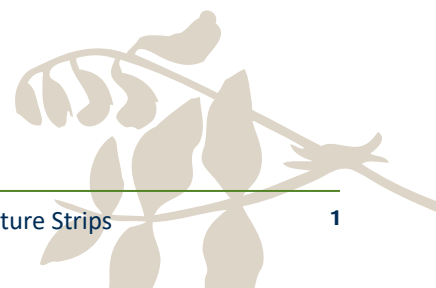




Is it possible to have a formal wildlife friendly garden?

A habitat garden does not have to replicate a wild, bush landscape – it can be formal. Insects and birds don't mind if plants are neatly maintained or aligned in rows.

A formal garden is defined by its symmetry, balance, and a restrained palette of plants. This style complements both traditional and contemporary houses.



Design Options

The benefit of using indigenous plants to create a formal garden is that they are mostly evergreen; they look great year-round, and the foliage and texture enhances the clean lines of traditional gardens. The key to achieving a beautiful formal indigenous garden is to plant en masse, repeat shapes and foliage colour and introduce perspective by layering plants to create a foreground, middle ground, and background. Layering your garden will create an illusion of depth and repeating shapes, and foliage colour creates balance and harmony.

Indigenous plants such as the Rock Correa (*Correa glabra*) respond well to clipping and hedging and has beautiful dark green leaves and delicate yellow-green tubular flowers from February to September. In garden beds near the house consider planting a low edging of Correa with a relaxed mix of indigenous shrubs to bridge the height between house and garden. The tall upright Silver Banksia (*Banksia marginata*) can give the same impression as the Pencil Pines that are used frequently in classic Mediterranean gardens. Mass planting of groundcovers such as the Ruby Saltbush (*Enchylaena tomentosa*) Kidney Weed (*Dichondra repens*), Creeping Boobialla (*Myoporum parvifolium*) or Running Postman (*Kennedia prostrata*) can emphasise the clean lines of formal garden beds.



Admire the view

Understanding the role of sightlines is the key to creating a beautiful garden. A well-planned garden will provide focal points from your house- consider the view or sightline when standing at your back door, kitchen sink or when you're sitting in your living room. If you have a two-story house think about what your garden will look like from above. A decorative feature placed at the end of a sightline creates perspective, structure, and the illusion of generous space. A decorative element could be a bench seat, sculpture, or an ornamental indigenous feature tree such as the Golden Spray (*Vinivaria juncea*) or Austral Indigo (*Indigofera australis*). A large pot planted with a neatly clipped Rock Correa (*Correa glabra*) or a steel pyramid trellis planted with Purple Coral Pea (*Hardenbergia violacea*) or Small-leaved Clematis (*Clematis microphylla*) and underplanted with Kidney Weed (*Dichondra repens*) creates a stunning focal point. Never place your utility shed at the end of your sightline!

Water features for wildlife

Water is also a common feature in formal gardens, and it is also the best way to bring more wildlife into your garden. Consider placing a pedestal birdbath at the end of a path, or if you have some space consider a clean-edged circular pond in the centre of a gravel path. Don't try this if you have a short path and a narrow space as visitors will find themselves on top of the water feature and unable to pass by comfortably. Always think about the scale of your garden and use less ornamentation in small areas- a simple, low, unadorned bowl with a single jet of water will suit a small garden more than an elaborate fountain or water feature.

