

## 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 advised to incorporate a mix of native plants into your garden. Native plants not only attract bees, but 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, and provide good quality pollen and nectar.



Short-tongued bee on a shallow compound daisy.

When trying to attract bees, it helps if you know if they have a long tongue or a short tongue. Long-tongued bees, such as blue-banded bees 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 bees 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.



Long-tongued bee foraging on a long, tubular flower.

When planting to attract bees, it is advised to 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*), *Goodia*, *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' by bees.

*Tetradlea*, *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

