



DELAWARE NATURE SOCIETY

NATIVE PLANTS FOR ATTRACTING BIRDS

To provide habitat for the largest diversity of birds, try to include plants from as many of these plant groups as possible on your property. Choosing plants that produce fruit or seed at different times of year ensures that your backyard will always have something to attract birds.

Summer-Fruiting Plants

This category includes plants that produce fruits or berries from May through August. Birds that can be attracted in the summer include bluebirds, robins, waxwings, woodpeckers, cardinals, towhees, and grosbeaks.

Amelanchier arborea - Downy Serviceberry
Amelanchier canadensis - Shadbush
Prunus serotina - Black Cherry
Rubus allegheniensis - Allegheny Blackberry
Sambucus canadensis - Elderberry
Vaccinium corymbosum - Highbush Blueberry

Fall-Fruiting Plants

Plants whose fruit ripen in the fall 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. Birds include orioles, thrushes, thrasher, catbirds, along with those in the summer category.

Cornus Florida - Flowering Dogwood
Crataegus viridis - Green Hawthorne
Chionanthus virginica - Fringetree
Nyssa sylvatica - Tupelo
Sassafras albidum - Sassafras
Viburnum prunifolium - Blackhaw Viburnum
Myrica pennsylvanica - Northern Bayberry

Winter-Fruiting Plants

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. Birds include hermit thrush, waxwing, robin, and bluebird.

Aronia arbutifolia - Red Chokecherry
Ilex opaca - American Holly
Ilex verticillata - Winterberry Holly
Rhus typhina - Staghorn Sumac
Euonymus americana - Strawberry Bush
Parthenocissus quinquefolia - Virginia Creeper

Nut and Acorn Plants

The meats of broken nuts and acorns are eaten by a variety of birds including blackbird, chickadee, tufted titmice, wood duck, flicker, nuthatch, quail, towhee, turkey, and woodpecker. These plants also provide good nesting habitat.

Quercus rubra - Red Oak
Quercus phellos - Willow Oak
Carya ovata - Hickory
Juglans nigra - Black Walnut
Fagus grandiflora - American Beech
Corylus americana - American Hazelnut

Conifers

Conifers are evergreen trees and shrubs that provide escape cover, winter shelter, and summer nesting sites. Some also provide sap, buds, and seeds. Waxwings eat the berries of cedars, junipers and yews. Chickadees, crossbills, goldfinches, nuthatches, siskins, and woodpeckers pick the winged seeds out of pine cones.

Chamaecyparis thyoides - Atlantic White-Cedar
Juniperus virginiana - Eastern Red Cedar
Pinus strobus - White Pine
Pinus virginiana - Virginia Pine

Grasses and Legumes

Grasses and legumes (pea family) 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. Ground nesting birds attracted include bobwhite quail, field and song sparrows, and redwing blackbirds.

Amorpha fruticosa - False Indigo
Andropogon gerardii - Big Bluestem
Panicum virgatum - Switchgrass
Schizachyrium scoparium - Little Bluestem
Sorghastrum nutans - Indiangrass

Nectar-Producing Plants

Nectar-producing plants are very popular for attracting hummingbirds. Flowers with tubular red corollas are especially attractive.

Campsis radicans - Trumpetvine
Lonicera sempervirens - Coral Honeysuckle
Monarda fistulosa - Bee Balm
Lobelia cardinalis - Cardinal Flower
Aquilegia canadensis - Wild Columbine