



SUSTAINABLE FARMS

HEALTHY FARMERS, HEALTHY FARMS,
HEALTHY PROFITS

Pollinators

Bugs and Biodiversity: maximising the benefits

Much talk about biodiversity tends to focus on the big and glamorous creatures – like koalas and parrots. But most biodiversity is in the form of millions of small creatures, like insects. Your farm or garden is brimming with this kind of biodiversity, and these small creatures help us in many ways.

There are three important jobs done by insects that help in farming landscapes.

Soil improvement: Insects help return nutrients to the soil and create tiny tunnels that bring water down to plant roots. These activities increase crop yields and pasture growth.

Pest control: The most important control of insect pests is done by other insects. By supporting predatory insects we help reduce damage from pests. Research shows that the non-agricultural patches in landscapes (such as native vegetation)

help support predator insect communities that provide pest control.

Pollination: Pollination by insects increases the quantity and quality of seeds or fruits produced by many of our valuable agricultural plants, including canola, clover, lucerne, and most orchard fruits. Diverse wild pollinator communities provide pollination for free. These wild pollinators are more important than ever, because the European honeybee is vulnerable to disease.

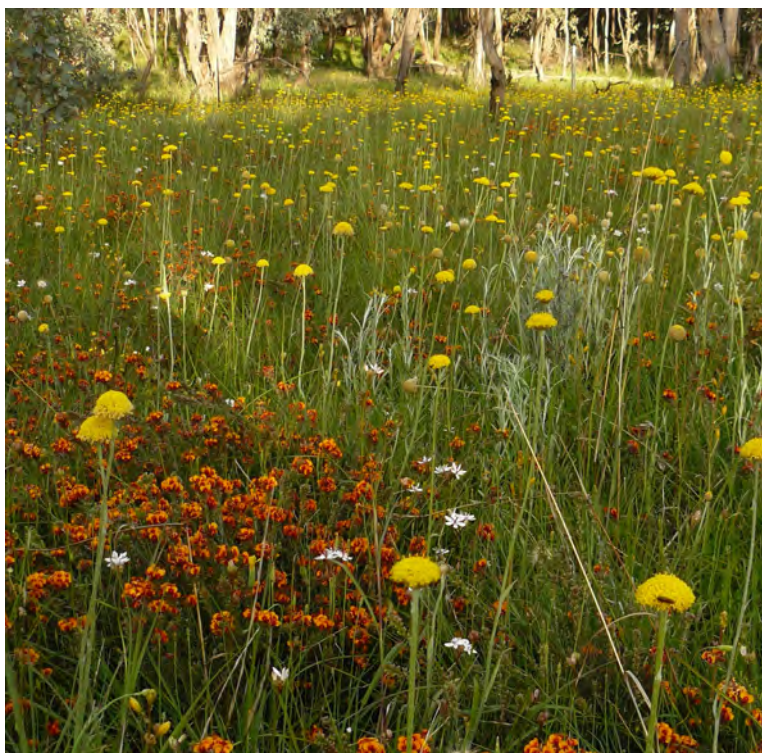
Some land use changes pose a threat to the biodiversity in farming landscapes. The increase in “intensive” land uses (like cropping and highly fertilised grazing) and a decrease in native grazing systems can lead to a reduction of good biodiversity habitat in the farming landscape. Therefore it is more important than ever to actively manage our land to support biodiversity.



Neon cuckoo bee (Laurence Sanders)

Some pollinator facts

- About three quarters of the crops we grow get a benefit from pollinators
- There are about 3,000 species of native bee in Australia
- Most native bees are smaller than the familiar European honeybee
- Most bees will fly a few hundred metres from their nests to the flowers they visit for nectar and pollen



Planting for pollinators

Although exotic species of plants can be used to form shelterbelts, native species provide additional benefits to biodiversity by providing superior habitat for wildlife.

Native species are adapted to local conditions and are thus easier to establish and more likely to survive, even in times of drought. Furthermore, native species also make it more likely that ecosystem processes will be restored and/or maintained.

Native vegetation in the broader landscape, outside your own property, is helping you by supporting beneficial biodiversity. Support initiatives to protect and enhance native vegetation in your region.

Tips

- Recognise that all farms offer habitat for insect diversity, but the non-agricultural patches and areas used at a low intensity (like native grazing) will support more native diversity than crops or fertilised grazing.
- Big patches are great – but all patches contribute, no matter how small. Value solitary paddock trees and the soil beneath them, rocky outcrops, fence lines, laneways – anywhere on the farm that is set aside from production.
- Look after these patches for biodiversity by protecting them from insecticide sprays, cultivation, fertilizers, weed invasion, or heavy grazing.



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For further information on
shelterbelts or Sustainable Farms

T: (02) 6125 1494

E: sustainablefarms@anu.edu.au

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