

dee's bees

One landscape designer is providing colourful homes for our endangered bees.

Why are beehives so often painted a variety of bright colours? Landscape designer Dee McQuillan of Ivy & Bloom can certainly tell you. She not only has a couple of hives in her garden, but rents out hives to other bee-loving gardeners. Bees use colour to identify their own hive so that they can get the nectar and pollen back to the right box in the right hive. Bees don't like red, brown or black, preferring blue, pink, mauve, yellow and green.

As a landscape designer, Dee has always had a love of flowers, edibles and fruit trees, so adding bees into the mix a few years ago was a natural progression. She has always been interested in the environmental and sustainability issues around bees, local populations of which have been under threat in recent years.

Says Dee: "Bees are in decline worldwide and need our help. Backyard beekeeping is essential to our ecosystem. You're not only helping our environment, but you get to reap the benefits as the bees work their magic on your fruit trees and flowers. And, of course, you get to eat the honey."

At first, Dee got a hive for her own suburban Auckland garden, joining the dog, cats, chickens and canaries. "It's very addictive and great fun. And they are great for the garden. The number of flowers and fruit has doubled since we've had the hives. And the hives smell really good on summer evenings."

She began to get requests from clients to include hives in their garden designs, so Dee began to lease them out. She provides the painted boxes, maintains them and harvests the honey, keeping the operation small at 10 hives.

She also takes care of related administration such as registration, inspections and reporting, testing and compliance with food regulations.

Harvesting the honey isn't as simple as removing the honeycomb and spreading honey on your toast, especially if you intend to sell it. Dee belongs to the



Dee's beehives are painted in (left hand hive, top to bottom): Resene Pink Lace, Resene Butterfly Bush, Resene Surrender and Resene Waikawa Grey. The other hive is Resene Royal Heath, Resene Witch Haze, Resene Perfume and Resene Surrender. The deeper boxes are brood boxes for eggs and bee babies; the shallower boxes are for the honey.

-  Resene Pink Lace
-  Resene Butterfly Bush
-  Resene Surrender
-  Resene Waikawa Grey
-  Resene Royal Heath
-  Resene Witch Haze
-  Resene Perfume

Franklin Bee Club where she uses its certified extraction equipment.

Dee has researched what colours are best to paint the hives, ending up with a selection of 13 Resene colours. One Resene testpot is the perfect amount of paint for two coats on one box, and Resene paint has Environmental Choice approval so is safe for the bees. She refreshes the boxes each year with a coat of paint. **H**

For more about Dee McQuillan, see www.ivyandbloom.co.nz.