Adelaide Hills: South Australia

Powerful pollinators

Encouraging insect pollinators in farm landscapes

Pollinators are an essential component of agricultural production and of healthy, biodiverse landscapes. Protecting and enhancing pollinator resources on farms will help support a diverse range of pollinators. This brochure provides an introduction to encouraging insect pollinators on farms and gardens, including a guide to choosing plants that will support diverse pollinators throughout the year.

WHEEN BEE FOUNDATION

The power of pollinators

Pollinators – mostly insects, but also birds and mammals – assist the production of seeds and fruit in many plant species by visiting flowers in search of food (nectar and/or pollen). Whilst foraging they transfer pollen from one flower to another, facilitating fertilisation, which results in fruits and seeds.

Honey bees, native bees and other native insects like hoverflies, wasps and butterflies provide essential pollination services for native plants, pastures, crops, fruits and vegetables.

Native vegetation supports pollinators by providing food and nesting sites. Nearby crops and pastures will benefit from the increased abundance and diversity of pollinators in the landscape.

Pollinators and food security

Without insect pollinators, the quantity and diversity of food grown for humans in contemporary agricultural systems would be severely restricted. Many of the food crops we eat, as well as pasture and fodder crops, benefit from pollination by insects.

Pollinator-dependent crops include almonds, apples, blueberries and vegetables, as well as many crops grown for seed production, such as canola, sunflowers and carrots.

The quantity and diversity of insect pollinators are key drivers of production as they influence both crop yields and quality. Under-pollination results in smaller and misshapen fruit or seed that isn't viable.

Grazing enterprises can also suffer from a reduction in the abundance or diversity of pollinators, due to the role these insects play in the persistence of nitrogen-fixing pasture legumes such as clover.

A diverse and healthy community of pollinators generally provides more effective and consistent pollination than relying on any single species.

Insect populations are in decline worldwide due to land clearing, intensive or monocultural agriculture, pesticide use, pollution, colony disease, increased urbanisation and climate change. Low pollinator numbers mean not all flowers are pollinated, leading to low fruit or seed set. This in turn reduces fruit and vegetable harvest yields, and decreases food supply.

Under-pollination results in smaller, misshapen fruit such as this strawberry.

Healthy ecosystems

Pollinators are both essential to, and depend upon, healthy ecosystems. A growing human population and increasing demand for food puts pressure on ecosystems, while declining ecosystem function will in turn negatively impact food production.

Insect pollinators are a prime example of this — without healthy ecosystems and the presence of patches of native vegetation to support insect populations, pollination will decline. This will threaten both crop productivity and the persistence of native, pollinator-dependent flowering plants.

Pollinators require habitat that contains year-round food sources, breeding resources and nesting sites. The presence of pollinator habitat adjacent to food crops has been shown to improve food production by enabling a greater variety and number of pollinators to persist year-round, providing pollination services when required.

Turn to the centre of this brochure for a guide to planting for pollinators.

Diapause or diet? Where are the insects?

Many insect pollinators undergo a diapause during colder winter months. Diapause is a period of suspended development during unfavourable environmental conditions, and during this period insect pollinators do not need flowers. Birds and other small mammals will continue to benefit from available pollen and nectar during this time.

If there are low numbers of insect pollinators in your local area, it is important to determine whether this is because of diapause, or because of an inadequate availability of nectar and pollen, creating a 'food desert' where insect pollinators cannot survive.

There are still many unknowns about insect pollinators in Australia. Take part in Australian Pollinator Week or in the annual Australian Pollinator Count to learn more about pollinators in your area – visit: **AustralianPollinatorWeek.org.au** and **AustralianPollinatorCount.au**

Encouraging pollinators on your property

Create pollination reservoirs

Pollination reservoirs are areas of native plant species that provide floral resources for pollinators. They can be new plantings or existing habitat, such as shelterbelts or remnant vegetation. A high diversity of plant species is essential to provide nectar, pollen and nesting sites throughout the year. Pollination reservoirs need to be close enough to crops to ensure that pollinators can fly easily to them.

Use existing habitat

Protect and improve existing habitat where possible. Roadsides, shelterbelts, dam margins, woodlands, grasslands, rocky areas, river and creek edges can all be important pollinator-attracting areas, bringing valuable pollination services to your property.

Native vegetation stands provide habitat for pollinators. If you have them on your property, protect and enhance the areas where they grow.

Plant trees, shrubs and groundcovers

Planting a variety of species of groundcovers, shrubs and trees on your property will further attract pollinators to your area. Use a combination of direct seed sowing and planting tube stock to establish new vegetation. Initial watering and protection from grazing will improve the success rate of young plants. Wildflowers, including our native pea species, are excellent at attracting a diverse range of native pollinators.

Plant for the future

When establishing pollinator habitat, consider including species that are indigenous to your area but can tolerate increasingly drier and warmer conditions, to create resilient habitat for climate change. Rehabilitate weedy areas into managed pollination reservoirs by introducing lots of flowering plant diversity. Be careful not to plant invasive or listed weeds, and look for suitable replacements.

Amplify the flower signal

Plants have evolved large flowers or clusters of smaller flowers because they attract more pollinator visits. Large, colourful and diverse plantings attract more pollinators. Ideally, plant in groups that contain different vegetation layers – combine a species-rich mixture of wildflowers, ground-covers, herbs, lilies, rushes, climbers, shrubs and trees.

Utilise ecotones

Ecotones are the margins between two different habitats. Ecotones often contain a more diverse mixture of species because they are used by species from both habitats. Protect and utilise ecotones such as the transition zones between woodland and grassland, or heath and shrubland, to create highly diverse floral and insect communities.

Connectivity counts

Insect pollinators benefit from greater connectivity of habitat in a landscape, which allows them to forage over a wider radius and increase in numbers in a local area. Encourage neighbours and other landholders to plant for pollinators and create connections across your landscape.

Get to know your local flora

Each property and region will have distinct populations of insects, based on the plants and climate. Identifying and understanding the insects in your area will help you develop better plantings. The plants growing in nearby bush will be well suited to the climate and soils in your region. Local community groups and specialist native nurseries can provide useful information and usually produce local plant species.

Double the crop value

Plants that are pollinator-attracting are sometimes crop species in their own right and can be used to diversify farm production. Bush foods such as muntries, wirilda (wattle) seed, yam daisy and many more are in high demand for use in fresh and manufactured products. Native plant seed is also needed for revegetation projects.

Supporting beekeepers by hosting beehives is an opportunity to increase pollinator numbers on the farm.

Reduce chemical use

Insecticides, fungicides and herbicides all affect bee, colony and wild pollinator health. Herbicides can impact pollinators by reducing the availability and diversity of flora and removing vegetation that helps support insect life. Some herbicides can also harm the beneficial microbes in the insect gut. Insecticides are an obvious threat to pollinators, yet many beneficial insects will, in healthy numbers, help control pest insects, ultimately reducing the need for insecticide use.

Many crops are dependent on pollination by bees. When chemical pest control is unavoidable, select products that are least harmful for pollinators and apply insecticides in the evening or at night when pollinators are not active. Always use according to directions, especially for withholding periods, and notify beekeepers a few days before spraying chemicals so beehives can be safely relocated away from harm.

Be a citizen scientist and do some detective work to discover local pollinators on your property. Visit **inaturalist.ala.org.au** to be involved.

Safeguard the bees? The best way to 'save the bees' and protect our pollinators is to create an abundance of diverse habitat – from the ground up! There is much interest in keeping a bee hive to promote pollinators, but there are serious legal and biosecurity responsibilities that must be considered, and that the introduction of a bee hive does not displace existing native pollinators and insects. Be a friend of pollinators and say it with flowers!

A guide to planting for pollinators for the Adelaide Hills region

Healthy populations of insect pollinators are important for crop yields, orchard production and thriving native vegetation.

This planting guide will help you choose plant species to attract and keep pollinators on your property throughout the year.

The Adelaide Hills (~1,500 km²) is located in the southern Mount Lofty Ranges, just east of Adelaide, South Australia. It has Mediterranean climate, with an average annual rainfall between 700–1200 mm. The steep parallel slopes resulted from compression of the earth's crust along a series of fault lines. The original vegetation is stringy bark forest and grassy Eucalypt woodlands identified by their overstorey (e.g. pink gum, or grey box). The fertile, more gently sloping areas have largely been cleared for horticulture (apple, pear, cherry and strawberry), viticulture, and grazing, while the steeper hillsides and unfertile tops have remained forested.

The plants listed in this Guide will help supply rewards to pollinators, with an emphasis on species that are indigenous and suited to local climates.

The eucalypt species in the chart have been selected as high quality honey production species. Most eucalypts do not flower every year, so choosing diverse species will help create continuously flowering habitat.

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The pollinator plant list

To create pollinator-attracting plantings, use the Guide to choose a selection of plants with a variety of flower colours, different growth habits and a range of flowering seasons.

For each species, the planting Guide lists:

- life-form/'habit' (climber, herb, shrub or tree) and height (m).
- the vegetation type in which they naturally occur
- flower colour and flowering season
- growth requirements (sun/shade, moist/dry)
- insect groups that may visit each plant and the floral reward (pollen and/or nectar).

The coloured bars indicate the flowering months for each species. Darker shading denotes the peak flowering period, with a lighter shading for non-peak flowering months. Flowering dates may differ between regions and seasons, particularly for non-peak times, if your local climate is consistently warmer or cooler than average, with earlier or later flowering.

Sourcing plants

Most of the plant species listed are available from retail or wholesale nurseries or native plant growers, and local environment groups. If you can't source these plants at your local garden centre, or indigenous nursery, ask them to contact the local nursery suppliers and plant growers listed online. See the reverse of the Guide for details.

Lifeform	Common name	Scientific name	Family	Vegetation type	Height	Flower colour	Flowering												Aspect	Soil moisture	Pollinator reward		Visitation by pollinator							
							Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec			Pollen	Nectar	Native bees	Honey bees	Hoverflies	Wasps	Butterflies	Moths	Beetles	Flies
Crop plants																														
Climber / Shrub	Grape Vine	*Vitis vinifera*	Vitaceae	Horticulture	1–3 m	Green													Sun	Damp to dry	●		●	●	●					●
Herb / Forb	Strawberry	*Fragaria x annanasa*	Rosaceae	Horticulture	0.3 m	White													Sun	Damp to dry	●		●	●	●	●	●		●	●
Tree	Avocado	*Persea americana*	Lauraceae	Horticulture	2–5 m	Green													Sun	Damp to dry	●		●		●					●
Tree	Apple	*Malus domestica*	Rosaceae	Horticulture	2–7 m	Pink													Sun	Damp to dry	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Tree	Pear	*Pyrus communis*	Rosaceae	Horticulture	2–7 m	White													Sun	Damp to dry	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Tree	Cherry	*Prunus avium*	Rosaceae	Horticulture	2–7 m	White													Sun	Damp to dry	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Indigenous plants																														
Climber	Sweet Apple Berry	*Billardiera cymosa*	Pittosporaceae	Plains, Footslopes, Hills	1.5 m	Blue, Mauve													Sun to semi-shade	Dry to damp	●*		●							
Climber	Old Man's Beard	*Clematis microphylla*	Ranunculaceae	Woodland, Forest	0.5–4 m	Cream													Sun to semi-shade	Dry	●	●	●	●	●	●			●	●
Herb / Forb	Australian Bugle	*Ajuga australis*	Lamiaceae	Woodland	0.3 m	Purple													Semi-shade	Damp	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			●
Herb / Forb	Chocolate Lily	*Dichopogon strictus*	Asparagaceae	Woodland, Forest	0.5 m	Pink, Mauve													Sun	Dry	●*		●							
Herb / Forb	Blue Boronia	*Cyanothamnus coerulescens*	Rutaceae	Forest, Woodland	0.5 m	Blue													Sun to semi-shade	Dry	●	●			●		●	●		●
Herb / Forb	Milkmaids	*Burchardia umbellata*	Colchicaceae	Woodland, Grassland	0.3 m	White, Pink													Sun to semi-shade	Dry to damp	●		●							
Herb / Forb	Finger Flower	*Cheiranthera alternifolia*	Pittosporaceae	Heath, Grassland, Woodland	0.3 m	Purple													Sun to semi-shade	Dry to damp	●*		●						●	
Herb / Forb	Common Everlasting	*Chrysocephalum apiculatum*	Asteraceae	Woodland, Grassland	0.5 m	Dark Yellow													Sun to semi-shade	Dry	●	●	●	●	●		●	●		●
Herb / Forb	Button Everlasting	*Coronidium scorpioides*	Asteraceae	Woodland, Grassland	0.2–0.5 m	Yellow													Sun	Dry	●	●	●	●	●		●		●	●
Herb / Forb	Black Anther Flax Lily	*Dianella revoluta*	Asphodelaceae	Woodland, Grassland	0.3–1 m	Purple													Sun to semi-shade	Dry	●*		●							
Herb / Forb	Black's Goodenia	*Goodenia blackiana*	Goodeniaceae	Woodland, Forest	0.1 m	Yellow													Sun to semi-shade	Dry	●	●	●							
Herb / Forb	Native Flax	*Linum marginale*	Linaceae	Grassland, Forest, Woodland	0.3–0.6 m	Blue													Sun to semi-shade	Dry to damp	●		●		●					●
Herb / Forb	Yam Daisy	*Microseris walteri*	Asteraceae	Woodland, Forest, Grassland	0.3 m	Yellow													Sun to semi-shade	Dry to damp	●	●	●	●	●	●				●
Herb / Forb	Austral Storksbill	*Pelargonium australe*	Geraniaceae	Woodland	0.3–0.7 m	Pink													Sun	Dry	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Herb / Forb	Smooth Rice Flower	*Pimelea glauca*	Thymelaeaceae	Woodland, Forest	0.1–1 m	White													Sun to semi-shade	Dry	●	●					●	●		
Herb / Forb	Pale Fan Flower	*Scaevola albida*	Goodeniaceae	Woodland, Forest	0.3–0.6 m	White													Sun to semi-shade	Damp to dry	●	●	●	●	●					●
Herb / Forb	Grass Trigger Plant	*Stylidium graminifolium*	Stylidiaceae	Woodland, Forest	0.3–0.5 m	Pink													Sun to semi-shade	Dry to damp	●	●	●	●	●					●
Herb / Forb	New Holland Daisy	*Vittadinia cuneata*	Asteraceae	Woodland	0.1–0.4 m	Purple, Yellow													Sun to semi-shade	Dry to damp	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Herb / Forb	Native Bluebells	*Wahlenbergia stricta*	Campanulaceae	Woodland, Grassland	0.3–0.6 m	Purple													Sun	Dry to damp	●		●		●	●	●			●
Shrub	Common Fringe Myrtle	*Calytrix tetragona*	Myrtaceae	Woodland, Heathland	0.5–1.7 m	Pink													Sun	Dry	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Shrub	Native Fuchsia	*Correa reflexa*	Rutaceae	Woodland, Forest	0.5–1 m	Green, Red, Yellow													Sun to semi-shade	Dry	●	●	●	●	●		●			●
Shrub	Leafless Bitter Pea	*Daviesia brevifolia*	Fabaceae	Woodland, Heathland	0.6–1.5 m	Pink, Red													Sun	Dry	●	●	●	●						
Shrub	Narrow-Leaf Bitter Pea	*Daviesia leptophylla*	Fabaceae	Woodland, Heathland	1–2.5 m	Yellow, Red													Sun to semi-shade	Damp to dry	●	●	●	●						
Shrub	Holly-Leaf Bitter Pea	*Daviesia ulicifolia*	Fabaceae	Woodland, Heathland	0.5–1.5 m	Brown, Orange													Sun to semi-shade	Dry to damp	●	●	●	●						
Shrub	Red Parrot Pea	*Dillwynia hispida*	Fabaceae	Woodland, Forest	0.2–0.6 m	Orange													Sun	Dry to damp	●	●	●	●						
Shrub	Common Heath	*Epacris impressa*	Ericaceae	Woodland, Forest	0.2–1.2 m	Pink													Sun to semi-shade	Damp	●		●	●						
Shrub	Mallee Bush Pea	*Eutaxia microphylla*	Fabaceae	Woodland, Forest	0.5–1 m	Yellow													Sun to semi-shade	Dry	●	●	●	●						
Shrub	Clasping Goodenia	*Goodenia amplexans*	Goodeniaceae	Woodland, Forest	0.5–1.2 m	Yellow													Sun to semi-shade	Dry	●	●	●						●	●
Shrub	Hop Goodenia	*Goodenia ovata*	Goodeniaceae	Woodland, Forest	1–2.5 m	Yellow													Sun to semi-shade	Dry to damp	●	●	●						●	●
Shrub	Holly Grevillea	*Grevillea ilicifolia*	Proteaceae	Woodland, Forest, Heathland	0.1–2 m	Red													Sun to semi-shade	Dry	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Shrub	Lavender Grevillea	*Grevillea lavandulacea*	Proteaceae	Woodland, Forest, Heathland	0.5–1 m	Pink													Sun	Damp	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Shrub	Native Lilac	*Hardenbergia violacea*	Fabaceae	Woodland	1.5–2 m	Purple													Sun to semi-shade	Damp to dry	●	●	●	●			●	●		●
Shrub	Prickly Guinea Flower	*Hibbertia exutiacies*	Dilleniaceae	Woodland, Forest	0.3–0.5 m	Yellow													Semi-shade	Damp	●*		●							
Shrub	Erect Guinea Flower	*Hibbertia riparia*	Dilleniaceae	Heathland, Open forest	0.1–0.5 m	Yellow													Semi-shade	Dry	●*		●							
Shrub	Silky Guinea Flower	*Hibbertia sericea*	Dilleniaceae	Forest, Woodland	0.2–0.4 m	Yellow													Sun to semi-shade	Dry	●*		●							
Shrub	Australian Indigo	*Indigofera australis*	Fabaceae	Forest, Grassland	1–2 m	Purple													Sun	Dry	●	●	●	●						
Shrub	Slender Velvet Bush	*Lasiopetalum baueri*	Malvaceae	Forest, Woodland	0.5–1.5 m	Pink													Semi-shade	Dry	●*		●							
Shrub	Boobialla	*Myoporum parvifolium*	Scrophulariaceae	Open	0.1 m	White													Sun	Dry	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Shrub	Twiggy Daisy Bush	*Olearia ramulosa*	Asteraceae	Woodland, Forest	1–1.5 m	White, Mauve, Pink, Yellow													Sun to semi-shade	Dry to damp	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●
Shrub	Common Flat Pea	*Platylobium obtusangulum*	Fabaceae	Forest, Woodland	0.3–1 m	Orange, Red													Sun to semi-shade	Damp to dry	●	●	●	●						
Shrub	Downy Mint Bush	*Prostanthera behriana*	Lamiaceae	Woodland, Forest	1–2.5 m	Pale Violet													Sun to semi-shade	Dry	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Shrub	Matted Bush Pea	*Pultenaea pedunculata*	Fabaceae	Woodland, Forest	0.1 m	Yellow, Red													Semi-shade	Dry to damp	●	●	●	●						
Shrub	Scented Groundsel	*Senecio odoratus*	Asteraceae	Woodland, Mallee, Grassland	0.5–1.8 m	Yellow													Semi-shade	Damp to dry	●	●	●		●				●	●
Shrub	Silver Cassia	*Senna artemisioides*	Fabaceae	Open Woodland	1–3 m	Yellow													Sun	Dry	●*		●							
Shrub	Blue Rod	*Stemodia florulenta*	Plantaginaceae	Grassland	0.5 m	Purple													Sun	Dry	●	●	●		●		●		●	●
Shrub	Pink-Eyed Susan	*Tetratheca pilosa*	Elaeocarpaceae	Woodland, Forest, Heathland	0.2–0.5 m	Pink													Sun to semi-shade	Damp to dry	●*		●							
Shrub / Small Tree	Slaty She-Oak	*Allocasuarina muelleriana*	Casuarinaceae	Woodland, Forest	1–3 m	Brown, Red													Sun to shade	Dry	●		●	●	●			●	●	●
Shrub / Small Tree	Desert Banksia	*Banksia ornata*	Proteaceae	Woodland, Forest	1–2 m	Pale Yellow													Sun to semi-shade	Dry	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Shrub / Small Tree	Silver Banksia	*Banksia marginata*	Proteaceae	Woodland, Forest	1–5 m	Pale Yellow													Sun to semi-shade	Damp to dry	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Shrub / Small Tree	Christmas Bush	*Bursaria spinosa*	Pittosporaceae	Forest, Woodland	2–4 m	White, Cream													Sun to semi-shade	Dry	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Shrub / Small Tree	Scarlet Bottlebrush	*Callistemon rugulosus*	Myrtaceae	Woodland, Heathland	1.5–4 m	Red													Sun	Dry	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Shrub / Small Tree	Beaked Hakea	*Hakea rostrata*	Proteaceae	Woodland, Heathland	1–4 m	White													Sun to semi-shade	Dry	●	●	●	●	●	●			●	●
Shrub / Small Tree	Prickly Tea Tree	*Leptospermum continentale*	Myrtaceae	Wetland, Heathland, Forest	1–4 m	White, Pink													Sun	Dry to damp	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Shrub / Small Tree	Woolly Tea Tree	*Leptospermum lanigerum*	Myrtaceae	Woodland, Heathland	1–5 m	White													Sun to semi-shade	Damp	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Shrub / Small Tree	Silky Tea Tree	*Leptospermum myrsinoides*	Myrtaceae	Woodland, Forest, Heathland	1–3 m	White, Pink													Sun	Dry to damp	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Shrub / Small Tree	Totem-Poles	*Melaleuca decussata*	Myrtaceae	Woodland, Forest	2–4 m	Purple													Sun to semi-shade	Dry	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Tree	Drooping She-Oak	*Allocasuarina verticillata*	Casuarinaceae	Forest, Woodland	2–7 m	Red													Sun	Damp to dry	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Tree	Blackwood	*Acacia melanoxylon*	Fabaceae	Woodland, Forest	7–20 m	Yellow													Sun to semi-shade	Damp to dry	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Tree	Coastal Wattle	*Acacia myrtifolia*	Fabaceae	Woodland, Forest	2–3 m	Yellow													Sun	Damp to dry	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Tree	Golden Wattle	*Acacia pycnantha*	Fabaceae	Woodland, Forest	2–5 m	Yellow													Sun to semi-shade	Dry to damp	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Tree	Brown Stringy Bark	*Eucalyptus baxteri*	Myrtaceae	Woodland	6–25 m	White													Sun	Damp	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Tree	Cup Gum	*Eucalyptus cosmophylla*	Myrtaceae	Woodland, Forest	3–8 m	Cream													Sun	Damp	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Tree	Pink Gum	*Eucalyptus fasciculosa*	Myrtaceae	Woodland, Forest	5–18 m	Cream													Sun	Dry to damp	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Tree	Long-Leaf Box	*Eucalyptus goniocalyx*	Myrtaceae	Woodland, Forest	8–20 m	White													Sun	Dry to damp	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Tree	SA Blue Gum	*Eucalyptus leucoxylon*	Myrtaceae	Woodland, Forest	8–30 m	Cream, Pink, Red													Sun	Damp to dry	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Tree	Grey Box	*Eucalyptus microcarpa*	Myrtaceae	Woodland	6–20 m	White, Cream													Sun	Damp to dry	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Tree	Messmate Stringy Bark	*Eucalyptus obliqua*	Myrtaceae	Forest	15–40 m	White, Cream													Sun	Damp	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Tree	Rough Barked Manna Gum	*Eucalyptus viminalis*	Myrtaceae	Woodland	6–20 m	White													Sun	Damp to dry	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Tree	Dryland Tea-Tree	*Melaleuca lanceolata*	Myrtaceae	Woodland, Healthland	3–8 m	Cream													Sun to semi-shade	Wet to dry	●	●	●			●	●	●		

*Buzz Pollinated

Know your pollinators

European honey bee
(Apis mellifera) © iStock

European honey bees have two pairs of wings and long, segmented antennae. They are daytime-flying and feed on nectar and pollen. They are generalist pollinators and provide the bulk of pollination services for horticulture and crop plants. Honey bees and native bees are both essential to functioning ecosystems and food security in Australia.

Honey bees have become an important part of the Australian landscape. Honey bees live as colonies, and have a long history of coexistence with humans, including in domestic gardens.

Leafcutter bee
(Megachile maculariformis) © Karen Retra

Australian native bees comprise more than 2000 species, which provide essential pollination services. Native bees are generally solitary and live in nests in the ground or in hollow stems, old borer holes and other cracks and crevices, and some have evolved to pollinate particular native flowers through 'buzz pollination'. Although many Australian native bees are generalist foragers, some species have co-evolved with native plants and adapted to be the most effective pollinators of their flowers. Many native plant species, such as *Dianella* and *Grevillea* require specially adapted insects to access their nectar and enable the transfer of pollen to the stigma. Most native bees are solitary, but some species found in northern Australia (*Tetragonula* sp. and *Austroplebeia* sp.) are social bees and are used for commercial pollination of crops like macadamia nuts.

Bee fly
(Family Bombyliidae) © Karen Retra

Fly species number up to 30,000 in Australia, and can be identified by having only one pair of flight wings. A second set of wings are modified into club-shaped paddles that allow flies to hover and stabilise their flight. Unlike bees and wasps, many flies (Brachycera) have very small, clubbed antennae at the front of their head. Flies, including blowflies, are often attracted to flowers that smell like carrion. Some flower-flies, have hairy bodies that easily collect pollen while they are feeding. Flies provide a range of services in the garden, including pollination, decomposition and predation.

Hoverfly
(Family Syrphidae) © Karen Retra

Hoverflies are a type of fly, distinguishable by their large eyes, short antennae, bright black and yellow abdomen and their hovering flight behaviour. Adult hoverflies are nectar and pollen feeders. Hoverfly larvae feed on pests such as aphids, thrips and leafhoppers and are excellent biocontrol agents.

Fiddler Beetle
(Eupoecila australasiae) © Erica Siegel

Beetles have hard outer wings that form their distinctive beetle shape. Their outer wings form a T-shape where they join at the top, unlike bugs where the outer wings make an X- or Y-shape. Some beetles feed on nectar and pollen, usually by crawling over flower surfaces. There are around 30,000 species of beetles in Australia, with many yet to be formally described.

Meadow argus
(Junonia villida) © J. Hort

Butterflies have wings covered in tiny scales. They have clubbed antennae and hold their wings upright when at rest. They are day-flying and have long tongues that they can use to feed on nectar in flowers with deep tubes. Butterflies are usually brightly coloured, with approximately 600 species found in Australia.

Beautiful leaf moth
(Gastrophora henricaria) © Karen Retra

Moths also have wings covered in tiny scales and tend to be subtle in colour. They have antennae without clubs and hold their wings flat when at rest. They are generally dusk- and night-flying but there are some exceptions: the grapevine moth is a commonly seen day-flying moth. Moths feed on nectar. Australia has a high diversity of moth species, with up to 22,000 species thought to exist across the continent.

Flower forms

© Meredith Cosgrove

Generalist flowers can be pollinated by many different insects and animals. They are typically saucer shaped with many stamens and have a surface that insects can walk on. *Eucalyptus* flowers and daisy flowers are generalist flowers — they can be pollinated by bees, flies, beetles and butterflies.

© Meredith Cosgrove

Specialist flowers have modifications to their shape and size that only let certain pollinators access the nectar and pollen. These flowers might have deep flower tubes or narrow entry points so that only a select group of pollinators can access them. The advantage of specialisation is that pollination is very targeted and efficient, with accurate pollen placement made possible by co-evolution between flowers and insects. The disadvantage is that if the correct pollinator isn't there, the flowers aren't pollinated. Often, nectar is produced at the base of the flower, forcing pollinators to enter the flower fully and in the process, become covered in pollen.

Pollinator rewards

Nectar is a sugary solution, rich in carbohydrates, vitamins and minerals, produced by flowers and sometimes by glands on leaves or stems (called extra-floral nectaries). Nectar is attractive to insects, and provides an immediate energy source needed for tasks such as hunting pest insects, laying eggs in decomposing organic matter, collecting pollen, or parasitising other insects.

Carbohydrates alone don't support everything needed for health and growth, so insects also need pollen.

Pollen is rich in protein, fats and nutrients. Bees are vegetarian, and need to collect pollen to feed their offspring.

Buzz pollination

Some flowers do not produce any nectar; they specifically target pollen-collecting bees, and only offer pollen rewards. To limit pollen loss and ensure effective pollination, some plants produce flowers with specialised, tubular anthers, that only open at the tip. To extract pollen, bees use vibrations to 'buzz' the pollen grains out of the pores of these anthers. Many crops are buzz pollinated, including tomatoes, potatoes, eggplants, capsicum, chillies, tomatillo and cranberries.

European honey bees are unable to buzz pollinate flowers, but several native bees, such as the blue-banded bee, teddy bear bee (*Amegilla* sp.) and carpenter bee (*Xylocopa* sp.) are exceptionally good large buzz pollinators, and have evolved to pollinate native plants such as flax lilies (*Dianella* sp.). Many of our smaller, ground nesting bees utilise vibration to help them excavate their burrows, and they also use that skill to buzz pollen from the anthers of native plants.

Planting buzz-pollinated species will encourage populations of buzz pollinators for successful pollination of food crops and ensure seed set in native plants. Many small ground nesting bees also buzz pollinate native flowers.

Nectar feeding

Grevillea flowers and other tubular flowers are often adapted to be successfully pollinated by birds. Pollen is 'presented' on a floral stigma that extends outside the flower. When birds feed on the nectar, pollen is deposited on their beaks or heads. Bees, also attracted to the sugary nectar, crawl into the side of the flower and feed on the nectar without encountering the pollen-laden stigma. The plant doesn't receive the pollination benefit from the insect, but flowers such Grevillea species can be a very useful source of nectar for insects in the cooler months.

Nurseries

Most of the plants shown in the planting guide will be available at nurseries that have a good stock of native plants. But if your local nursery doesn't stock the plant you're after, ask them to order it in. For a list of nurseries that stock all the plants shown in the planting guide, plus other useful resources, visit the Wheen Bee Foundation website or scan the QR code.

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Wheen Bee Foundation

Powerful Pollinators Planting Guides are produced by Wheen Bee Foundation. We fund vital strategic research and education initiatives that strengthen bees, improve pollination efficiency, and protect our food security and ecosystem health. Visit the website for more information.

WheenBeeFoundation.org.au

Far left: The spreading flax lily, *Dianella revoluta*, is buzz pollinated.

Left: This European honey bee is 'side-working': feeding on the nectar-rich flowers without coming into contact with the plant's pollen.

Front cover:
1. *Homalictus urbanus* on *Wahlenbergia*. (Photo: Donna Sanders)
2. View from Norton Summit, Adelaide Hills. (Photo: Paul Weston)
3. European honey bees, *Apis mellifera*. (Photo: Kirrily Hughes)

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