

# Attracting Birds to Your Backyard

by Lovat Watts, Delaware Nature Society Backyard Habitat Steward

A variety of feeders and different types of seed will attract many birds to your backyard. However, you can attract even more species by the plantings in your yard.

In this area, we have many resident bird species. Additionally, we are on the eastern flyway for migratory birds. Both resident and migrant birds need high-quality habitats to thrive and many will come to your yard if you have food, shelter, and water to offer. Your planting choices should be guided by the conditions in your yard including the amount of sun and soil conditions. The Delaware Nature Society offers free one-on-one assistance to homeowners through volunteers called Backyard Habitat Stewards, who will help to assess your landscaping potential, provide information and suggestions for plantings, and assist with certification of your property as an official Wildlife Habitat. You can request a Backyard Habitat Steward visit by contacting Greg Gagliano, Backyard Habitat Coordinator at (302) 239-2334, ext. 142.

The Delaware Nature Society emphasizes the use of native plants as they are adapted to the area, tend to be more disease resistant, and are more familiar to birds and other wildlife. A backyard with a variety of plants will cover the different seasons and attract the widest range of birds. The following are some suggestions for backyard plantings that attract birds by providing food and shelter. Full plant descriptions can be found in this catalog, including the required conditions and height at maturity.

The suggestions for trees include large varieties such as the Black Gum (*Nyssa sylvatica*), Eastern Red Cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*) and River Birch (*Betula nigra*). Suggested medium sized varieties include Flowering Dogwood (*Cornus florida*), and Fringe Tree (*Chionanthus virginicus*).

There are excellent choices for native shrubs, which when planted together, will provide good cover and food supplies in the form of berries for the winter. One of the all time favorites for its gorgeous red berries is Winterberry Holly (*Ilex verticillata*). Other good choices include Bayberry (*Morella [myrica] pensylvanica*), Chokeberry (*Aronia arbutifolia*), Elderberry (*Sambucus canadensis*), and Arrowwood Viburnum (*Viburnum dentatum*).

If you have an area where vines are appropriate, three good choices include Trumpet Vine (*Campsis radicans*), Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*) and Coral Honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*). Vines by their nature need support to grow up and can be vigorous in their growth.

A perennial is a plant that dies down in the winter and re-emerges again in the spring, year after year. They also multiply and can easily be divided so you get good value for your money. Perennials grow in many different conditions and those with bright or tubular flowers are particularly attractive to hummingbirds. Many perennials are also very attractive to butterflies. Suggestions include Wild Columbine (*Aquilegia Canadensis*), Cardinal flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*), Butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*), and Brown-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia fulgida*).

Many of the other plants in this catalog also attract insects and these in turn attract more birds. All of the above-listed plants can be found in this catalog and we wish you many happy hours of gardening.