

Waikato

ENVIROSCHOOLS



Backyard Ecosystems - Bees!

Bees are a very important part of the ecosystem because they are **pollinators**. They are also **indicator** species, which means they **indicate** or **show** the health of an ecosystem.

Pollinators are animals that cause plants to make fruit or seeds. They move pollen from the male part of the flower of a plant to the female part of the flower. This process causes fertilisation and makes the seed or fruit grow. Only fertilised plants can make fruit and/or seeds, and without pollinators, the plants cannot reproduce. **Without pollinators, we would not have many of the fruits, vegetables, seeds or grains that we eat.** Nearly three quarters of all our food requires bee pollination!

Watch: Bees, bugs, birds and breakfast with Rudd Kleinpaste

- Go in to your garden and look for bees . . . are there any plants that are covered with bees? Find out what they are called and make a list of them.
- Why do bees pollinate flowers? What's in it for them?
- What other types of pollinators are there?
- What are some special 'bee' facts you can find out?
- Make a poster of how a bee pollinates a flower and why bees are important (there are lots of diagrams on the internet you can use to get ideas from).

Honey bees all around the world are in decline due to Varroa mite, use of pesticides and loss of habitat which has reduced the number of flowers that bees can pollinate. But there's so much we can do!

Create a bee-friendly garden!

Make a watering station for bees:

Bees don't drink, but they do collect water to use in their hive. Place some marbles or pebbles in a shallow dish and add water, but don't submerge the pebbles. Bees and other insects will land on the pebbles.

Place the watering station in a shaded or semi-shaded part of the garden and try to put it up off the ground (on a tree stump or wall or similar structure.) Make sure you change the water regularly so that it stays fresh.



Create a bee-friendly garden . . .

Plant more bee-friendly plants Having a lots of different types of flowering plants in your garden means more different sorts of food for bees.

What bee-friendly plants do you have in your garden?
What ones could you grow?

Make sure there's always something on the menu for your bees. . have you got plants that flower in Autumn and Winter as well as Spring and Summer?

Resources for creating a bee friendly garden:

[Bee friendly plants - Mitre 10](#)

[Urban Trees for Bees](#)

[For the Love of Bees - create a pollinator sanctuary](#)



Leave some wild-spaces in your backyard

Talk to your parents about creating a wild-space in your backyard. Simply by not mowing a small area, you can create a meadow in your garden which is food for bees and a fun place to play in.

Avoid chemical sprays in your garden

Keep your garden natural. Synthetic chemicals like herbicides, fungicides and pesticides are known to kill bees and other beneficial pollinators. Talk to you parents about keeping your garden organic and spray free.

[Protecting bees and other pollinators - EPA](#)

Did you know?

In New Zealand there are:

- 28 [native bees](#) - ngaro huruhuru
- 4 species of [bumblebees](#), and
- [Honeybees](#)



More resources

[APINZ - LOVE our Bees Activity book](#)

Join [for the love of bees](#)

Imagine New Zealand as a giant pollinator sanctuary. **For the love of bees** has all the resources you need to help you and your community make your place the safest place in the world for bees!