

# Choosing plants to attract native bees

Although most native bees are 'generalist' foragers, collecting pollen and nectar from a variety of flowers, it is advisable to incorporate some 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 pest insects such as aphids, caterpillars, grasshoppers and katydids. Parasitoids lay 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 management. There are many exotic plants that attract bees and provide good quality pollen and nectar.

## Australian native plants

Choose local plant species if possible, as they are more likely to do well in your area. Some examples of bee-attracting flowers are shown below, but they are not limited to this list.

**Myrtaceae**, with their large bowls of easily-accessible nectar, are a particular favourite with many Australian native bees. Our short-tongued bees, in the family Colletidae, are the most diverse in the world because they have evolved with these bountiful food resources.



*Leptospermum* – Tea tree

*Eucalyptus* & other 'gums'

*Syzigium* – Lilly pilly

**Proteaceae**, have quite complex floral structures and some of our bees are able to 'unlock' the pollen presenter to access the protein-rich resource. These flowers also provide a sugar-rich nectar which is attractive to many small and large pollinators.



*Banksia*

*Grevillea*

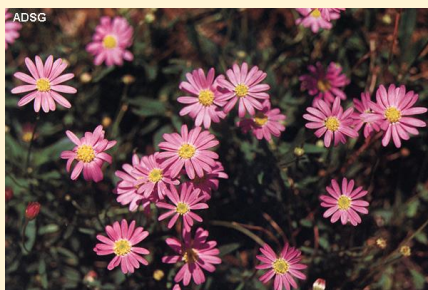
*Hakea*

*Macadamia*

**Asteraceae**, native daisies are compound flowers with multiple simple flowers within a single inflorescence. These shallow flowers are visited by small, short-tongued bees and other nectar-seeking pollinators. The pollen is usually quite abundant.



*Olearia*



*Brachyscome*



*Xerochrysum*

**Fabaceae**, native peas are very attractive to bees in the Megachilidae family. This includes resin bees and leaf-cutter bees. A female bee lands on the keel of the flower, enabling her to access the hidden pollen and store it in hairs (scopa) under her abdomen.



*Hardenbergia*



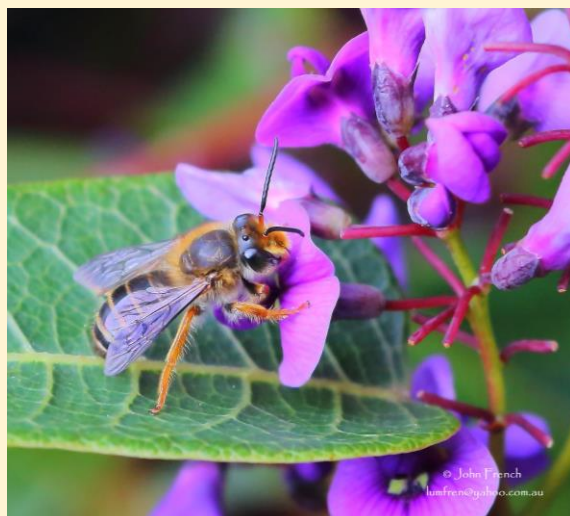
*Dillwynia*



*Pultenaea*



*Megachile punctata* foraging on *Swainsona* (image by Erica Siegel)



*Trichocolletes venustus* foraging on *Hardenbergia* (image by John French)

## Other assorted genera

Native bees have evolved with an assortment of flowering plants. Flowers with tubular petals and deep floral structures, such as *Correa*, are pollinated most effectively by long-tongued bees, such as blue-banded bees. Ground nesting bees, such as *Lasioglossum*, *Lipotriches* and *Amegilla* are effective buzz-pollinators of porcidal anthers, such as *Dianella*.



*Bursaria*



*Dianella*



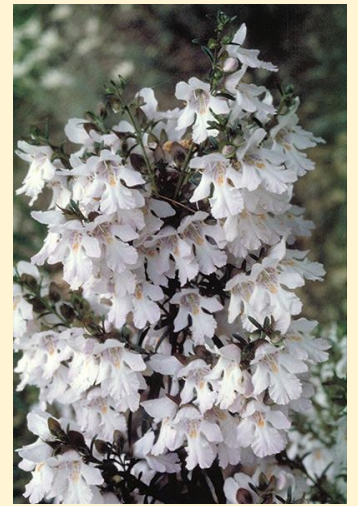
*Hibiscus*



*Wahlenbergia*



*Correa*



*Prostanthera*



*Eremophila*



*Scaevola*



*Tetratheca*

# Non native flowering plants

Only about 100 species, of over 1,600 species of Australian native bees, are specialist bees. These bees have co-evolved with specific plant families or genera and have developed morphological characteristics that enable them to collect pollen and nectar from some of the more unusual floral structures. Most bees will forage on a variety of native and exotic flowers to obtain pollen and nectar to feed their offspring. Below is a list of just some of the bee-attracting exotic flowers you can include in your garden.

Herbs such as basil, thyme, oregano, sage, parsley, coriander

Let vegies such as Bok choy, celery and radish bolt

Vegetables such as tomato, pea, capsicum

Allow some weeds to flower, then deadhead them to reduce seeding

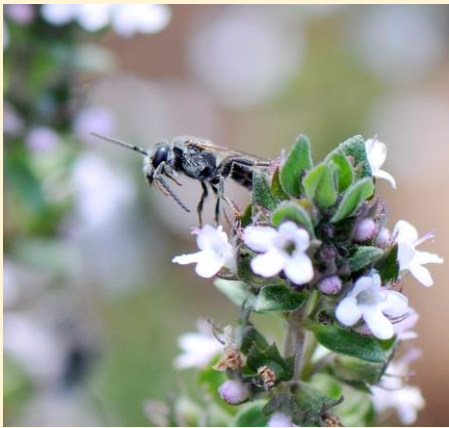
Daisies

*Salvia*

*Hebe*

*Diosma*

*Dahlia*



Images by Bees Business

**Acknowledgements:** This brochure was produced by Bees Business as an educational resource, 2016. Photographs of all native flowering plants were kindly donated by Brian Walters, unless otherwise noted. More images and information can be found at the Australian native plant society Australia website <http://anpsa.org.au> Native bee images authored as noted.