

Planting for Australian native bees.

Most of our native bees are ‘generalist’ foragers, which means they will collect pollen and nectar from a variety of flowers. However, it is best to incorporate a mix of native plants into your garden.

Native plants not only attract bees, they attract other beneficial insects such as predators and parasitoids. Predators hunt and eat many of our pest insects such as aphids, caterpillars, grasshoppers and katydids. Parasitoids lay their eggs inside many soft-bodied pests. The balance between beneficial and pest insects is a delicate one and if we provide the ideal habitat garden for the beneficial insect, the balance will swing more toward controlling the pests. This doesn’t mean that you must use native plants exclusively, but that their inclusion will help with pest control. There are many exotic plants that also attract bees and other pollinators, as well as providing good quality pollen and nectar.

When trying to attract bees, it helps to know if they have a long or short tongue. Long-tongued bees, such as blue-banded and carpenter bees, are especially attracted to flowers with long, tubular shaped petals, such as *Correa* or Lavenders. While short-tongued bees, such as *Lasioglossum* and *Homalictus* species, prefer to forage on shallow, compound flowers such as daisies. Other bees such as resin and leaf-cutter bees favour pea flowers and have specially adapted scopal hairs under their abdomens, to collect the difficult-to-access pollen. This is a guide though, not a rule. Some bees have evolved so closely with their host-plant that they emerge from their nest at the same time of year that the flowers open. These bees often have specialised characteristics to help them better access the pollen and nectar, while efficiently pollinating the flower. Such bees include the *Persoonia* bee, a species of *Leioproctus*, and it’s

almost guaranteed to be found on your *Persoonia* flowers.

When planting to attract bees, plant in patches or ‘swathes’, at least 1 metre across. Bees are more attracted to large areas of flowering plants and will cross pollinate flowers within the same species, thus producing seed. These can be collected and used to propagate more plants.

Australian native plants

- Myrtaceae – Tea tree (*Leptospermum*), Gum trees (*Eucalyptus*, *Angophora*, *Corymbia*), Lilly-pilly (*Syzygium*)
- Proteaceae – Banksia, Grevillea, Hakea, Macadamia
- Native peas – Egg and bacon (*Pultenaea*), Happy wanderer (*Hardenbergia*), Dillwynia
- Fan flower (*Scaevola*), Bursaria, mint bush (*Prostanthera*), blue bell (*Wahlenbergia*), Hibiscus, Emu bush (*Eremophila*), native fuchsia (*Correa*), daisies.

Buzz pollinated plants - Plants requiring ‘sonication’

- Tetratheca, Hibbertia, Flax lily (*Dianella*), Chocolate lily (*Arthropodium*), Fringe lily (*Thysanotus*)

Some exotic plants

- *Salvia* (many different species), daisies, Hebe, *Diosma*, basil, thyme, oregano, mint, rosemary, lavender, parsley, sage, coriander

