

ANOTHER LIST – SEVEN KINDS OF PLANTS FOR WILD BIRDS

Conifers are evergreen trees and shrubs that include pines, spruces, firs, arborvitae, junipers, cedars, and yews. These plants are important as escape cover, winter shelter, and summer nesting sites. Some also provide sap, buds, and seeds.

Grasses and Legumes can provide cover for ground nesting birds--especially if the area is not mowed during the nesting season. Some grasses and legumes provide seeds as well. Native prairie grasses are becoming increasingly popular for landscaping purposes.

Nectar-Producing Plants are very popular for attracting hummingbirds and orioles. Flowers with tubular red corollas are especially attractive to hummingbirds. Other trees, shrubs, vines and flowers can also provide nectar for hummingbirds.

Summer-Fruiting Plants include plants that produce fruits or berries from May through August. Among birds that can be attracted in the summer are brown thrashers, catbirds, robins, thrushes, waxwings, woodpeckers, orioles, cardinals, towhees, and grosbeaks. Examples of summer-fruiting plants are various species of cherry, chokecherry, honeysuckle, raspberry, serviceberry, blackberry, blueberry, grape, mulberry, plum, and elderberry.

Fall-Fruiting Plants include shrubs and vines whose fruits are ripe in the fall. These foods are important both for migratory birds which build up fat reserves prior to migration and as a food source for non-migratory species that need to enter the winter season in good physical condition. Fall-fruiting plants include dogwoods, mountain ash, winter-berries, cotoneasters, and buffalo-berries.

Winter-Fruiting Plants are those whose fruits remain attached to the plants long after they first become ripe in the fall. Many are not palatable until they have frozen and thawed numerous times. Examples are glossy black chokecherry, Siberian and "red splendor" crabapple, snowberry, bittersweet, sumacs, American highbush cranberry, eastern and European wahoo, Virginia creeper, and Chinaberry.

Nut and Acorn Plants include oaks, hickories, buckeyes, chestnuts, butternuts, walnuts, and hazels. The meats of broken nuts and acorns are eaten by a variety of birds. These plants also provide good nesting habitat.



The primary sources of information for this pamphlet are <http://pubs.caes.uga.edu/caespubs/horticulture/birds.html>, an on-line publication prepared by Mel Garber, University of Georgia Extension Horticulturist, and "Homes for Birds," a US Fish & Wildlife Service pamphlet; also include www.gahummer.org and www.hummingbirds.net regarding the hummingbirds.

Gardening for the Birds

Environmental Enhancement with Ornamentals

Birds can be an important aspect of our backyard environment. In many cases, the quality of our environment is perceived to be directly related to the population of birds. The bird population in your yard or neighborhood park can be increased with the proper selection and arrangement of ornamental trees and shrubs. The selection of food-producing plants can ensure the presence of birds year-round.



To attract and maintain a bird population, a habitat should provide:

- food
- cover
- nesting areas
- water

Ornamental trees and shrubs can supply the necessary cover (shelter) and nesting areas. Many ornamental plants can satisfy more than one habitat requirement. For instance, multi-stem plants that form a dense canopy will satisfy the needs for nesting and also provide cover.

The **food source** for birds should be supplied, as much as possible, by the trees and shrubs in the yard. To maximize the natural food source, select plants to ensure an available food source year-round. The use of trees and shrubs native to your locale will help ensure that appropriate fruits and berries are available for the local bird population. If the landscape does not supply food during certain periods, you can supplement with commercial mixes of bird seed. This will help keep birds in the vicinity of your yard. Some birds eat a wide variety of seeds while others prefer one or two types. The seeds that appeal to the majority of birds are sunflower, proso millet, and peanut kernels.

Birds require a place of **cover or shelter** if they are to become long-term residents. They require protection from inclement weather and natural predators. This is why the multi-stem plants that form a dense canopy are preferred by birds. The dense canopy also provides an ideal **environment for nesting**. Since birds require shelter year-round, the yard should have a mix of deciduous and evergreen plants. Evergreen plants include broadleaf evergreens, such as holly, and conifers, such as red cedar. Several references suggest that at least 25% of the trees and shrubs should be evergreen.

**Georgia Mountains
Master Gardeners**



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A **source of fresh water** is also necessary to maintain your bird population. The water source should be shallow (no more than 2"-3" deep) and replaced on a regular basis. Running water, such as a shallow fountain, is the ideal water source. The water source should be elevated or in the middle of an open area to minimize predation by cats and other animals. An elevated bird bath or fountain is ideal.

To make your yard more suitable for birds, conduct an inventory of trees/shrubs in your landscape and develop a table similar to that in this article. From this list, a) determine the mix of evergreen and deciduous trees, b) look at the time of fruiting and identify season(s) without food supply, and c) ensure that adequate cover and nesting habitat is provided. The following are two examples of possible situations in your yard and how to use the chart:

- You have very few evergreen trees/shrubs (hence minimal shelter in the winter) but also have only small areas for additional plants. Select plants that are classified as evergreen (**E**) and are small sized at maturity. These plants (red cedar, nandina, viburnum, pyracantha, Japanese yew, holly, and wax myrtle) are relatively small trees.
- You need a food source for the spring but have limited yard area available. An excellent solution is to plant hawthorn, especially mayhaws. They are a small multi-stem shrub that bear fruit in the spring and attract a wide variety of birds.

The **chart to the right** lists recommended trees and shrubs for enhancing the **wild bird** population. Attributes that must be considered before selecting the trees and shrubs for your yard include: (1) the habitat element provided, (2) fruiting season, (3) deciduous (loses leaves in winter) or evergreen, and (4) size of mature tree.

The **chart below** provides some general information and seasonal food preferences especially for **hummingbirds**.

TREES AND SHRUBS FOR ATTRACTING WILD BIRDS					
Southeastern Trees & Shrubs	Provides		Fruiting Season	Deciduous or Evergreen	Size
	Cover	Food			
Beech		X	Fall, winter	D	M
Black gum	X	X	Summer	D	L
Blackberry/Blueberry	X	X	Summer	D	S
Dogwood	X	X	Fall, winter	D	M
Elderberry		X	Summer	D	S
Fruit trees	X	X	Spring, summer, fall	D	M
Hawthorn	X	X	Spring	D	M
Hemlock	X	X	Spring, summer, fall	E	L
Hickory	X	X	Summer, fall	S	L
Holly	X	X	Winter, spring	E	M
Japanese yew	X	X	Summer, fall	E	M
Magnolia	X	X	Summer	E	L
Mulberry		X	Spring, Summer	D	L
Nandina	X	X	Fall, winter	E	S
Oak	X	X	Fall	D	L
Pine		X	Spring, summer, fall	E	L
Pyracantha	X	X	Fall, winter	E	S
Redbud	X	X	Spring, summer	D	M
Red cedar	X	X	Fall, winter	E	M
Red maple	X		Spring	D	L
River birch	X		Summer, fall	D	M
Sourwood	X	X	Spring, summer	D	L
Sumac		X	Fall, winter	D	M
Sweet gum		X	Summer, fall	D	L
Viburnum	X	X	Winter	E	S
Wax myrtle	X	X	Summer, fall	E	M

D = Deciduous, E = Evergreen. S = Small, M = Medium, L = Large.

ESPECIALLY FOR HUMMINGBIRDS



The Ruby-throated Hummingbird is the only one that breeds in Georgia. Their normal life span is 5 years. They winter in Central America, come north in late March, and go south in late October. A few individuals may overwinter here, so provide at least one nectar feeder, some fruit, and suet then.

Feeders: Nectar feeders, tube feeders (for only one kind of seed), platform feeders (can use mixed seeds, fruits, suet). Favorites are safflower seeds & black oil sunflower seeds.

March: Trumpet Honeysuckle, Buckeye, Tulip Tree

April to May: Columbine, CrossVine, Fire Pink, Indian Pink

June to Frost: Bee Balm, Salvia, Brazillian Sage, Texas Sage, Batface, Trumpet Vine, Cypress Vine

July to Frost: Black-eyed Susan, Cardinal Flower, Hyacinth Bean, Jewel Weed (also called Touch-Me-Not), Mexican Milkweed, Purple Coneflower

Sept & Oct: Pineapple Sage, Turtlehead

Home-made Nectar: 1 part sugar + 4 parts water, no red food coloring. Boil for 3 minutes. Let cool. Change water in feeder weekly.

Home-made Suet: 1 part lard, 1 part peanut butter, 3 parts corn meal, bird seed and raisins to taste. Form into cakes and stuff into suet feeder or hole in tree. Refresh every 4 to 6 weeks or as depleted.