

Landscaping for Birds

Different types of birds need different foods, from buds to seeds to insects to nectar, and their diets often vary throughout the year. Never use pesticides, because these will destroy many non-target species, and even pest species can provide good food for the birds. To attract a variety of species, give birds plenty of choices.

More Information

Conifers: Evergreens provide both food and shelter for birds. The cones hide seeds that many species are adept at extracting and others bear fruit, especially important during winter months. Look for native pines, spruces, junipers, cedars and arborvitae.

Nut-bearing Trees: Many nuts (also called “mast”) are popular with woodpeckers, jays, titmice, and turkeys. Spring blossoms attract insects, providing food for spring arrivals. Consider oaks, hazels, beeches, butternuts, chestnuts, buckeyes, hickories and walnuts.

Summer Fruits: Fruit makes up a large portion of the diet of many species, and supplements the diet of nestlings as well. Look for cherry, chokecherry, raspberry, blueberry, grape, elderberry, native honeysuckle and native mulberry.

Autumn Fruits: Birds count on plentiful food in the fall, whether for migration or to fatten up for the winter. Dogwood, bayberry, serviceberry, mountain ash, cotoneaster and buffaloberry are good choices.

Winter Fruit: Some fruits don't become palatable to birds until they have frozen and thawed several times, keeping these available for late winter eating. Choose among Virginia creeper, crabapple, snowberry, sumac, viburnum, Eastern wahoo, highbush cranberry, and winterberry.

Grasses: Many native grasses are planted for landscaping, but don't cut them back in the fall as their seeds can provide food for the birds. Look at wavy hair grass, prairie dropseed, switchgrass, little bluestem, pink muhly grass, purple love grass, big bluestem, and Indian rice grass

Perennials: Coneflower, Jerusalem artichoke, sunflower, coreopsis, black-eyed Susan provide seeds in the fall that attract finches and sparrows.

Nectar: Hummingbirds and orioles are attracted to nectar producing flowers, but especially those with tube-shaped blooms. Consider trumpet creeper, beebalm, trumpet honeysuckle, cardinal flower, assorted salvia, and columbine.