

Save the Bees

Simple Things **YOU** Can Do...

Bees are having a hard time, but we can all do our bit to help save the bees, even if you're not able to become a beekeeper. Indeed, many other pollinators (not just honey bees) are in serious decline too. For example, in some countries, some bee species have gone extinct already. Many butterfly species are also struggling. Some of the steps you can take will help pollinators as a whole, as well as the bees. We need our bees, and helping them is surely in everyone's best interests, and it's everybody's job to do their bit, however small.

*You **CAN** make a difference, and here are some tips to help set you on your way to doing just that.*

CREATE HABITAT

There is much you can do in your own gardens to help save the bees! Ensure you have flowers and plants in bloom for as long as possible in the garden. Some bee species may come out early, and will be looking for much needed pollen and nectar sources. Herbs and vegies are great - let them go to flower! Remember, some bees will continue foraging late into the season too, so try to ensure you include late flowering blooms in your garden. Make an effort to purchase plants, bulbs and seeds free of insecticides. Pesticides are used widely by major suppliers to garden centers, grocery multiples and other plant sellers. Why not establish a relationship with a local nursery or grower you can trust, and ask them not to use these products.

Purchase your plants, bulbs and seeds from local organic suppliers.

OLD FASHIONED IS BEST

When selecting plants for your garden, always remember that simple, old-fashioned varieties are better than highly cultivated ones. Find out about heritage varieites.

WONDERFUL NATIVES AND WILDFLOWERS

Plant, plant, plant! Allow a patch of lawn to grow...wait and see what comes up. Sow seeds, or buy potted natives (some may be difficult to establish otherwise). Many grassy areas will not convert easily because of resilient grasses that prevent natives establishing themselves. If this is the case for you, sow a native that is parasitic on tough grasses, which is loved by bees, and will out-compete the grass.

Plant out Eucalyptus, Lavandula, Callistemons, Malaleuca, Westringa, Leptospermums, Grevilleas, Baeckeas, Banksias, Buddleias...

CREATE NEST SITES FOR BEES

A bundle of hollow canes could make a home for solitary bees. Some species will take up residence in bird boxes, or an upturned plant pot (with holes) provisioned with bedding, and located in a secure, shady area. Encourage native solitary bees to set up residence on your property by providing suitable nesting blocks. Different types are required for different species.

NESTS AND SWARMS

If you know of land to be cleared for development or roadways etc and suspect or know there is a hive of Native Stingless Bees in it, contact someone who can identify and remove the hive.

If you come across a bee nest or swarm, try not to disturb it. If it's a solitary bee nest, they only last a season – and be careful not to mistake solitary bees for wasps, as some look alike. Most bees rarely sting unless provoked. Meanwhile, if you are concerned about a swarm or honeybee nest, contact a local beekeeper.

SPREAD THE WORD

Spread the word about the need to help save the bees! This could range from sharing these tips to chatting with your neighbour or giving a talk about bees to your gardening groups.

CAREFULLY SELECT YOUR HONEY, HONEY

If you are going to buy honey, buy local honey from the markets or from a beekeeper you trust who cares about their bees.

GET INVOLVED! IT'S EVERYONE'S JOB

There are lots of 'Save the Bees' initiatives, from signing petitions to ban suspect pesticides and GMO crops, to asking governments for more funds for positive action into helping bees and pollinators. Participate where you can. Learn about the threats - Small Hive Beetle, Asian Bee incursion, myrtle rust, varroa mite, and how their impact can be minimised.

SPEAK TO YOUR COUNCIL

Write to your local council or political representative. Tell them about the need to save our bees, and ask them to stop the use of pesticides in public spaces (from parklands to community planting schemes), to plant more bee-friendly plants, and to make space for native plants along verges etc.

EAT ORGANIC

Eat organic produce (or at least no-spray or care-farmed produce), eat regional and seasonal foods, buy from smaller outlets and farmer's markets. When you spend your cash, you cast a vote!

GROW YOUR OWN

Perhaps now is the time to start growing your own pesticide-free fruit & veg? You'll be surprised just how many zucchinis and green beans you can grow - even in a few pots outside. Join your local permaculture Group, Register as a volunteer with your local Community Gardens.

CREATE A BEE GARDEN

Lots more info on this in our special document. In the meantime, dig, plant, seed, sprout, flower, build, nurture, attract, observe, enjoy, share! The rewards of a special Bee Garden are immeasurable!

JOIN VALLEY BEES

Join our Valley Bees Group! It's as simple as that. And it it's a wee bit too far, then

start up your own Valley Bees cluster!

Talk to us about how to go about setting up your own local cluster of

Valley Beesters!

**Valley
Bees**