

## Shelter

Animals need shelter from the weather and from predators such as cats, dogs and foxes. Depending on the particular animal, shelter may be provided by plants, rocks or logs, particularly if they are hollow. Pot-plants grouped together can also provide shelter.

Brown honeyeaters, ground-dwelling birds and other small birds, such as wrens, need dense plantings of shrubs to provide them with suitable protection. Lizards and geckoes need rocks and logs to hide under or among. It is common to see fence skinks basking in the sun or chasing insects on rocks and walls in Perth.

## Leaf Litter

The leaf litter beneath plants provides important habitat for some animals, including legless lizards, crickets and scarab beetles. It is also important shelter for many other insects. The leaf litter formed from local plants is of more use to fauna than is that from exotics. Providing leaf litter for native animals is the perfect excuse not to rake up all the leaves in your garden!

## Insects and spiders

Insects and spiders are important in the fauna-friendly garden. They are of course fauna themselves! They are also essential to other larger species. Frogs and many birds feed on insects. Spiders are a food source for many birds — willy wagtails and some honeyeaters eat spiders. Spider web is important, too. Willy-wagtails won't be able to nest in your garden if you constantly spray the spiders around your house and brush away every cobweb you see! They need cobwebs to construct their nests, as do some other birds.

## Garden chemicals

Many gardeners rely on a range of garden chemicals to keep their gardens free of pests and diseases. Unfortunately, these chemicals are just as deadly for the insects you are trying to encourage to your garden. Frogs are also sensitive to some garden chemicals, especially snail pellets and some glyphosate-based herbicides. Insecticides will kill butterfly larvae and adults. It is worth remembering that a few nibbled leaves are an interesting part of a fauna-friendly garden!

## Cats and Dogs

Cats and dogs are hunting animals. They will stalk, chase, maim or kill small native animals, including frogs, lizards and birds. It is estimated that even a well-fed pet cat could kill an average of 32 animals each year (Land for Wildlife Note No 25).

The impact of cats on wildlife can be reduced by keeping cats indoors, especially at night. An enclosed outside run is also a great option. Cats should wear a

collar with at least one bell on it; two is better and the addition of a small mirror or other highly reflective object is also useful in alerting animals of the danger of the cat's approach.

Dogs too have natural hunting instincts. They should be confined to your yard and trained from puppyhood not to attack wildlife. You may be able to confine your dog to one portion of your garden and keep it away from areas where your focus is attracting native fauna. For example, keep the dog out the back of your house and create a local garden out the front.

## Where to start

Your fauna-friendly garden starts with choosing the right plants. Many of the plants suggested in this brochure will not be available in many commercial plant nurseries. Some nurseries do, however, stock local plants. Contact the Swan Catchment Centre or your local landcare group for details. Happy gardening.

## Useful Books:

Aplin, K., A. Paino, and L. Sleep (2000), Building Frog Friendly Gardens, W.A. Museum.

Bowden, John (1999), Living With the Environment in the Pine Rivers Shire, Pine Rivers Shire Council, Queensland. (Although this book is written specifically for the Pine Rivers Shire in Queensland, it contains a lot of information that is of broader interest.)

Crosbie, D. (1996), Bush Plants for Perth Gardens, Greening W.A., Perth.

Houston, T.F. (ed) [1994] Bring Back the Butterflies,

Western Australian Insect Study Society, W.A. Museum.

Main, B. Y., M. Williams and J. Hunter (1998), Bugs in the Backyard, Department of Conservation and Land Management, Perth.

Powell, R., and J. Emberson (1996), Growing Locals: Trees and Tall Shrubs of Perth, Western Australian Naturalists Club.

Powell, R. (1990), Leaf and Branch, Department of Conservation and Land Management, Perth.

Thompson, C. and J. Dell, Common Birds in the Backyard, Department of Conservation and Land Management.

Land For Wildlife: News, Department of Conservation and Land Management

APACE (Fremantle) — local plants species lists for soil types in the Perth metropolitan area.

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Swan Catchment  
Centre

# GARDENS

## Fauna Friendly Gardening

*A garden can be a work of pride and a place of quiet contemplation. It can also be a place of natural variety, home to a myriad of native animals, filled with birdsong and the hum of insects — even if it's only a small suburban garden.*

*Coming from a conventionally beautiful garden to create a fauna-friendly garden often requires a changed mind-set. In a fauna-friendly garden, the plants have a higher purpose — they are providers of food, shelter and breeding-sites. They are part of an ecosystem, if only a small one. Gardens dominated by introduced exotic plants may look beautiful, but may be devoid of the types of food and shelter needed by local birds, animals and insects.*

*The range of fauna that can be attracted to Perth gardens is significant — birds, butterflies, frogs, lizards, dragonflies, damselflies, to name a few. Depending on your location, you may get some local marsupials, such as possums or bandicoots. Each has different requirements but, in general, attention to a few basic factors will see an increase in the amount of fauna visiting and living in your garden.*

*All animals need food, water, shelter and places to breed. This is true be they large or small, insects, frogs or birds. Within these broad requirements, each individual species will have specific requirements.*

## How will it look?

Traditional English-style gardens — with lawns, flower beds, formal hedges and non-native standard shrubs and trees, and the associated fertilisers, insecticides, herbicides, fungicides and water required to keep them looking good — tend to discourage native animals and may encourage pest species (Bowden, 1999). A garden of this type is unlikely to be very fauna-friendly.

Fence Skink  
Photo by Robert Powell



Local Plants create a fauna-friendly garden  
Photo by Robert Powell



## Fauna Friendly Gardening

### How will it look?

A fauna-friendly garden has a variety of plants — different sizes, shapes and growth habits. Some birds like to perch high up, so trees of at least medium size are important. It is a good idea to plan your garden so that there is always something in flower. This not only creates welcome colour in the garden, it can also provide food for nectar-feeding birds and insects.

The most effective way of attracting native fauna into your garden is to grow local native plants — that is, the plants that grew naturally in your area. These are the plants that the local animals evolved with and that are most suitable to provide them with food, shelter and places to breed. A garden of local native plants also needs less water and fertiliser than a garden of exotics, making it more environmentally friendly and less costly. Once established it will require much less labour as well!

If you don't want to devote all of your garden to local plants, you may consider establishing a local area in one part of your garden. If that is not possible, you can add a few selected species to attract certain animals to your garden. As some local plants are particularly sensitive to over-watering and fertiliser,

you need to take care when deciding where to plant them. Banksias and grevilleas, for example, are extremely sensitive to phosphorus and will die if placed among plants that are regularly fertilised with a conventional plant fertiliser. Most local plants, unless they are wetland species, need little or no watering or fertiliser. They can be established easily if planted at the start of winter.

### Which plants?

Find out which is your local eucalypt: it will support many species of insect. Plant it in your garden, if you have room. Many of the taller shrub species local to different parts of Perth support many insects too. Particularly good species for insects include green stinkwood (*Jacksonia sternbergiana*), coojong (*Acacia saligna*), red-eyed wattle (*Acacia cyclops*, local to coastal suburbs), common sheoak (*Allocasuarina fraseriana*), spearwood (*Kunzea ericifolia*), modong (*Melaleuca preissiana*) and chenille honey-myrtle (*Melaleuca huegelii*, local to coastal suburbs).

Grevilleas flower over a long period. *Grevillea preissii* and *Grevillea crithmifolia* are local species if you live near the coast. *Grevillea preissii* has

evolved with flowers that need birds to pollinate them, but *Grevillea crithmifolia* has evolved for insect pollinators. The popular hybrid *Grevillea* Robyn Gordon attracts birds but is not a local species. The native groundcover running postman (*Kennedia prostrata*) attracts some species of butterfly — notably the pea blues and grass blues.

Green stinkwood (*Jacksonia sternbergiana*) is a good plant for fauna-friendly gardens. It attracts birds and several species of butterflies including, if you are lucky, the rare and very beautiful western jewel. The western jewel is a very fussy creature, requiring that its breeding-plant (stinkwood or rattlepods, *Daviesia divaricata*) has a nest of the ant *Crematogaster perthensis* at its base! (The caterpillars shelter in the ants' nest during the day.)

The common woollybush (*Adenanthos cygnorum*) will attract a range of honeyeaters, including brown honeyeater and red wattlebird.

The yellow admiral butterfly breeds on native pellitory (*Parietaria debillis* and *P. cardiostegia*). Another butterfly, the spotted jezebel, will lay eggs on quandong (*Santalum acuminatum*), a species local to Perth's coastal suburbs, but prefers to breed on sandalwood (*Santalum spicatum*), native

to the Wheatbelt and beyond.

White myrtle (*Hypocalymma angustifolium*) provides nectar for two beautiful jewel beetles (*Stigmodera gratiosa* and *S. sanguinosa*).

### Water

The addition of a simple bird-bath or pond in a garden will attract a range of fauna — such as birds, dragonflies and damselflies — coming to drink or bathe. Bird-baths should be raised above the ground, with good visibility to enable birds to see around them. Planting trees and shrubs nearby for birds to escape to is also a good idea. Remember that bird-baths dry up in the heat so keep them topped up — birds will remember where they are and learn to rely on them as a source of water.

Building a pond is a good way to attract frogs and give them a place to breed in your garden. It will also attract insects. Planting sedges and water plants around it will enable more fauna to live and breed. [Ensuring the safety of small children is essential when creating a pond. A fence, or sturdy mesh (large enough for frogs to move through) secured across the pond just below water level will ensure it is not a danger.]



Lynx Spider on blood lace flower  
Photo by Robert Powell



Even a small garden can be fauna friendly  
Photo by Robert Powell



Jewel Beetle  
Photo by Robert Powell



Leaf Litter With Grasshopper  
Photo by Robert Powell

