

Superb Fairy-wrens

Landscape and gardening to attract them to your garden

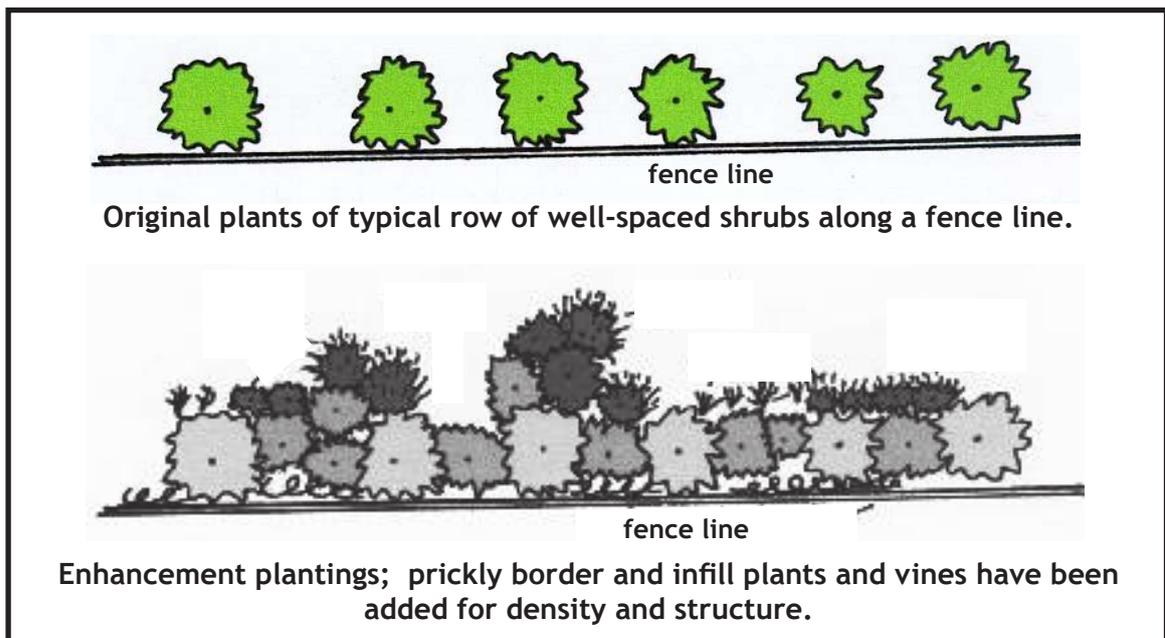
Superb Fairy-wrens are small insect-eating birds. They need a habitat which offers both food and security. This means providing open space for foraging as well as growing insect-attracting plants, and shelter plants for roosting, nesting and security from territorially aggressive birds and predators, both avian and mammal. Consequently a good Superb Fairy-wren garden will not be 'neat and tidy', but tend more to the wild, organic and unruly.



Photo of local wren sighted in Boyce Street by Stewart Whittlestone.

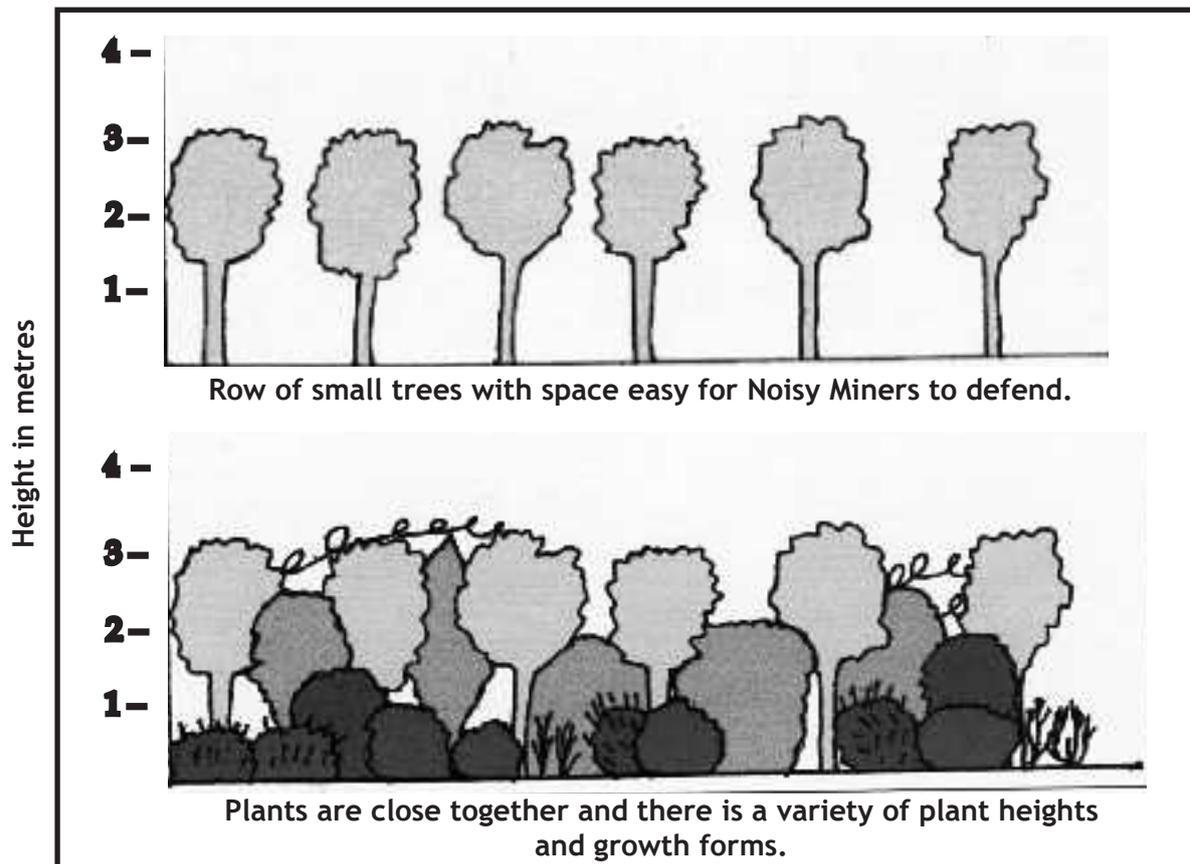
To have a garden that is welcoming to Superb Fairy-wrens:

- Plant, quite densely, a variety of shelter and insect-attracting plants.
- Have a diversity of plants, of differing heights, that will provide 'layers' of vegetation that reach continuously to the ground - groundcovers, tall grasses, small and large shrubs, climbers.
- Rather than having a single row of shrubs, plant in depth to provide wrens with better refuges from predators. Maybe plant additional shrubs in groups to expand an existing row, e.g. along a boundary fence. This can produce a curving, aesthetically pleasing line extending into a lawn.
- Include some prickly or thorny plants (e.g. climbing roses) as these can act as barriers and protect small birds.



- Try to include in your garden grassed areas with shrubby shelter on more than one side. In some parts of your garden you may be happy to let grasses flower. These will attract insects, providing food for insect-eating birds, as well as seed for other small birds, such as finches.

- Light, regular pruning encourages more vigorous growth and therefore greater plant density. However, avoid pruning small dead branches at the top of shrubs as these are useful look-out perches, but with the safety of shrubs below.
- 'Weeds' may sometimes provide safe refuges for wrens, so any clearing should be sensitive to their needs. Stage any major clearances and replant the cleared area as soon as possible. High priorities for removal are woody weeds that produce small fleshy fruits, such as Large Leaf Privet, and Celtis seedlings before they mature into trees. Be cautious, however, when dealing with lantana as this may often be used by wrens for shelter, roosting or nesting.



Some DON'Ts

DON'T clear undergrowth over-zealously.

DON'T be excessively neat and tidy. A wilder garden is more attractive to small birds.

DON'T prune back the lower branches of trees and shrubs.

DON'T prune during the Superb Fairy-wren nesting season (between July and March, but particularly September to December).

DON'T use pesticides, as poison can build up in wren bodies if they eat poisoned insects. The birds themselves, by eating insects, make the use of pesticides unnecessary.