

Bring back the birds!

Any birdlife adds to the enchantment of a garden, but it's the sight and sound of NZ native birds we love the most.



Flax flowers

The best way to attract wildlife visitors and encourage them to stay is to turn your garden into their kind of haven. Basically, if you want more native birds, plant more native plants!

"It's possible, even in a small garden", says Ruth Russell of Naturally Native nursery. Ruth suggests we create wild corners with native plants and give them a dose of healthy neglect! "Leaving the seed heads to ripen and allowing leaf litter to build up creates a habitat for insects", she says. Another idea is to team up with the neighbours and create a bush corner across two or more properties. "Every small bush corner contributes to urban ecology", Ruth assures. "A couple of square metres is enough to begin with but, when they see the results, most people want to plant more." The birds will reward us for our efforts by helping to keep garden pests under control.

When it comes to attracting a good range of visitors with different diets, informality and variety has the edge over neat minimalist planting schemes. Mother Nature likes balance! Birds also love flowers.

Certain natives are well known bird magnets. For example, nectar seeking tui, bellbirds and wax eyes will flock to flax and kowhai flowers. Many lesser-known natives are well worth adding to the mix. Olearias, for example, play host to many native insects, which in turn attract insect eating birds, such as grey warblers, fantails and moreporks. Kereru (native pigeon) will feast on karaka berries, also poroporo, puriri, titoki, fuchsia, pigeonwood, wineberry, kowhai leaves and five finger (Pseudopanax). Small but shrewd, fantails and silvereyes love to build their nests on the outer branches of tall twiggy shrubs, so they're out of reach of heavy predators.

Because they are evergreen, native plants provide the best kind of shelter and security for birds. They also happen to be some of the most attractive, functional and easy care plants in the garden, providing maximum pleasure for minimum care and attention. The idea is to create a native bush paradise that will be enjoyed as much by you as it is by your feathered friends.



Corokia berries



IMAGE: FIONA DEAN

Extra treats to attract birds in winter

Bird Pudding -

Melt a block of pure lard. Add some of the following: stale biscuits, cake crumbs, birdseed, raisins, bacon rind, meat scraps or wheat.

Mix well, then cool and shape into a pudding. Place the pudding into a string bag (e.g. an onion bag) and hang it in a tree where it can easily be found by the birds and seen by you.

Sugar Water - Melt a tablespoon of sugar in some hot water and make it up to a litre with cold water. Put a little out each day, preferably at the same time. Tui and bellbirds particularly like this mixture.

Containers for feeding birds -

Margarine pots, fruit drink cartons with the sides cut out, half a coconut shell.

IMPORTANT:

- Never put salt in bird puddings as it can kill some birds.
- Do not use honey in your sugar water as it attracts bees and may spread disease among them.
- Once you have begun feeding the birds continue to do so throughout the winter. If you stop you may cause them to starve.



Nectar feeding tui are important pollinators of many native trees and will fly large distances, especially during winter for their favourite foods.



Kakabeak (Clianthus Kaka King)



Kowhai (Sophora)



Konini (Fuchsia excorticata)

NZ plants for NZ fauna

Common Name	Botanical Name	Flowering Time	Berries or Seeds	Fauna
Wineberry	Aristotelia serrata	Spring	Autumn	Birds
Putaputaweta	Carpodetus serratus		Autumn	Insects
Kakabeak	Clianthus 'Kaka King'	Late winter		Birds
	Coprosma species		Autumn	Lizards
Korokio	Corokia		Autumn	Birds
Konini	Fuchsia excorticata	Spring		Birds
Kawakawa	Macropiper excelsum		Late summer	Birds
Crimson rata	Metrosideros carminea	Spring		Birds
Pohutukawa	Metrosideros excelsa	Summer		Birds
Southern rata	Metrosideros umbellata	Summer		Birds
Pohuehue	Muehlenbeckia species			Butterflies/moths
	Olearia species			Insects
NZ jasmine	Parsonsia heterophylla	Spring/Summer		Moths
Flax	Phormium species	Spring		Birds
Tarata/Kohuhu	Pittosporum species	Spring	Autumn	Birds
Totara	Podocarpus species			Stick insects
Miro	Prumnopitys ferruginea		Autumn	Birds
Five-finger	Pseudopanax species	Spring		Birds
Kowhai	Sophora species	Spring		Birds
	Tecomanthe speciosa	Winter		Birds
Puriri	Vitex lucens	All year		Birds



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For comprehensive information about these plants and more go to www.naturallynative.co.nz