

Nectar Food Trees

Why are nectar food trees important?

Nectar and pollen from the flowers of eucalypts, banksias, melaleucas and other shrubs provide an important food resource for many species of insects, birds and mammals. These include a number of threatened species, for example the Regent Honeyeater, Swift Parrot, Yellow-bellied Glider, Squirrel Glider, Eastern Pygmy-possum, Grey-headed Flying Fox and Blossom Bat.



Sugar Glider

Roly Paine

Dependence on nectar by individual animals varies widely with some species relying almost exclusively on this food source while others use nectar and pollen to supplement their diet at different times of the year.

It is therefore important for these animals that a diversity of nectar producing plants are available throughout different seasons of the year and in particular, plants that produce nectar in autumn and winter months when other food resources become scarcer.

Flowering patterns and the production of nectar in many eucalypts and other species of plants can be sporadic and inconsistent from year to year depending on plant age, position in the canopy and individual seasonal conditions such as rainfall.

A number of plants produce nectar in late summer, autumn and winter. Some of these may be considered keystone species in that

they provide a vital food resource during these times of the year. Table 1 provides examples of some (but not all) of these keystone species.



Wallum Banksia

Kristin den Exter

How to identify nectar food trees

Field identification of the species listed in Table 1 can often be difficult. A number of field guides and keys are commercially available to assist. Some of these are listed on this Note together with a number of websites which give information on plant identification.

What can you do?

Protection and management of trees and shrubs, particularly those with larger flowers that produce abundant nectar are important in providing a range of food resources for native animals and enhancing biodiversity on your property.

Three simple rules for protection and management of trees are:

Retain: Retention of existing vegetation has many benefits including providing shade and shelter, maintenance of soils and enhancement of biodiversity and basic ecological processes (eg food web including micro-organisms through to insects, birds and other plants and animals). Retaining vegetation reduces fragmentation of the landscape and helps ensure genetic diversity of species.



Nectar Food Trees

Common Name	Scientific Name	Common Name	Scientific Name
Wallum Banksia	<i>Banksia aemula</i>	Grey Ironbark	<i>Eucalyptus placita</i>
Heath-Leaved Banksia	<i>Banksia ericifolia</i>	Needlebark Stringybark	<i>Eucalyptus planchoniana</i>
Coast Banksia	<i>Banksia integrifolia</i>	Swamp Mahogany	<i>Eucalyptus robusta</i>
Old Man Banksia	<i>Banksia serrata</i>	Steel Box	<i>Eucalyptus rudderi</i>
Hairpin Banksia	<i>Banksia spinulosa</i>	Ironbark Species	<i>Eucalyptus rummeryi</i>
Pink Bloodwood	<i>Corymbia intermedia</i>	Mugga Ironbark	<i>Eucalyptus siderophloia</i>
Red Bloodwood	<i>Corymbia gummifera</i>	Black Sallee	<i>Eucalyptus stellulata</i>
Red Ironbark	<i>Eucalyptus fibrosa</i>	Forest Red Gum	<i>Eucalyptus tereticomis</i>
Yellow Box	<i>Eucalyptus melliodora</i>	Eucalyptus umbra	<i>Eucalyptus umbra</i>
Grey Box	<i>Eucalyptus moluccana</i>	Broad-Leaved Paperbark	<i>Melaleuca quinquenervia</i>
Ironbark Species	<i>Eucalyptus paniculata</i>		

Note: Important nectar food trees are not restricted to those in the above list

Protect: Protecting native vegetation from degrading processes ensures that it remains in healthy condition providing maximum benefits for farm management and biodiversity. Protection of native vegetation may involve a number of actions including fencing to reduce grazing pressure and trampling by stock, and encouraging regrowth.

Manage: Actively managing areas of native vegetation helps ensure long term health and condition. This may include the control of weeds, stock management (lower stocking rates or rotation of stock in vegetated areas), reducing fire intensity and frequency and eliminating drift from fertilisers such as superphosphates and herbicides.

Additionally, encouraging retention of understorey species, native grasses and herbs and key habitat resources such as trees with hollows, logs and rocks on ground and autumn/winter nectar-producing species provides a range of habitats for native animals.

References and Further Reading

- Brooker, M I H and Kleinig, D A (1999), *Field Guide to Eucalypts of South Eastern Australia*, Revised Edition, Vols 1-2, Blooming Books, Sydney.
- Steenbeeke, G L (1999), *The Plants Directory CD-ROM: Vol 1, North Eastern NSW*, Orkology Kreations.
- DEC Website: www.environment.nsw.gov.au for Atlas of NSW Wildlife information and species profiles.

Further Information

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August 2004