

Trees attractive to birds

Many birds are attracted to gardens and parks by the trees and the shrubs growing there. Trees provide food and shelter and, in breeding periods, nesting sites and materials. A careful selection of species will attract a variety of birds through the year.

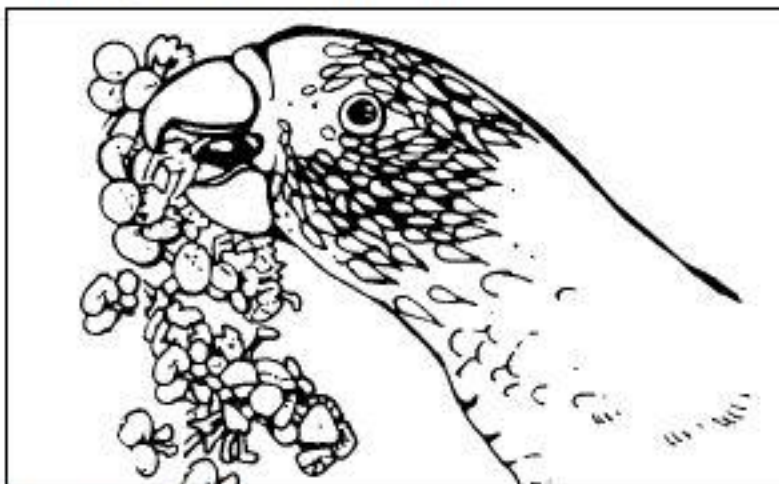
Food

Trees provide nectar, seeds and fruits. These and the insects which live on or around the trees are major food sources for many species of birds.

Some birds are specialised feeders, while others, such as noisy miners, eat a variety of foods.

Nectar

The flowers of eucalypts, grevilleas, banksias, callistemons and melaleucas are prolific nectar producers. They attract honeyeaters, spinebills, lorikeets, friarbirds and rosellas.



Fruits and Seeds

Fruit and seed feeders include figbirds, rosellas, lorikeets, currawongs, orioles, friarbirds and pigeons. Trees such as Bangalow palms, ash quandongs (blueberry ash) and lillipillis are suitable for small gardens. On larger blocks, silky oaks, silver (blue) quandong, sheoaks, figs and native tamarinds can also be planted. Birds spread the tree seeds as they move between food sources.

Insects

Insect-eating birds are valuable garden-pest controllers. The birds eat leaf-feeders and sap-suckers, and insects visiting flowers for pollen and nectar. Wrens, wagtails, pardalotes and welcome swallows feed exclusively on insects while silvereyes eat fruit as well. Magpies and butcher birds catch pests such as caterpillars, beetles, cicadas and grasshoppers in the canopy and scratch for soil insects beneath trees and shrubs. Cockatoos can be a nuisance, as they will tear bark and small branches to get at wood-feeding insects.

Water

In hot or dry weather a supply of fresh water will attract many garden birds. Bird baths or other water sources should be placed in an open position to give the birds a clear view of approaching cats.

Nesting

Birds differ in their nesting preferences. Small species such as wrens, robins, silvereyes and wagtails seek protection in dense shrubs and small trees sometimes with nests only a metre off the ground. Nesting materials can include moss, twigs, cobwebs and plant fibres. Welcome swallows build mud nests on buildings and under bridges and pardalotes nest in ground burrows.

Magpies and butcher birds prefer tall trees so that they can patrol and defend their territories. Kookaburras, dollar birds, lorikeets and many parrots nest in tree holes, or hollowed out arboreal termite nests. In the suburbs there are few hollow trees, but a nesting box fixed high in a tree will quickly attract occupants (and there may be competition from possums and gliders).

The table on the next page will help you select a variety of trees to encourage birds into your garden.