

Butterflies

Many flowering plants provide food for butterflies in the form of nectar but did you know that butterfly larvae (caterpillars) only feed on a small selection of plant species (called 'host' plants)? By including these native plants in our gardens and protecting them on our Landcare sites we can help support the local butterflies that need them to raise their young. Following are some examples of local butterflies and their native host plants.



Meadow Argus
Junonia villida



Pale Fan-flower
Scaevola albida



Common Crow
Euploea core



Sandpaper Fig
Ficus coronata



Brown Ringlet
Hypocysta metirius



Basket Grass
Oplismenus sp.



Orchard Swallowtail
Papilio aegeus



Sandfly Zieria
Zieria smithii

Grass and sedges like Themeda, Gahnia, Poa, Carex, Lomandra, Imperata, and Entolasia are also host plants for a variety of caterpillars. Some wattles, many rainforest plants and mistletoe species that live in gum trees and she-oaks are also important hosts.

Adult butterflies are much less particular with their needs and a range of nectar-providing plants are suitable. Plants with UV-rich coloured flowers (purple, red and white) are often preferred but any with nectar that can be reached through butterfly's specialised drinking-straw tongues may be utilised. Some good examples that provide plentiful nectar are Xanthorrhoea (grass-trees), Leptospermum, Melaleuca /Callistemon (bottlebrush), Brachyscome and other native daisies, Hakea, Myoporum and Eucalyptus (gum trees).

Like all insects, butterflies and caterpillars are sensitive to pesticides so try to avoid use of these chemicals.

Bees

Honeybees and native bees can be attracted with many flowering plants. Some local native plants that are great for attracting native bees are shown below. Many of these will also attract European Honeybees, native wasps and other insects that provide pollination.



Clumps of the same species are often more attractive to pollinators and easier to find than individuals scattered throughout a garden. Diversity is always key and a range of different flower sizes will help provide nectar for different sized native bees and other insects.

Birds

Birds are important pollinators and perform this function when drinking nectar from flowers but also when hunting insects on flowers where they might come in contact with pollen from plant to plant. Plant diverse layers of plants that provide seeds, fruit and flowers to attract both birds and insects for insect-eating birds.

Avoid providing only large flowering species for nectar feeding birds as this can primarily attract aggressive Wattlebirds, Honeyeaters and Noisy Miners that tend to chase away smaller birds. More information on this can be found in our Video “A little birds garden” at www.youtube.com/LakeMacLandcare

Right: The video on our Youtube channel A Little Birds Garden shows how planting smaller flowering species like *Grevillea sericea*, which also has spiky foliage for protection, can attract smaller nectar feeding birds as well as birds that feed on insects



A little birds garden

Other animals

A number of other animals in Australia perform a pollination role, including Flying Foxes (fruit bats), Possums, Gliders and Dasyurids (like the *Antechinus*). Some of these are Threatened Species like the Grey-Headed Flying Fox and the Squirrel Glider. Following are some important tree species for planting to support these pollinators.



Mammals including Gliders (e.g. Yellow-bellied, Sugar, and Squirrel) and Flying-foxes not only rely on native plants for feed trees, but are important pollinators and crucial to ecosystem health.

Eucalypts are an important source of nectar, pollen, and manna (a white carbohydrate-rich crystalline substance that occurs on leaves) for Gliders. These mammals will also lick sap from incisions made primarily in the bark of smooth-barked Eucalypts, and forage for insects on trees with loose, shedding bark.

Although Flying-foxes are commonly known as fruit bats, their favourite food is actually the pollen and nectar of Eucalypt blossoms, followed by other native hardwood blossoms, such as Melaleuca and Banksia. Eucalypt nectar and pollen production varies considerably from year to year, which results in Flying-foxes needing to cover great distances to acquire this rich food source.

Planting local native species is a way you can help these threatened mammals. Our nursery grows a range of flowering plants which you can incorporate in your plantings to support local Gliders and Flying Foxes populations.

References and further information

LMCC, Lake Macquarie Backyard Habitat Planting Guide - available at

www.lakemac.com.au/For-residents/Sustainable-living/Backyard-Habitat-for-Wildlife

NSW OEH, Planting to conserve threatened nomadic pollinators in NSW - available at

www.environment.nsw.gov.au/

Australian Pollinator Week resources - available at www.australianpollinatorweek.org.au/about/what-is-pollination/

Gliding Possums - information and profiles - available at www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/animals-and-plants/native-animals/native-animal-facts/gliding-possums

Flying Foxes article from NSW Wildlife Council - available at www.nwc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Flying_Fox_Article_June2010.pdf



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