoides*				
*	Sticky Boobialla	*Myoporum petiolatum*				
	Downy Mintbush	*Prostanthera behriana*				
*	Large-leaf Bush Pea	*Pultenaea daphnoides*				
	Twiggy Bush-pea	*Pultenaea largiflorens*				
	Flat-stalk Senna	*Senna artemisioides*				
	Cut-leaf Kangaroo-apple	*Solanum laciniatum*				
*	Grey Germander	*Teucrium racemosum*				
	Paper-flower	*Thomasia petalocalyx*				
	small shrubs and higher plants					
	Hand-flower	*Cheiranthera alternifolia*				
*	Common Everlasting	*Chrysocephalum apiculatum*				
	White Everlasting	*Chrysocephalum baxteri*				
	Correa	*Correa spp.*				
	Billy-buttons	*Craspedia glauca*				
	Dampiera sp.	*Dampiera spp.*				
*	Narrow-leaf Bitter-pea	*Daviesia leptophylla*				
*	Other Bitter-peas	*Daviesia spp.*				
*	Parrot-peas	*Dillwynia spp.*				
*	Common Eutaxia	*Eutaxia microphylla*				
*	White Goodenia	*Goodenia albiflora*				
	Spider-flower	*Grevillea lavandulacea*				
	Button Everlasting	*Helichrysum scorpioides*				
	Guinea-flowers	*Hibbertia species*				
*	Austral Indigo	*Indigofera australis*				
	Common Beard-heath	*Leucopogon virgatus*				
*	Austral Trefoil	*Lotus australis*				
	Australian Malva	*Malva behriana*				
	Yam Daisy	*Microseris lanceolata*				
	Austral Stork's-bill	*Pelargonium australe*				
	Holly Flat-pea	*Platylobium obtusangulum*				
*	Matted Bush-pea	*Pultenaea pedunculata*				
	Groundsels	*Senecio spp.*				
	Swainson-pea	*Swainsona spp.*				
	Hairy Pink-bells	*Tetratheca pilosa*				
	Grey Germander	*Teucrium racemosum*				
	New Holland Daisies	*Vittadinia spp.*				
	Native Bluebell	*Wahlenbergia spp.*				
	monocots					
	Common Vanilla-lily	*Arthropodium strictum*				
	Milkmaids	*Burchardia umbellata*				
	Blue Squill	*Chamaescilla corymbosa*				
	Flax-lily	*Dianella spp.*				
	Twining Fringe-lily	*Thysanotus patersonii*				
	Yacca/Grass-tree	*Xanthorrhoea spp.*				
	ground layer					
	Australian Bugle	*Ajuga australis*				
*	Pigface	*Carpobrotus rossi*				
*	Southern Sea-heath	*Frankenia pauciflora*				
	Rough Halgania	*Halgania cyanea*				
*	Muntries	*Kunzea pomifera*				
*	Creeping Boobialla	*Myoporum parvifolium*				
*	Pale Fanflower	*Scaevola albida*				
	Mistletoes					
*	Mistletoe	*Amyema spp.*				
*	Mistletoe	*Lysiana spp.*				

legend

- pollen only
- pollen + nectar
- buzz pollinated plant (see below)
- * star bee plant

How many flowers do bees need?

The more the merrier!

As a guideline, aim for the abundant flowering of three sources of pollen and three sources of nectar at any time.

Why pollen and nectar?

Bees need nectar for energy and pollen for protein. Without this they cannot reproduce.

When do bees need food?

Different species are active at different times of the year.

Expect bees to be present in your garden between late winter and late autumn.

Why native plants?

More than half of the ~ 300 local native bee species do not use introduced plants.

All bees will use native plants, and local native plants are best.

Buzz pollinated plants for native bees

Many native bees can get pollen out of buzz pollinated plants. But introduced honey bees cannot handle the flowers, so by planting these plants, you provide pollen exclusively for native bees.

However, buzz pollinated plants provide pollen only, so make sure to have nectar sources available as well.

Blue banded bees

These bees are generalists and will visit buzz pollinated plant species, vegetables such as tomato and introduced garden plants like salvia, borage and basil, the long-flowering, buzz pollinated Solanum rantonetti and Hibbertia scandens, as well as the nectar producing Duranta erecta and English lavender.

Grasses...

Grasses do not provide any food for bees. However, native grasses can attract butterflies to your garden.