



Info Sheet: Native bees and hotels

Did you know that most of the pollination in your garden is done by native bees rather than honey bees? There are over 1,500 species of native bees in Australia and they range in size from 2 to 10 mm. When you know what to look for you will find some in most gardens. Together with honey bees they keep your garden healthy and flourishing.

Australian native bees are stingless and most are solitary. That means they don't have hives or produce honey you can collect. (However, there are some in Queensland that are social insects and provide honey).



Australian blue banded bee
(Photo from Wikipedia)

What our native bees need most is somewhere to lay their eggs. Native bees nest and lay their young in hollow logs or twigs, old plant stems or cracks in walls. Some make their own holes in clay or similar. Modern gardens don't always provide appropriate hollows. Please leave some dead twigs on the plants in your garden, or build a bee hotel.

Some ideas for bee hotels:

- Use natural materials, recycled where possible; only used untreated wood
- An old letter box with the front cut out is a good start, or even a can, soft drink bottle, plant pot or PVC pipe; 15 cm depth is ideal
- Fill the box or can with different size garden canes or bamboo; or blocks of wood with holes drilled. Twigs or dried plant stems are useful
- Hollows should be a range of sizes to suit bees from 2 to 10 mm
- For the bees that prefer to nest in mud or clay (like the blue banded), make clay or mortar tubes. You can make these in PVC pipe. 1 part clay to 3 parts sand makes a good crumbly mix.
- A solid wall at the back is good, or just fix the hotel to a fence or wall to give more protection from the weather
- The bees appreciate a small landing pad out the front, and some overhang on the roof
- When finished place the hotel in a warm, sunny spot between 1 and 2 metres off the ground



Further information:

- For a flyer about building bee hotels join the 'Build a Bee Hotel' Facebook page, or go to the link on our website.
- To find out more about Australian native bees go to www.aussiebees.com.au.



*If you want more information or would like to see a demonstration
please contact Kyneton Transition Hub
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