

FOOD

Fruit forms a significant part of the diet of **Fruit-doves, White-headed Pigeons, Brown Cuckoo Doves, Double-eyed Fig-Parrots, Koels, Bowerbirds, Catbirds and Figbirds**. Other birds such as **Australian King-Parrots, Lewin's Honeyeaters, Pied Currawongs, Helmeted Friarbirds, Orioles, Cuckoo-shrikes, Silveryeyes and Crimson Rosellas** feed on fruit opportunistically.

The birds, in turn, play an important role in the dispersal of seeds for many fruit bearing plants. Colourful fruit bearing plants are numerous and are readily available at nurseries. If possible, select plants that fruit at different times of the year.

Trees

Blue Quandong *Elaeocarpus grandis* [large tree, moist locations]
 Celerywood *Polyscias elegans* [medium tree, dry rainforest]
 Cheese Tree *Glochidion ferdinandi* [small tree, rainforest]
 Euodia *Melicope micrococca* [medium tree, rainforest]

Figs: Many grow very large so beware of root damage to buildings and utilities. Some pot successfully, while others can be trimmed to fit the small garden.

Weeping Fig *Ficus benjamina* [large, will pot]
 Small-leaved Fig *Ficus obliqua* [large tree]

Flax Lilies *Dianella* spp. [grass-like, blue/purple berries] are very beautiful border plants or can be planted under larger plants.

Lilly Pillies: *Acmena* and *Syzygium* species [see nectar listing] produce beautiful red/pink, purple or white fruits.

Palms supply not only fruit but nectar, palm grubs in the leaves, and sometimes shelter or nest spaces in the crown.



Double-eyed Fig-Parrot enjoying figs (I&JB)



Satin Bowerbird enjoying fruit of Bangalow Palm *Archontophoenix cunninghamiana* (I&JB)



Brown Cuckoo-Dove feeding on fruits of the Bleeding Heart Tree *Homalanthus populifolius* (I&JB)



Female Australasian Figbird enjoying fruit of Alexandra Palm *Archontophoenix alexandrae* (NCL)

FRUIT

FOOD

Seeds form a very important part of the diet of many birds, especially **Finches, Parrots** and ground foraging **Pigeons** and **Doves**. Allowing grasses and other plants to run to seed will greatly increase the diversity of birds in your garden. Consider including the following groups of plants:

Wattles A wide selection is available from ground covers to small trees. Many are short lived [e. g. 3 years], others over 100 years. Common colours: near white to rich golden. Many prefer poor soils and are quick to grow so excellent for beginning gardens. **Rosellas, Cockatoos** and **Red-winged Parrots** are attracted to wattle seeds.

Brisbane Wattle *Acacia fimbriata* [shrub]
 Black Wattle *Acacia melanoxylon* [small tree]
 Cootamundra Wattle *Acacia baileyana* prostrate [spreads 2-3m, flowers only in colder regions]
 Flat-stemmed Wattle *Acacia complanata* [shrub, often re-shoots from underground stems]
 Velvet Leaf Wattle *Acacia holosericea* [shrub]
 Winter Gold *Acacia amblygona* prostrate [spreads 1.5m]



Pale-headed Rosella eating wattle seeds (I&JB)

Hop Bushes Small shrubs often with bright green foliage. Will grow in pots. Some species bear colourful winged seed capsules that are eaten by **Australian King-Parrots**.

Sticky Hop Bush *Dodonaea viscosa*
 Large-leaf Hop Bush *Dodonaea triquetra*



Australian King-Parrot eating hop bush seeds (NCL)

Grasses

Barbwire Grass *Cymbopogon refractus*
 Kangaroo Grass *Themeda triandra*
 Queensland Blue Grass *Dichanthium sericeum*
 Word of warning: Select species with care as some will spread, becoming weeds. **Finches, Mannikins, Galahs, Cockatiels, Corellas** and some species of **Parrots** feed upon grass seeds.

Red-browed Finch enjoying grass seeds (GC)



She-oaks

Although she-oak seeds are eaten by a variety of **Finches** and **Parrots**, they form the staple diet of **Glossy Black-Cockatoos**. Their food trees are Forest She-oaks (*Allocasuarina torulosa*) and Black She-oak (*Allocasuarina littoralis*). Other **Black-Cockatoo** species will also eat seed from Banksias, Hakeas and Acacias.

Horsetail She-oak *Casuarina equisetifolia* [small tree, coastal]
 Belah *Casuarina cristata* [medium tree, western Queensland]



Glossy Black-Cockatoo (GC)

HABITAT/SHELTER

Birds need places to escape from predators and inclement weather.

Acacia, Banksia, Leptospermum, Acmena, Syzygium and *Melaleuca* species are some of the plants that offer suitable shelter for birds. Ideal bird habitat will contain layers of plantings including some tall trees, a mid-storey of shrubs and a lower storey of ground covers. Select plant species offering a variety of foliage densities.

Small birds prefer not to cross open spaces so link your plantings to create corridors through your garden and with the neighbours' gardens or adjacent bushland.

All of the species listed in other parts of this brochure should be considered plus:

Bursaria spinosa is a shrub or small tree with prickles providing a perfect haven for small birds.

Mat Rushes *Lomandra longifolia, L. hystrix*. Tufted perennial grass-like plants useful for borders and under larger plants.

Native Rosemary *Westringia fruticosa* (hedge or thicket)
Salvia spp. small herbs to shrubs, provide dense cover, many flower colours available

Creepers including *Pandorea pandorana, Pandorea jasminoides* and *Passiflora aurantia* provide shelter especially for small birds. Use over arches, along walls or between garden sections creating links between the lower storey plants and the taller specimens.



Female Superb Fairy-wrens (I&JB)



Male Variegated Fairy-wren (JS)



Yellow-rumped Thornbill (I&JB)

WATER

The provision of a reliable source of fresh water will attract many bird species to your garden and will assist them to survive periods of hot or dry weather. You will be richly rewarded with the pleasure of observing them drink and bathe. There are some very simple ways in which you can establish a bird bath in your garden.

Birds are very vulnerable as they drink or bathe so locate the bath where cats and other predators cannot ambush the birds. Hang a saucer from a tree or upstairs eaves or set it on top of an upright log set in your garden. Locate the bath at the edge of dense bushes which provide rapid approach and escape routes. Groups of social birds often 'post' a lookout while the others drink and bathe.



White-naped Honeyeater drinking (I&JB)



Grey Shrike-thrush bathing (I&JB)

Bird baths should be shallow so small birds can stand in them without drowning. Use stones to make different levels so birds can select the depth that suits them.

Bird baths have to be cleaned regularly to keep the water fresh and prevent the spread of disease. If the baths are in the shade, they do not grow algae as quickly and the water remains cool.

If you have a natural water source [dam, stream, wetland] enhance its attractiveness and 'bird' value by protecting and restoring native plant species and allowing the vegetation to grow high along the banks to create a buffer zone.



Male Magpie-lark drinking at a natural waterhole (BW)



Double-barred Finch drinking at a natural waterhole (CW)

FOOD INSECTS & THEIR LARVAE

Most song birds eat insects, and even honeyeaters supplement their diet with insects and their larvae as well as spiders to obtain vital proteins. Most nectar producing plants attract insects thus insect-eating birds such as **Fairy-wrens, Whistlers, Robins, Flycatchers, Magpie-larks** and **Fantails** [e.g. *Willie Wagtail*].

The more insects in your garden, the more birds, but you may have 'tatty' plants! How to improve this situation?

If you have a wide variety of plant species in your garden, insect damage to plants is usually minimal, as insect eating birds will reduce insect numbers. A new garden may benefit from some selective spraying until all plants begin to mature.

Eucalypts

Many bird species such as **Spotted and Striated Pardalotes, Bell Miners**, and other small **Honeyeaters** feed on the sugar rich secretions of lerps, often present in eucalypts.

Tea Trees are understorey plants hosting numerous insects, making them a very valuable asset to your garden.

Wild May *Leptospermum polygalifolium* [small bush, white]

Crimson Rosellas love the fruits of this species.

Lemon-scented Tea-tree *L. petersonii* [white]

There are a number of hybrids that flower for a much longer time: *L. 'Pink Cascade'* [ground cover, pink]; *L. 'Wiri Sandra'* [low shrub, dense green foliage, pink]; *L. 'Alicia Rose'* [low shrub, rose].

The three examples are suitable for pots, small garden beds or wherever a splash of colour is needed.

Soap Bush *Alphitonia excelsa* is a medium bush to small tree, sensitive to frost, and is subject to insect attack [from which it usually recovers] providing a wonderful source of food for insectivorous birds.



Female Red-backed Fairy-wren eating an insect (GC)



White-browed Scrubwren with prey (I&JB)



Eastern Yellow Robin with a worm (I&JB)

NESTING MATERIALS

Not all garden designs will immediately create materials suitable for birds to use in the construction of their nests but over time, bark, spider webs, twigs etc will become available. Many birds may prefer to take the material elsewhere but do not be surprised, even small gardens can provide nest sites.

Nest sites vary with species; some require tree holes, others build nests on branches or even on the ground.

Melaleucas often provide nesting sites for **Pigeons** and **Thornbills**. She-oaks and large street trees are popular as nest sites among many bird species such as **Magpie-larks** and **Australasian Figbirds**. A well protected bushy corner will often boast a nest, especially if prickly plants are included in the design.

Tree hollows provide vital nesting sites for many birds such as **Parrots, Owls** and **Wood Ducks** but large old gum trees are often not part of your garden design. You can create artificial hollows by installing nesting boxes. Nest boxes make a wonderful addition to a garden, allowing you to watch a pair of birds raise its young. Identify the species of bird you'd like to attract to determine the correct size of entrance hole needed: small holes attract **Rosellas** and **Lorikeets** while larger holes are suitable for **Kookaburras**.

Spotted Pardalote collecting nesting material (I&JB)



Mangrove Gerygone collecting nesting materials (GEC)

REFERENCES/RECOMMENDED READING/GROUPS

HANZAB Volumes 1-7 Edited by P.J. Higgins, J.M.Peter, & W.K.Steele (2001), Oxford University Press, South Melbourne.

The Dynamic Partnership Edited by H.A.Ford & D.C.Paton (1986), D.J. Woolman, Government Printer, South Australia.

Groups: Birds Queensland; Birdlife Australia; Myall Park Botanic Garden; Queensland Field Naturalists' Club; Society for Growing Australian Plants

Nesting boxes: Ipswich City Council

Queensland Museum publications

Birdlife Australia: Birds in Backyards www.birdsinbackyards.net/