

Gardening for Birds

Barbara Aldinger

Birds require food, water, nesting sites and shelter. They are attracted to areas that copy nature with layers of native vegetation, large and understory trees, shrubs and perennials. They nest and shelter everywhere from tall trees to shrubs. Evergreens, including pines (*Pinus*), cedars (*Juniperus*, *Chamaecyparis*), holly (*Ilex*) and leucothoe, provide the best winter shelter. Nonnatives are used for shelter and nesting but do not provide food.

“Leave seed sources like coneflowers and sunflowers standing for winter/spring feeding.”

Providing a four season food supply is critical for attracting year round residents, summer nesters, and those seeking food during migration. Winter residents eat fruits and nuts from oaks (*Quercus*), hickories (*Carya*), chokeberries (*Aronia*), sumac (*Rhus*) and seeds from asters (*Symphyotrichum*), goldenrod (*Solidago*), and grasses (*Andropogon*, *Panicum*, *Sorghastrum*) among others. Spring arrivals, like robins, cruise lawns seeking grubs, worms and insects that provide protein to produce eggs and feed their young. Almost all birds eat insects, especially during spring and early summer. Humming birds’ diet also includes insects although they are usually spotted seeking nectar from red buckeye (*Aesculus pavia*), trumpet honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*), beebalm (*Monarda didyma*) and cardinal flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*).

Lepidoptera (butterflies and moths) lay eggs only on the specific native plants that feed their caterpillars. To feed their young, birds find many caterpillars in the canopy of large trees like oak (*Quercus*), maple (*Acer*) and birch (*Betula*), but they also find caterpillars on smaller trees like serviceberries (*Amelanchier*) and pagoda dogwood (*Cornus alternifolia*), on shrubs like viburnum and spicebush (*Lindera*), and on herbaceous plants like Joe Pye (*Eutrochium*) and violets (*Viola*). It takes thousands of caterpillars to raise one baby bird so only a few of them will survive long enough to damage plants. Soft berries on blueberry (*Vaccinium*) and Jack-in-the-pulpit (*Arisaema*) add to the bird buffet in summer. More plants provide seed and fruit through the fall. Hard berries like winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*), dogwood (*Cornus florida*) and Bayberry (*Morella*) are the last food source to appear and are packed with fat and protein needed by migrating birds and residents preparing for winter.

Your garden can be a balance of plants, insects and birds if you provide water, cover, nesting sites, and food. Avoid pesticides to promote insects and keep the birds healthy. Leave seed sources like coneflowers and sunflowers standing for winter/spring feeding. Birds will flock to a quality garden.

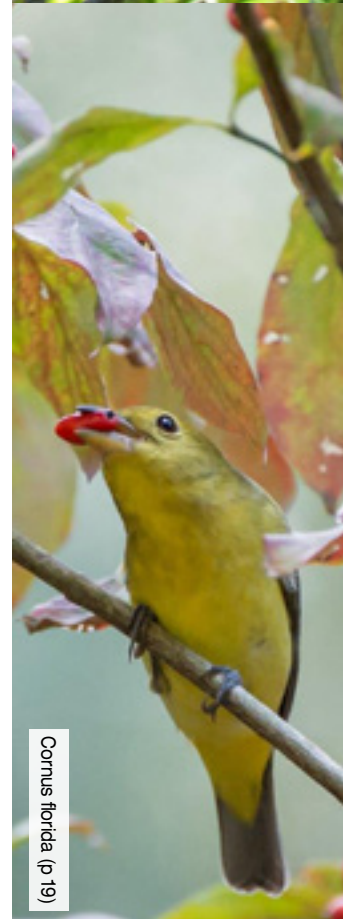
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Echinacea (p 11)



Morella (Myrica) pennsylvanica (p 24)



Cornus florida (p 19)