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## Spring is in the air .....!

Springtime brings a wealth of activity to suburban and country gardens alike. Creatures that have been asleep during our pretty cold winters, start to stir and make themselves known. The sounds of different bird species fill the air and the smell of honey and nectar is on the wind.

We can do much to happily co-exist with these creatures, and make our gardens wildlife friendly places. Here are a few tips that may help....

- 1.Design your garden so that you have an open area surrounded by multi-layered plantings of Australian native plants.
- 2.Include a mulch layer, groundcovers and tussocky grasses, bushy shrubs and trees.
- 3.Remember that just five foods - leaves, nectar, seeds, fruit and insects - satisfy almost every native bird and animal.
- 4.Provide as much water as you can buy having birdbaths and bowls of different depths set at different levels around the garden. Ponds also supply drinking water.
- 5.The best shelters include prickly shrubs, dense climbers, hollow trees and logs, piles of rock, and plants which are bushy to ground level.
- 6.Nest boxes made of untreated timber and attached to trees are also appealing to birds and small animals.



Attract birds to your garden by planting bird attracting trees (especially grevilleas, banksias and bottle brushes) available from your local native plant nursery. Smaller birds especially like dense or prickly shrubs. Always give them a water source to bathe in, but don't make it too deep.



Similarly, attract butterflies to your garden by planting butterfly attracting, trees and shrubs that have high nectar content, in your garden. Don't forget about the larvae. They usually feed on a different range of plants than their adult form. Again, these plants would be available from your local native plant nursery. As well as looking beautiful, butterflies have a job to do in our garden. They, like bees, can be great pollinators.

Reptiles, like this striped skink will be starting to stir and you may find them, or their larger cousins, on large

flat rocks sunning themselves. Make sure you leave enough rocks, logs, leaf litter and mulch, around the garden for these animals to hide, when they've finished sunbaking.

Provide dense bushes, hollow logs and nest boxes with a 7cm opening for ringtail possums and 12cm opening for brush-tailed possums. Their favourite food is fruit, insects, nectar and new shoots. As much as you may like them to share your breakfast, don't feed them bread and jam!

Attract frogs by building a pond or semi-permanent pool planted with native aquatic plants and grasses. Moist, mossy areas are frog havens.

So, you can see, it doesn't take much, and you could have a garden teeming with native wildlife.

Parts of this article were sourced from: <http://au.lifestyle.yahoo.com/b/better-homes-gardens/662/wildlife-friendly-garden/>

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