



Creating a 'Layered Garden'

To provide for a diversity of wildlife species, it is necessary to have structural diversity, as well as diverse native plant species.

Small birds require different 'layers' of vegetation: ground covers, various small shrubs and tall shrubs, as well as trees.

The understorey vegetation, that is small trees, shrubs, ground covers, grasses, herbs and vines, is a vital component of a healthy and



diverse habitat. The presence of understorey vegetation creates physical structure and complexity, essential for providing habitat for moving, foraging, resting, breeding and avoiding predators.

When selecting the types of plants you wish to use, imagine the height that they will grow to and the area they will need. Trees, such as eucalypts, are valuable for wildlife, but grow to quite a height. You may not have the space to grow them to full size in your garden, or your neighbour may object to them spoiling their view or blocking the sunlight when they reach 20m+ in height! - Not to mention the cost of clean up and removal if the tree has to be removed.

In many areas, small bird species (e.g. pardalotes, many small honeyeaters, wrens, and robins) are declining, largely due to the clearing of understorey vegetation. This has led to dominance in larger bird species, but in particular noisy miners, a native honeyeater that favours open country with scattered trees and no understorey.

Noisy miners are aggressive birds that will exclude smaller birds from their territory. Understorey vegetation gives protection to the smaller birds. BirdLife Australia's 'Birds in Backyards' program has a wealth of information on creating habitat for birds in your garden - go to www.birdsinbackyards.net



A few of their design principles, which can equally apply to creating habitat for other wildlife species are:

- Plant for vertical and horizontal structure – this will provide shelter and food.
- Plant for shelter – plant in clusters to provide dense, protective thickets rather than isolated plants. This will also enable safe nesting sites and shelter from predators.
- Plant for food – plant a wide variety to provide nectar, attract insects, or produce fruit in each season. Native grasses provide seed and attract insects.
- Create diversity - plant ground covers, grasses, small, medium and large shrubs in clumps.

