

Make your own lizard haven

Have you ever seen a lizard in your garden? The lizards that most people see around their homes are sleek, copper coloured and unfortunately sometimes brought in by the family cat. NZ has over 40 named species of lizard commonly known as either geckos or skinks. The rainbow skink which was accidentally introduced is also a common sight in urban and rural gardens. About half of our native lizard species make the forest their home. Living on insects and other invertebrates, lizards also play an important role in pollination of flowers and distribution of seeds.

Vulnerable to other predators like rats, mice and hedgehogs, lizards rely on hiding places and shedding their tails to avoid capture. You can create your very own lizard home in your own back yard.

Lizards like lots of low lying groundcover or leaf litter. Plants such as pohuehue (*Muehlenbeckia*) and coprosmas provide a thick mat and food source for lizards. A layer of mulch will provide a good environment for lizards to explore.



You can place rocks and logs artistically and strategically throughout the area, some for hiding and some for viewing. You can also use man-made hiding places such as planks, corrugated iron, bricks, concrete or strips of bark. Why not try making an Onduline lizard hotel? Onduline is an extremely tough lightweight corrugated roofing and cladding product made from organic fibres saturated with bitumen. Check the manufacturer's website for a local supplier www.onduline.co.nz.

Instructions: Take a couple of sheets two metres long and cut into smaller pieces (290 mm x 400 mm or larger) with a handsaw or skillsaw. These should be stacked two or three high with small stones in between the layers.

Place your lizard home in a warm dry sunny area with good cover such as low shrubs, tussocks, groundcover and rock piles. Once in place do not disturb your lizard home. Prospective tenants will abandon habitat that is frequently disturbed.