

Gardening to Attract Birds, Bees, Butterflies, and Hummingbirds

From the beginning, plants and pollinators have been part of Mother Nature's harmonious system of growth and reproduction. Trees, plants, and shrubs were created with aromas and beauty to specifically attract birds, bees, hummingbirds, and butterflies. In turn these pollinators help the flora reproduce, thus creating a perfectly mutual relationship. Even scientists watch this barometer to determine the health of our entire eco system. You can help, making a positive difference, by adding plants, trees, and shrubs to your gardens and flowerbeds that attract more of nature's pollinators.

Birds

When it comes to welcoming birds to your garden there are several simple considerations for success.

Food

Seeds, fruits, flowers, nectar, insects, and earthworms, are just a few of the things that birds love to eat. The more trees, grass, plant, and shrub varieties in your gardens and flowerbeds, the more food options available to attract a wider array of birds. As the weather turns colder and plants move into dormancy, hang seed and suet feeders that can remain year-round. Consistent food sources produce consistent bird populations. Don't forget to regularly clean your feeder to prevent harmful bacteria from building up.

Water

Adding birdbaths, small pools, or shallow areas provide areas for bathing, drinking, and a cool respite from the hot summer months. Remember to check your water levels, in all seasons, as empty or frozen birdbaths and pools can send your birds elsewhere to find this vital resource.

Nesting Sites and Shelter

Different birds require different nests and shelters. Some like tall grass, some prefer trees, some will nest in pots and containers, while some require the safety of a birdhouse. If you are looking for a wide range of bird types, provide a wide range of nest and shelter location types. Food is always a motivator in keeping birds around. Throwing birdseed at the base of plants, in the winter months, will encourage birds to stay there. Consider leaving a dead tree on your property as the birds will use it still to lay eggs and overwinter there. You can dress up the dead tree by planting a compatible vine to grow on it. Another option is to use your cut Christmas tree. When the holidays are over, place it in the backyard and wrap chains of popcorn or cranberries on it. Slather peanut butter on open pinecones and tuck them inside the branches. This is a great shelter with a built-in feeder. Make sure to remove all tinsel and ornaments first!

Bees

Bees love pink, blue, white, and purple flowers and are especially attracted to fresh, minty aromas.

Beebalm, catmint, coreopsis, lavender, penstemon and yarrow fit the bill here with amazing colors and wonderful aromas. One of the most prolific pollinators in all of nature is the Mason Bee. This gentle worker has small hair on his legs and can collect the same amount of pollen as sixty honeybees. Welcome these amazing pollinators into your garden, especially if you have fruit trees.

Butterflies

Attracting butterflies to your garden is all about having the right plants and shrubs. Start with asters as over 112 butterfly species love them. Of course, Butterfly bush is a must...it is actually in the plant's name! You can find Butterfly bushes in both standard and dwarf varieties. Include milkweed (asclepias) on your list to attract the famous Monarch butterfly. Phlox, coreopsis, goldenrod, lavender, stonecrop sedums, marigold and pansies are other great plants that the butterflies flock to.

Hummingbirds

More than just beautiful, hummingbirds are one of nature's great pollinators and insect eaters. Traveling hundreds of miles every year, sometimes over 500 per day, these little workhorses seem to have endless energy. They remember every feeder, flower, and garden they have ever visited and will return again and again looking for a meal nectar. Their uniquely long beak allows them to pollinate plants that other birds and insects can't. Keep your feeder filled only about 2 inches as the sugar water should be changed every two days. While the color red attracts hummingbirds, it is no longer recommended to add red dye to your feeder. A better choice is a feeder of red glass or plastic.

Additional Tips

Try to avoid a "fall clean-up" if possible. By cleaning up your garden beds you are removing food and shelter for these amazing creatures. Before you know it, the birds, bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds will be out looking for other sources. Rake your leaves from the lawn and driveway and use them in your garden beds, especially around new plantings to protect the plants. The nutrients from the leaves will add to your soil's health. Let your perennials die down on their own and your roses form rose hips. The seeds from your decorative grasses are a much-needed food source.

As land continues to be converted to farms, roads, homes, and warehouses, birds, bees, butterflies, and hummingbird environments are slowly being eliminated. There are simple and intentional ways to reverse this trend. Simply adding more pollinator-friendly plants to your garden is a good first step. Provide additional safe environments from predators and consider safe alternatives to the synthetic amendments, fertilizers, and pesticides you traditionally use. A simple fish fertilizer or organic compost are still some of the best options available. If you are unsure what products are safe, check with your local nursery professional. With a little effort you will be enjoying the wonders of more birds and butterflies and the benefits of bees and hummingbirds.

Plants that are known to provide food, shelter, and attract Birds, Bees, Butterflies, and Hummingbirds.

Perennials	Annuals	Shrubs	Trees	Groundcovers
Achillea - Yarrow	Ageratum	Amelanchier	Acer – Maple	Ajuga
Agastache	Alyssum	Arbutus – Strawberry Tree	Cornus – Dogwood	Fragaria
Alcea - Hollyhock	Calendula	Aronia	Crataegus – Hawthorne	Gaultheria
Armeria	Cleome	Buddleia – Butterfly Bush	Fruit Trees	Hepatica
Artemesia	Cosmos	Callicarpa – Beautyberry	Heptacodium	Ivy
Asclepias – Butterfly Weed	Cuphea	Caryopteris	Malus - Crabapple	Ligonberry
Aster	Dahlia	Chaenomeles -Quince	Morus – Elm	Salal
Astilbe	Daisies	Clethra – Spicebush	Nut Trees	Trifolium
Columbine	Euryops	Cotoneaster	Nyssa - Black Gum	Vinca
Coreopsis	Fuchsia	Cornus – Dogwood	Picea – Spruce	
Delphinium	Geranium	Corylus – Filbert	Pinus – Pine	
Dianthus - Carnation	Impatiens	Ilex – Holly	Pseudotsuga - Douglas Fir	
Digitalis – Foxglove	Lantana	Juniper	Robinia – Locust	Grasses
Echinacea – Coneflower	Lobelia - Annual	Lonicera	Salix – Willow	Bouteloua – Gamma Grass
Echinops – Thistle	Marigold	Mahonia – Oregon Grape	Serviceberry	Calamagrostis
Erigeron	Mums	Nandina	Sorbus – Mountain Ash	Chasmanthium
Eupatorium	Nasturtium	Potentilla	Tilia – Linden	Deschampsia
Gaillardia	Pansies	Rhododendron	Tsuga - Yew	Miscanthus
Helianthus	Pentas	Rhus – Sumac	Taxodium	Muhlenbergia
Hemerocallis - Daylily	Petunia	Ribes – Currant		Panicum
Hypericum	Rudbeckia	Roses		Pennesetum
Hyssop	Salvia	Rubus – Raspberry		Schizachyrium
Iris	Stock	Sambucus – Elderberry		Stipa
Kinnikinnick	Sunflower	Symphoricapos		Typha – Cattails
Lavender	Viola	Thuja – Arborvitae		
Leucanthemum	Zinnia	Vaccinium		
Liatris		Viburnum		
Lobelia (Cardinal)		Weiglea		
Lupinus – Lupine				Bulbs
Monarda – Beebalm		Vines	Herbs	Allium
Papaver – Poppy		Honeysuckle	Basil	Camassia
Perovskia – Russian Sage		Lonicera – Honeysuckle	Borage	Chinodoxa
Phlox		Parthenocissus	Catmint	Crocus
Penstemon		Passiflora	Chamomile	Fritillaria
Salvia		Vitis – Grapes	Comfry	Galanthus
Saponaria			Fennel	Hyacinths
Scabiosa			Lavender	Muscari
Sedum			Lemon Balm	Scilla
Skullcap			Mentha - Mint	
Solidago			Origanum - Marjorum	
Thyme			Rosemary	
Verbena			Tarragon	