

Using landscape elements



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

Planning 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 native species living in or visiting your garden.

Lots of native plants are sensitive to poor drainage, so locate the good and poorly drained areas of your yard to plan your garden. For example, place your pond or wetland area in a naturally damper area of the garden and grow riparian (boggy) species around the edges.

If you wish to achieve a natural look, avoid planting in rows. Growing several of the same species together in a clump, 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. Incorporating fallen tree limbs, leaf matter and rocks provides valuable habitat for some wildlife.

Birdbaths, ponds and water

Provide a source of water to add a cooling and attractive element to your garden. No matter how small or what style your garden, a water feature will encourage local wildlife to visit. However, fauna can become reliant upon these sources so a commitment to maintain them is vital.

Birdbaths need to be maintained with clean water and scrubbed monthly with a hard plastic brush to remove algae.

Ponds can provide water for a range of wildlife as well as habitat for native fish, frogs and numerous invertebrates. It is important to consider the location and design of your pond. The area should ideally:

- not disturb you or your neighbours (frogs can be vocal, especially at night)
- be protected from predators, including cats and dogs
- receive part sun and part shade (as a rule two-thirds of the pond should be shaded at all times)
- be located near a source of insects to attract frogs (e.g. local native plants or a mulched area)
- not enter a waterway directly or indirectly
- be placed so no run-off containing potential pollutants will enter your pond (such as from a compost bin)
- have gently sloped edges to help terrestrial frogs move in and out of the water easily.



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

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 of 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 shortage, with no likelihood of new ones being created due to the long timeframes (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 to 8 m) 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 native species require some management. This means removing the eggs and nestlings of Common Starlings and House Sparrows and destroying the nests of feral Honeybees or European Wasps. You must have convenient regular access to the nest box, and you aware of what creatures are using it for what purposes.

Be aware also, that not all hollows exist high up in trees, fallen hollow or rotten logs are also 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 local native plants that produce flowers, seeds and berries – this will provide natural food resources and create much needed habitat in urban areas.

Rocks, logs and mulch

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.

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.

However do not mulch too close to the plant's stems as this may encourage rot.

Why a backyard for wildlife?

In Australia, gardening has been recognised as one of our favourite pastimes. 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 4 Wildlife principles, you can help contribute to a better local environment, while at the same time conserving our local flora and fauna, create important habitat, reduce your maintenance costs, and reduce the threat of invasive environmental weeds.

Backyards 4 Wildlife top 5 tips

1. Use plants native to your suburb.
2. Plant species that are a range of heights.
3. Use a mix of local native plants that flower at different times 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 help grow a great living environment for Adelaide.



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

More information

Visit the urban biodiversity page of our website to access more Backyards 4 Wildlife information, weeds brochure, garden booklets, the local native plant selector and contact details for specialist native plant nurseries.

www.naturalresources.sa.gov.au/adelaidemtloftyranges

Or contact your nearest Natural Resources Centre

Black Hill

115 Maryvale Road, Athelstone, SA 5076
P (08) 8336 0901

Eastwood

205 Greenhill Road, Eastwood, SA 5063
P (08) 8273 9100

Gawler

8 Adelaide Road, Gawler South, SA 5118
P (08) 8523 7700

Willunga

5 Aldinga Road, Willunga, SA 5172
P (08) 8550 3400

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