

JUNIOR SECTION *



A good way of supplying sweetened water.

I have had several letters from Juniors saying how much they enjoyed the visits of tuis and bellbirds while the kowhais were in flower and regretting that when the flowers were finished these lovely songsters would leave them. I agree that it is a real pleasure to have tuis and bellbirds visiting one's garden.

Have you ever thought of feeding them with honey or sugar dissolved in water to encourage them to stay around after the honey-bearing trees have finished flowering? A cup or other open-necked container wired to the tree (in such a way that it can be taken down for cleaning) while the birds are about should soon be discovered by these "sweet teeth". Until the sweetened water is discovered by the birds, put a spray of flax or gum flowers upon which they are feeding in or near the water so that the flowers will entice them to try it, and if possible put the containers in or very close to the flowering

plant until they are accustomed to this odd new flower.

It is important:

1. To keep the container clean and the water fresh.
2. To keep up the supply regularly or they'll move off to seek food elsewhere.
3. To make sure that there is somewhere for your visitors to perch while they are drinking (if there are no twigs handy a firm piece of wire will do).
4. Honey is always mixed with water. They'll prefer it that way and it will not stick to their feathers. The honey may need replacing after rain in case the sweetness is washed away.

By the way, if you have magpies around it is likely that you will not have much success with tuis or bellbirds. Even the bold, brave tui is no match for the strong bill and larger size of the magpie, which is known to rob their nests.