Creating a backyard oasis that mimics the wilderness is the goal of many wildlife enthusiasts. While others install fences, put out poison baits or chemical deterrents, these people want to attract birds, critters, and even deer to their gardens.

- Our desire to tidy and groom our landscapes, whether spraying the lawn with pesticides, raking up leaf litter, or pruning shrubs and trees to rigid shapes, is not friendly to wildlife.
- A typical yard with lawn, raked flower beds, and specimen shade trees does not provide the diversity needed to attract wildlife. It may be tidy, but it provides habitat for very few native species.
- “Wildscaping”, on the other hand, growing a variety of native or adapted plants in a natural arrangement that includes diverse shapes, colors, flowers, and fruits, is a boon to wildlife.
- Start small: choose an area of lawn to replace with a mix of native shrubs, perennial flowers, and wild grasses. By selecting plants that provide different heights and forms, foliage, flowers and an assortment of fruits and seeds, you’ll add interest - both human and wild - year round.
- A “wild” garden doesn’t have to look sloppy: Arrange the plants to enhance the space they’ll occupy, considering their eventual shape, size, and habit of growth and bloom.
- Cluster plants for maximum impact by grouping 3 or 5 plants of the same species. Placing clusters to contrast colors, foliage, and blooming time creates a garden that is more natural in appearance.
- Add structural diversity by mixing tall plants, mid-sized and shorter plants, and ground-hugging plants to allow wildlife to move from one part of the wildscape to another. Strips of plants running between different habitat areas allow small critters a corridor for safe travel.
- Resist tidiness: leave organic litter in place to mulch the soil, don’t cut back dead stalks until spring to leave seeds for food, prune thoughtfully, and avoid using pesticides.
- Dead leaves may hide the cocoons of butterflies; a dense tree provides camouflage and thermal protection for the tiny nests of hummingbirds.
- If you have pest problems, start with the least invasive remedy. Many pesticides kill everything they encounter – including beneficial insects.
- Learn what a weed is and what a native plant is. Native plants are important for their established relationships with wildlife and other plants. Even if they do not suit our aesthetics, native plants are the backbone of wild communities.

Attract Birds to Your Yard and Garden

- It takes more than a feeder and a birdbath to make your yard truly bird friendly. Birds need a complete habitat that provides food, shelter, nesting areas, and singing posts from which to defend their territories.
A Bird Pantry

Birds get their food not only from the fruits of plants but from their buds, flowers, and nectar. You may want to select plants that provide food in each of these ways.

- Select plants to provide food for birds in every season. Fruits ripen in different seasons. Plants with spring-ripening fruits that feed new parent birds include serviceberries, wild cherries, and mulberries.
- In fall, migrating birds look for the ripening fruits of cotoneaster, mountain ash and buffaloberry. Other plants bear fruits that persist through the winter providing an important source of food. These plants include viburnum, sumac, hawthorn, and crabapple.
- Not all berries are consumed by all bird species. In some cases, fruits may be too large for a bird to swallow. Use a diversity of plant species to attract more birds.

Concentrate on Native Plants

- Emphasize native trees, shrubs, and vines. Native plants and birds have evolved side-by-side over thousands of years. Native plants are more likely to provide the right mix, size, and nutrition that birds in our area require.
- By incorporating native habitats into our landscapes, we create natural corridors for birds to pass back and forth through their natural ranges. This is especially important for areas that have been impacted by development.
- Avoid exotic, invasive species. Some exotic species, like buckthorn or Japanese honeysuckle, provide abundant fruit for birds; however, they tend to crowd out native species over time, robbing birds and other animals of the diverse mix of plants needed for food and shelter.

Take a Cue from Nature

- Plant in drifts. If you look to nature, you’ll discover that in the wild, plants usually occur in groups. This promotes cross-pollination, boosts fertility (and, therefore, fruit yield), and makes it easier for migrating birds to spot ripening fruits.
- Consider vertical layers. Natural areas tend to have vertical layers, each attracting and providing something important to different bird species. Some birds prefer the canopy of tall trees. Others perch in the understory trees. Many build nests in shrubs, while still others find shelter and nesting materials in vines and ground covers. Try to create as many of these layers as possible in your backyard bird refuge.
- Plant at least one grouping of conifers. These plants provide year-round windbreaks, shelter, and nesting sites.

Attract Critters to Your Yard and Garden

- If you want to attract rabbits, squirrels, chipmunks, and other small critters to your yard, you must provide food, shelter, and water. A water garden or pond will attract many types of wildlife. A short tray of water or ground-level birdbath will do fine as well.
- Birdfeeders will also attract squirrels and chipmunks. Squirrels need a network of tall trees to live in and travel, while chipmunks would prefer some safe hiding spots on the ground.

TREES

Rocky Mountain Maple (Acer glabrum)
- Food Quality – Excellent
- Season – Spring/Fall
- Cover – Good
- Nesting - Good
- Mature height 15’ and spread 15’
- Attractive red stems, birds eat the buds, seeds and flowers. NATIVE
Autumn Brilliance Serviceberry (*Amelanchier × grandiflora* ‘Autumn Brilliance’)  
- Food Quality – Excellent  
- Season – Early Summer  
- Cover – Good  
- Nesting - Good  
- Mature height 15’ and spread 12’  
- White flowers followed by small red fruit that ripen in June; fruit is favored by many species of birds.

Common Hackberry (*Celtis occidentalis*)  
- Food Quality – Good  
- Season – Fall/Winter  
- Cover – Fair  
- Nesting - Fair  
- Mature height 60’ and spread 40’  
- This tree is generally liked by songbirds; fruit is a small blue berry that persists through winter.  

Washington Hawthorn (*Crataegus phaenopyrum*)  
- Food Quality – Good  
- Season – Fall/Winter  
- Cover – Good  
- Nesting - Good  
- Mature height 20’ and spread 15’  
- Dense tree with long thorns provides good cover for birds; red berries persist through winter.

Rocky Mountain Juniper (*Juniperus scopulorum*)  
- Food Quality – Excellent  
- Season – Fall/Winter  
- Cover – Excellent  
- Nesting - Excellent  
- Mature height 20 to 40’ and spread 3 to 15’  
- Common cultivars: Cologreen, Gray Gleam, Moonglow  
- Birds eat the seeds; dense foliage used as cover.  

Flowering Crabapple (*Malus* spp.)  
- Food Quality – Excellent  
- Season – Summer/Winter  
- Cover – Good  
- Nesting - Good  
- Mature height 15 to 25’ and spread 10 to 20’  
- Many cultivars available  
- Select disease resistant cultivars; fruit eaten by birds and mammals.

Colorado Spruce (*Picea pungens*)  
- Food Quality – Fair  
- Season – Fall  
- Cover – Good  
- Nesting - Good  
- Mature height 60’ and spread 25’  
- Valuable as cover; provides habitat for various bird species.  

Ponderosa Pine (*Pinus ponderosa*)  
- Food Quality – Good  
- Season – Fall  
- Cover – Good  
- Nesting - Good  
- Mature height 50’ and spread 25’  
- Very drought tolerant; seeds are eaten by numerous birds and small mammals, also used for cover.  

Southwestern White pine (*Pinus strobiformis*)  
- Food Quality – Fair  
- Season – Fall  
- Cover – Good  
- Nesting - Good  
- Mature height 40’ and spread 30’  
- More important as cover for various wildlife; seeds eaten by birds and small mammals.  

NATIVE
Gambel Oak (*Quercus gambelii*)
- Food Quality – Good
- Season – Fall/Winter
- Cover – Fair
- Nesting – Fair
- Mature height 15 - 30' and spread 12 - 20'
- A hardy, xeric tree with a shrubby growth habit, favored by a variety of wildlife.  NATIVE

Northern Red Oak (*Quercus rubra*)
- Food Quality – Excellent
- Season – Fall/Winter
- Cover – Fair
- Nesting – Fair
- Mature height 50’ and spread 30’
- Excellent fall color; acorn liked by numerous birds and animals

Swedish Whitebeam (*Sorbus intermedia*)
- Food Quality – Excellent
- Season – Fall
- Cover – Good
- Nesting – Good
- Mature height 15’ and spread 12’
- Creamy white flowers, showy bright orange berries in fall; hardy and tolerant of alkaline soils.

**SHRUBS**

Four Wing Saltbush (*Atriplex canescens*)
- Food Quality – Good
- Season – Fall
- Cover – Good
- Nesting – Good
- Mature height 5’ and spread 5’
- Upright spreading habit; a four-winged fruit appears in late summer on female plants, may become rose-tinted in fall. Seeds eaten by birds.  NATIVE

Butterfly Bush (*Buddleia davidii*)
- Food Quality – Good
- Season – Summer
- Cover – Good
- Nesting – Good
- Mature height 6’ and spread 5’
- Tubular flowers are attractive to hummingbirds as well as butterflies; available in blue, pink, purple, red and white.

Peking Cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster acutifolius*)
- Food Quality – Good
- Season – Fall/Winter
- Cover – Excellent
- Nesting – Good
- Mature height 10’ and spread 5’
- Fruit favored by Robins. Small pink blossoms turn to black fruit; orange-red fall color.

Waxflower (*Jamesia americana*)
- Food Quality – Excellent
- Season – Fall
- Cover – Good
- Nesting – Good
- Mature height 5’ and spread 4’
- Intensely fragrant and showy clusters of waxy, white flowers. Attractive to bees and butterflies, seeds are favored by birds.  NATIVE
Boulder Raspberry (*Oreobatus deliciosus*)
- Food Quality – Good
- Season – Summer/Fall
- Cover – Good
- Mature height 6’ and spread 6’
- Very hardy, tolerant of dry, sandy soils; arching growth habit. Fruit is eaten by a variety of wildlife. **NATIVE**

Nanking Cherry (*Prunus tomentosa*)
- Food Quality – Good
- Season – Summer
- Cover – Good
- Mature height 10’ and spread 10’
- Showy, pink-white flowers and fine-flavored, red fruits that are favored by over 80 species of birds.

Chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana*)
- Food Quality – Good
- Season – Summer
- Cover – Good
- Mature height 25’ and spread 20’
- Fruit is eaten by more than 70 bird species. Aggressive growth habit! **NATIVE**

Fragrant Sumac (*Rhus aromatica*)
- Food Quality – Fair
- Season – Winter
- Cover – Good
- Mature height 6’ and spread 5’
- Excellent orange-red fall color, small red berries used by a variety of birds. **NATIVE**

Wood’s Rose (*Rosa woodsii*)
- Food Quality – Excellent
- Season – Fall/Spring
- Cover – Good
- Mature height 4’ and spread 4’
- Fast growing, suckers freely. Wildlife feeds on the rose hips. **NATIVE**

Buffaloberry (*Shepherdia argentea*)
- Food Quality – Good
- Season – Summer
- Cover – Good
- Mature height 8’ and spread 6’
- Robins, Sparrows, Red-Winged Blackbirds and many other birds usually eat the fruit when it is yellow or light orange in July and early August. **NATIVE**

Coralberry (*Symphoricarpos orbiculatus*)
- Food Quality – Good
- Season – Fall/Winter
- Cover – Good
- Mature height 4’ and spread 6’
- Attractive in winter, full of fruit. This Colorado native is used by birds and small mammals. **NATIVE**

Arrowwood (*Viburnum dentatum*)
- Food Quality – Good
- Season – Fall/Winter
- Cover – Good
- Mature height 12’ and spread 9’
- Fruit is eaten by songbirds; flat white flower clusters in June followed by blue-black berries; orange-red-purple fall color.
PERENNIALS

**Hyssop** (*Agastache* spp.)
- **Food Quality** – Good
- **Season** – Summer - Fall
- **Cover** – Fair
- **Nesting** – Poor
- **Mature height** 18 -36” and spread 14-30”
- **Attractive to hummingbirds. Many cultivars available, all with extraordinary scented foliage and blooms.**

**Coreopsis** (*Coreopsis* spp.)
- **Food Quality** – Good
- **Season** – Summer - Fall
- **Cover** – Fair
- **Nesting** – Poor
- **Mature height** 12 -30” and spread 12-18”
- **Attractive to hummingbirds; sparrows and finches also feed on the seeds. Many varieties to choose from in shades of yellow.**

**Coneflower** (*Echinacea* spp.)
- **Food Quality** – Good
- **Season** – Summer - Fall
- **Cover** – Fair
- **Nesting** – Poor
- **Mature height** 24 -36” and spread 18-24”
- **Attractive to hummingbirds; sparrows and finches also feed on the seeds. Available in lavender-purple and white with coppery centers.**

**Blanket flower** (*Gaillardia aristata*)
- **Food Quality** – Good
- **Season** – Fall
- **Cover** – Fair
- **Nesting** – Poor
- **Mature height** 14 -24” and spread 18-24”
- **Yellow to orange-yellow flowers; seeds are attractive to goldfinch and sparrows.** **NATIVE**

**Coral Bells** (*Heuchera* spp.)
- **Food Quality** – Good
- **Season** – Summer
- **Cover** – Fair
- **Nesting** – Poor
- **Mature height** 10 -18” and spread 12-18”
- **Attractive to hummingbirds; sparrows and finches also feed on the seeds. Multiple colors of flowers and foliage.**

**Bee Balm** (*Monarda didyma*)
- **Food Quality** – Good
- **Season** – Summer
- **Cover** – Fair
- **Nesting** – Poor
- **Mature height** 36” and spread 18-36”
- **Attractive to hummingbirds. Grows well in any soil; foliage emits a spicy mint fragrance. Available in red, pink, blue, light purple and white cultivars.**

**Switch Grass** (*Panicum virgatum*)
- **Food Quality** – Good
- **Season** – Winter
- **Cover** – Good
- **Nesting** – Poor
- **Mature height** 3 -4’and spread 3 - 4’
- **Seeds are eaten by songbirds; very good cover for birds and small mammals. Fall color ranges from deep yellow to orange.** **NATIVE**
Penstemon (*Penstemon* spp.)
- Food Quality – Good
- Season – Summer - Fall
- Cover – Fair
- Nesting - Poor
- Mature height 12 -30” and spread 12-18”
- Attractive to hummingbirds; sparrows and finches also feed on the seeds. Beautiful tubular flowers in colors of red, pink, yellow, blue and purple. **NATIVE**

Prairie Coneflower (*Ratibida columnifera*)
- Food Quality – Good
- Season – Summer/Fall
- Cover – Fair
- Nesting - Fair
- Mature height 18 - 24” and spread 18 - 24”
- This drought tolerant plant is easy to establish, naturalizes readily. Seed heads are attractive to finches. **NATIVE**

Salvia (*Salvia sylvestris* × ‘Mainacht’)
- Food Quality – Good
- Season – Summer - Fall
- Cover – Fair
- Nesting - Poor
- Mature height 24” and spread 12-18”
- Attractive to hummingbirds; sparrows and finches also feed on the seeds. Grayish-green leaves persist throughout winter; blooms all summer long.

Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*)
- Food Quality – Good
- Season – Winter
- Cover – Fair
- Nesting - Poor
- Mature height 3 -4’ and spread 2’
- Blue-gray foliage turns red to orange in the fall. Great winter seed source. **NATIVE**