

HOMES FOR RINGTAIL POSSUMS



Making a drey using hanging baskets

In the wild, ringtail possums create a dome shaped nest. It is important that possum homes are strong and waterproof. An artificial drey should resemble as closely as possible in comfort and size of the natural drey. Hanging baskets conform perfectly to these specifications.

Items Required

- Two wire hanging baskets with hook (10" for up to 4 ringtails, 12" for up to 8 ringtails)
- Two coconut fibre basket liners (usually come with the wire hanging basket)
- A pair of scissors
- Wire cutters
- A large eye needle
- Baker's twine
- Reusable or biodegradable cable ties, tie wire or netting clips
- Optional: paperbark



Instructions

1. Bottom - place the bottom coconut fibre liner inside the wire basket.
2. Top - remove the chain and place the fibre liner on the outside of the wire basket.
3. Using wire cutters, cut the wire apart on the top basket to make an opening at the front and back to create space for an entry and an exit hole (make sure there are no sharp edges).
4. Using scissors, in line with where you cut the wire, make a hole in the top fibre liner to form an entrance approximately the size of a tennis ball, then repeat on the other side to form an exit.
5. Place the two baskets on top of one another to form a sphere and cable tie them together in at least four spots to prepare for sewing.
6. Using the needle and baker's twine, sew the baskets together through the fibre liner and the wire basket. Sew loosely, leaving a 10 - 15cm length at the starting point.
7. Once sewn, tighten all threads so the basket is secure and tie off threads.
8. Cut off the cable ties to prevent plastic from going into the environment.
9. Extend the chain from the bottom section over the combined baskets to be able to hang.
10. Additional: Soft leaf litter or additional coconut fibre can be placed in the bottom of the drey for added comfort for the possum. A few layers of paperbark can be sewn on the top of the drey to give it extra protection from inclement weather and helps prevent birds from taking fibres for their nests.

HOW TO HANG YOUR DREY



Dreys are nests made by possums and artificial dreys are designed to be strong and waterproof. An artificial drey should resemble as closely as possible in comfort and size of the natural drey. Hanging baskets conform perfectly to these specifications and are often used when trying to replicate a drey in the wild.

When placing your drey it is important to be aware of the following considerations:

- When placing the drey in a tree, ensure it is not in an exposed location. Ringtail Possums build their dreys in the canopy and limbs of trees to hide from predators.
- Do not place the drey in an isolated tree as this will force the possum to come to the ground to move around.
- The drey should be placed in a tree out of direct sunlight, with shade, cover and somewhere the possum can remain in the trees to get around. Do not place the opening of your drey facing into direct northern or western summer sun.
- Try to position the drey with the entrance facing away from the direction of the prevailing rain and wind.
- Try to place your drey at least 5m off the ground (the higher the better), and securely wedged above a branch, out of the way of predators. This way, the possum can walk out directly onto the branch and also use it to access the entrance.
- It is preferable to place your drey in a native, and non-deciduous tree to ensure that come winter the site is not bare of leaves. If possible, place the drey in a gum tree surrounded by other eucalyptus trees, as their leaves are the possum's primary food source. If there are native flowering or fruiting plants in the area, that would also help provide additional natural food resources.
- The drey should ideally be firmly wedged or attached to the tree with 'occy' straps or wire so that it will not become easily dislodged.