



Using Landscape Elements

Backyards for Wildlife Fact Sheet

Planning Your Garden

The best way to attract wildlife is to plant local native plants; however there are a number of landscaping elements that can greatly increase the range of species that will visit your garden.

- The key issues for our native wildlife are the availability of food, water and shelter. Provide these features in your garden and you will see a significant increase in the level of native species living in or visiting your garden.
- Lots of native plants are sensitive to poor drainage, so locate good and poor drainage areas and plan your garden accordingly. For example, place your frog pond or wetland area in a naturally damper area of the garden and grow riparian species around the edges.
- If you wish to achieve a natural look, avoid planting in rows. Grow several of the same species together in a clump, as this generally looks better, has greater habitat value and makes watering more efficient. Also create a variety of plantings, for example a shrubby area, a grassland area and a wetland area. If possible include a patch of densely planted prickly shrubs for wildlife to shelter in or under. This is particularly important for small birds and lizards.



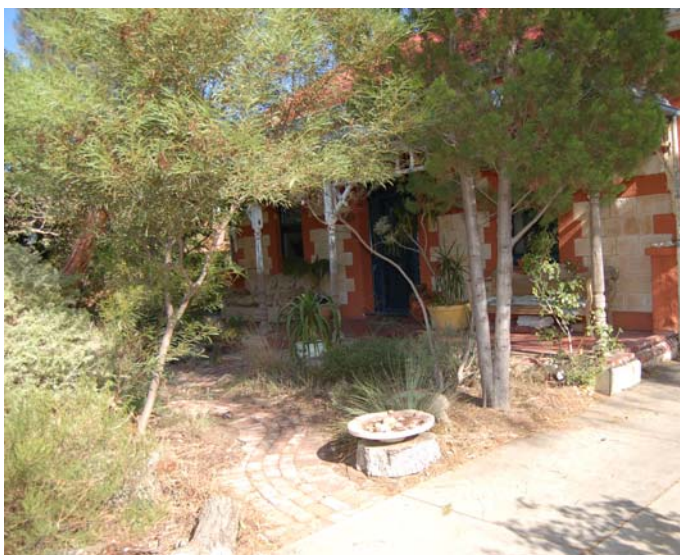
Birdbaths are a simple way to attract birds to your garden, adding colour and interest to your backyard.

Birdbaths, Ponds and Water

A wildlife friendly garden does not necessarily need to look like a bush garden. Any style of garden can incorporate elements that encourage wildlife, such as birdbaths, ponds and nesting boxes, which will enhance its habitat value.

Birdbaths are a simple way to attract birds to your garden, especially in hot weather. Ponds too can provide a source of water for a range of wildlife as well as habitat for fish, frogs and numerous invertebrates. However, fauna can become reliant upon these sources so a commitment to maintain them is vital.

We are all increasingly aware of the pressure that our sources of freshwater are under. In response we are being asked to change the way we use water, especially in our gardens. As we feel the pinch, spare a thought for our native wildlife who must find water everyday. You can help provide a source of water that will add a cooling and attractive element to your garden. No matter how small your garden might be you can include a water feature that will encourage local wildlife to visit it.



Creating a wildlife friendly garden is not expensive and can help save water by planting drought tolerant local native species.

Nesting boxes

The clearing of Adelaide's original bushland has resulted in the loss of natural nesting hollows in old trees. More recently, the removal of dead trees and limbs for firewood has further contributed to the decline in suitable hollows. This has impacted upon the many bird and mammal species that rely on hollows for nesting and shelter – and Australian wildlife has the highest rate of hollow dependency in the world.

While every attempt should be made to conserve existing hollows the reality is that there is currently a great shortage with no likelihood of new ones being created due to the long time frames (80+ years!) required for hollows to form.

One alternative is to mimic natural hollows by using of nesting boxes to help recreate homes for birds, bats and possums. When installing a nest box remember to locate it high above the ground (4-8m) to avoid threats from dogs, cats, rats and foxes. The box entrance needs to face away from the hot westerly sun but also be positioned to avoid the wind and wet (In Adelaide a north-easterly direction is preferable).

It is important to remember that nesting boxes for all native species require some management. This means removing the eggs and nestlings of Common Starlings and Sparrows and destroying the nests of feral Honeybees or European Wasps. You must have convenient regular access to the nest box, and you must be aware of what creatures are using it for what purposes.

Be aware that not all hollows exist high up in trees, fallen hollow or rotten logs are vitally important in providing a refuge for frogs, lizards, echidnas and insects at ground level.

Artificial Feeding

Do not artificially feed animals as they may become dependent on you as a food source and may starve if feeding ceases. Additionally, an artificial diet will most likely not provide adequate nutrients. Instead, you can help wildlife by growing a variety of locally native plants that produce flowers and berries – this will not only provide natural food resources but will also create much needed habitat in urban areas.



Backyards for Wildlife is managed by the SA Department of Environment and Natural Resources, with support from the Adelaide & Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management Board and the Australian Government

Rocks, Logs and Mulch

Incorporate fallen tree limbs, leaf matter and rocks as these provide valuable habitat for some forms of wildlife. Remember that it is detrimental, and in some cases illegal, to take fallen logs or moss rocks from bushland as they are already providing habitat, so alternative sources need to be found.

Mulch

Adding a layer of mulch to your garden can reduce evaporative water loss by over 70%. It will also reduce stress to plants by keeping soil temperatures down. A good layer of mulch will also reduce weed growth and improve the biodiversity of soil invertebrates that maintain soil structure and productivity. This will ensure that there are plenty of bugs and slugs to provide food for a range of native species.

Why a Backyard for Wildlife?

In Australia, gardening has been recognised as one of our favourite pastimes and what we do in our home gardens has the potential to benefit or harm the natural environment.

By choosing to develop and maintain a garden that follows the five basic Backyards for Wildlife principles (see below), you can help contribute to a better local environment while at the same time conserve our local flora and fauna, create important habitat, reduce your maintenance costs, and reduce the threat of invasive environmental weeds.

Backyards for Wildlife principles:

1. USE LOCALLY NATIVE PLANTS.
2. USE PLANTS THAT ARE A RANGE OF HEIGHTS.
3. PROVIDE FLOWERS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR.
4. MANAGE YOUR PETS RESPONSIBLY.
5. MINIMISE CHEMICAL USE.

Please consider applying some of these principles to your own backyard, so that together we can all help grow a great living environment for Adelaide.

Find Out More

Visit www.backyards4wildlife.com.au to access more Backyards for Wildlife and biodiversity information including an interactive map with lists of what grew in your suburb prior to 1836, a plant database and contact details for specialist native plant nurseries.

For further Information Contact

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