

REPTILES IN YOUR GARDEN - what you are likely to see and what you need to provide for their protection

The most common reptile found in a Bayside garden is the **garden skink**, and sometimes the **marbled gecko** which has moved from northern states via human transport.

Blotched and **Common Blue tongue lizards** are more commonly found in gardens near heathlands or the coastal park where there is thicker undergrowth protection although wandering pets can turn up in any garden.

Turtles wander from pond to pond but are not so common away from the dams and ponds of golf courses and parks, unless they are pets moving on.

Snakes are mostly found along the coastal bushland and occasionally in heathlands, but most noticeable during warmer weather. When not out hunting for food such as rats and mice, snakes mostly prefer their burrows and thick bush away from human interference. Only during warmer months are they likely to be found warming themselves across pathways, but usually in less frequented areas.

Skinks, blue tongue lizards, turtles and even snakes all have similar body functions, i.e. they are cold blooded animals. These animals rely on warmth from external surrounds. They will go into torpor, or aestivate (turtles) most noticeably during the colder months in Melbourne, but not entire winter periods, which is not true hibernation. They lower their body temperature while at rest during extreme weather conditions, either hot or cold, saving energy until conditions are comfortable and food is available, surviving on fat built up during productive times. These animals will emerge during any season when food and warmth exist without going into a full seasonal period of hibernation.

Provision of logs, especially hollows, bark, rocks, leaf litter, clumpy grasses and bushes, some in sunny positions are ideal locations to find reptiles. If you wish to attract or see a skink in your garden, a piece of tin amongst a patch of leaf litter that warms in the sun is often a place to find them. Skinks are small and blend in with their natural surroundings but love to sun themselves when the temperature warms up.*

A shallow dish of fresh **water** at ground level will become popular with your local lizards, especially during summer.

Cats are common **predators** of skinks in our gardens. Keeping cats in their own runs or in your house is the only way to stop cat predation of native wildlife. Local laws provide for capture of cats on your own property, but as at 2017, there is no law covering the control and containment of cats to their own property. Small skinks and small birds suffer greatly from this omission.

Therefore, the best places in your garden are mulch with some logs and bark. Hollow logs are a great home for all sorts of insects, food of reptiles, plus reptiles love to live in hollows too. Some will burrow in soft soil, particularly under roots, rocks or paving stones.

*Always be careful when turning over logs or tin (preferably from the side or furthest point away from you in case there is something which wants to escape rapidly or that fingers are protected from bites (through wearing a glove). Simply precautions.

<https://www.bayfonw.org.au/g4ws/reptiles>

Reptile Rescue on 0407 565 181.