



Ideas for a Backyard Habitat

These are suggestions for making a residential property attractive to birds. Much more information is available in books and online.

FEEDING BIRDS: Birds feeders are a popular way to attract birds. Feeders supplement and complement available food supplies. Feeders can be bought or made, but even throwing a handful of seed on the ground will attract birds.

Suet, although not a seed, attracts many interesting species. Suet cakes, a mixture of seeds and suet, can be made or bought.

Birds: Woodpeckers, nuthatches, jays, chickadees.

Sunflower Seeds, especially the Black Oil variety; hulled seeds keep the lawn from becoming too messy.

Birds: Chickadees, house finches, titmice, jays, grosbeaks, cardinals, sparrows, nuthatches, woodpeckers, doves, goldfinches

Nyjer seeds are one of the most popular types of birdseed for small finches. They substitute for thistle seeds.

Birds: Goldfinches, purple finches, redpolls, pine siskins, quail

Millet seeds are common component in mixes and can be purchased separately for individual feeding if desired. This seed is useful in hopper and tube feeders, as well as for sprinkling on the ground or in tray or platform feeders.

Birds: Doves, sparrows, juncos, quail, buntings, wild turkeys

Safflower Seed is a popular seed because squirrels do not like its bitter taste.

Birds: Cardinals, nuthatches, jays, woodpeckers, house finches

Cracked Corn: is suitable for a number of backyard birds, particularly for ground-feeding birds that may have larger appetites.

Birds: Sparrows, jays, towhees, grouse, quail, doves, blackbirds, grackles, ducks, wild turkeys

TREES FOR BIRDS: Native trees are the backbone and framework of a good backyard habitat. In all cases, native species are preferable because various insects, which birds eat, feed on the leaves. Nonnative trees often do not attract insect.

Native Maple (*Acer*): Birds and small mammals devour the seeds within the winged samaras of maples. The leaves also make these trees host plants to almost 300 butterfly and moth species.

Birch (*Betula*)

Spruce and Pine (*Picea*) and (*Pinus*)

Poplar (*Populus*)

Cherry, Plum and Chokecherry (*Prunus*): More than 400 moths and butterfly species eat the leaves.

Oak (*Quercus*)(Especially White Oak): More than 500 butterflies and moths are attracted to this host plant.

Willow (*Salix*): The trees are host plants for more than 400 butterflies and moths.

SHRUBS FOR BIRDS: Native shrubs attract insects that birds feed on and provide berries many species eat during the winter. Also, many birds nest in shrubs. Popular varieties include:

Serviceberry; Redbud; Viburnum; Blueberry; Sassafras; High Bush Cranberry

SEED-PRODUCING FLOWERS: *Besides providing nectar for butterflies, these flowers (native and introduced) provide seeds in the fall and winter:*

Yarrow; Black-eyed Susan; Purple Coneflower; Asters and Goldenrod; Zinnias; Marigolds; Bachelor's Buttons; Sunflowers; Daisies

HUMMINGBIRDS: *Hummingbirds can be attracted to feeders offering "nectar" made up of one cup of sugar and four cups of water (do NOT dye it!). Flowers, especially red, tubular ones, also attract hummingbirds and are especially effective in mass plantings.*

Cardinal Flower; Columbine; Bee Balm; Impatiens; Weigela; Common Lantana; Marigold; New England Aster; Nasturtium; Chives; Coreopsis; Day Lily; White Clover; Purple Coneflower

NEST BOXES (HOUSES): *Many species of birds nest in tree holes and cavities; however, the dead trees and limbs that are suitable for such holes are problematic in residential areas. Nest boxes are often accepted. Every species has its preferred dimensions, so consult a reference. A few tips: keep the design simple. Use cedar or pine (scrap wood can be used, though). An ideal nest box can be easily opened to clean out last year's nest. Perches are a BAD idea because nonnative House Sparrows and Starlings prefer such boxes and will often throw out a nesting native bird.*

WATER: *Providing water is a good way to attract birds. Traditional birdbaths are widely available. Be sure to change the water frequently and to keep the bath clean. Heaters can be used in the winter to keep the water from freezing.*

For more birding tips, visit the DuPage Birding Club at dupagebirding.org or on the DuPage Birding Club Facebook page.

