



Wasp strikes again.

In some areas this is actually a good thing, as gall wasp is a proclaimed pest. I hear people saying, "I will lose half my tree!", but if that is the case, it will have to be done, as gall wasp kills the tree's ability to fruit and in some cases makes it unproductive.

Some plants are very resilient and will bounce back. In many cases, you may not get too much fruit but it can bring your tree down to a manageable size and give it a fresh start. I know exactly how to do it, we have produced a YouTube how-to video. This link: [youtube.com/watch?v=RrEpoeA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RrEpoeA) or search "DIY citrus pruning" on YouTube site.

Chris is the horticultural manager of the Hermitage Gardens. Readers can email chris@weekender@theherald.com.au.



GINA CRANSTON
BACKYARD

HEAVENLY CREATURES

Have you ever considered what living creatures – pets, insects, producers – would most contribute to a happy, happening backyard?

Chris Wallis, who runs Tree Frog Permaculture (treefrogpermaculture.com.au) and manages a website which blogs about permaculture in the Hunter Region (hunterpermaculture.org), posed the question at Permaculture Hunter's May monthly meeting.

The chooks, I thought, were a lay down misere to be in Chris's top 10 but I was surprised to see them only coming in at No. 10.

Here's the substantiated list:

10. Chickens: "Chickens are the all-round perma-animal, turning your food scraps and lawn into eggs, meat and a strong and balanced manure," Chris says. "Unfortunately, when you scale the system down the chickens can become big problems, destroying gardens in a single afternoon."

9. Quails: "Miniature chickens with almost zero destructive power," Chris enthuses. "But the eggs are tiny and they require much more protection."

8. Pigeons: Who'd have thought?

"Pigeons bring in nutrients from other areas, cycle phosphorus well [high levels in their poo] and have low destructive potential."

7. Rabbits and guinea pigs: "Miniature horses that turn high cellulose green waste into potassium rich manure in pelletised packets ready for your garden," Chris says, adding they also breed like crazy, which can be good or bad.

6. Lizards: They are low impact, love slugs and snails, are native and hunt down pests during the day. And they can hang around for more than 20 years.

5. Cats: Yes, cats. Chris has cats and loves them, and so do I, but I sensed a touch of surprise (tinged with animosity) when they got a guernsey in the top 10. Chris says cats minimise the impacts of the other animals in the system by keeping pests down. "A well-trained cat can also keep other cats at bay while leaving the wildlife alone, leaving your backyard as a sanctuary for birdlife, lizards and other natives."

4. Spiders: Pest reduction.



3. Wasps, ladybeetles, dragonflies and damselflies: Predator insects that keep the pests down. "Dragonflies and damselflies live in

waterbodies in their juvenile state and prey on

mosquito wrigglers so they're particularly useful," Chris says.

2. Bees and other pollinators: "Without them much of the fruit wouldn't grow!"

1. Frogs: Offer night-time pest control and, says Chris, they are "zero hard, bird attracting and have such lovely calls".

Tree Frog Permaculture, by the way, will be on hand at Newcastle East's Sandhills Community Garden open day tomorrow (Sunday, June 6) between 1pm and 4pm, offering free workshops on increasing garden productivity and making your garden ecologically sustainable.

Permaculture Hunter meets at the Elderly Citizens Centre, Laing Street, Newcastle, on the third Wednesday of the month between 6.30pm and 8.30pm. The next meeting is on June 16.



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