

TREES, SHRUBS & PERENNIALS FOR ATTRACTING BIRDS AND OTHER WILDLIFE

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Craig R. Miller
Parks & Open Space Manager
www.cpnmd.org



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*)

- Attractive red stems, birds eat the buds, seeds and flowers. NATIVE
- Mature height 15' and spread 15'
- Outstanding red fall color
- Food Quality: Excellent Season: Spring/Fall
- Cover: Good Nesting: Good

Wood's Rose (*Rosa woodsii*)

- This fast growing shrub suckers freely. The bright red hips persist throughout the winter.



NATIVE

- Mature height and spread 4'
- The flowers are 2-2 1/2" wide, ranging in color from light to dark pink with a sweet and strong fragrance.
- Food Quality: Excellent Season: Fall/Spring
- Cover: Good Nesting: Poor

Buffaloberry (*Shepherdia argentea*)

- 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
- Mature height 8' and spread 6'
- Native Americans would have these berries when they ate buffalo, hence the name.
- Food Quality: Good Season: Summer
- Cover: Good Nesting: Good



Coralberry (*Symphoricarpos orbiculatus*)

- Attractive in winter, full of fruit, this Colorado native is used by birds and small mammals. NATIVE
- Mature height 4' and spread 6'
- Whitish pink flowers in June are followed by clusters of bright pink fruit maturing in September and October.
- Food Quality: Good Season: Fall/Winter
- Cover: Good Nesting: Fair



Arrowwood (*Viburnum dentatum*)

- Fruit is eaten by songbirds; flat white flower clusters in June followed by blue-black berries; orange-red-purple fall color.
- Mature height 12' and spread 9'
- Native Americans reportedly used the straight stems of this species for arrow shafts, hence the common name.
- Food Quality: Good Season: Fall/Winter
- Cover: Good Nesting: Good



PERENNIALS

Hyssop (*Agastache* spp.)

- Very attractive to hummingbirds. Many cultivars available, all with extraordinary scented foliage and blooms.
- Mature height 18 -36" and spread 14-30"
- Also known as Hummingbird Mint, this plant is essential to a pollinator friendly garden.
- Food Quality: Good Season: Summer/Fall
- Cover: Fair Nesting: Poor



Coreopsis (*Coreopsis* spp.)

- Attractive to hummingbirds; sparrows and finches also feed on the seeds.
- Mature height 12 - 30" and spread 12 -18"
- Their ruggedness and profuse blooms have made them popular with plant breeders, with over 100 types available.
- Food Quality: Good Season: Fall
- Cover: Fair Nesting: Poor



