

Landscaping to Attract Birds

If you ever set in the park or other wild place and watched the beautiful songbirds and thought to yourself that you would like to have them in your own backyard, well, with careful planning and planting, you can.

Birds have four basic needs; food, cover, water and nesting areas. Design these into your landscape, and you will be welcoming wildlife to your backyard.

To attract birds at any time of the year, select plants that provide flowers for nectar and fruits, berries, and nuts for year-long feeding. There are numerous trees and shrubs that offer fruit or berries that last long into the fall, or even throughout the winter.

Supplement your plantings with a well-stocked bird feeder. Be sure the feeder is squirrel and cat proof. If you want to attract both songbirds and squirrels, they should be fed separately. Sunflower seeds, particularly the oil (black) striped seeds are a favorite delicacy for a wide variety of birds. Once you start feeding it is best to continue until spring so that the birds have this extra food source during the winter months.

For a landscape to attract songbirds, suitable habitat must also be created. Arrange plants in a mass to create cover. Dense vegetation not only offers protection from cats, dogs and other predators, but provides good nesting sites. Design different masses into your landscape to provide the habitat needed for a variety of birds. For example, some birds prefer to nest and perch in low thickets, while others prefer large trees, and still others are attracted to evergreens.

To help create a good habitat, songbird bundles can be purchased from the Extension Service. The bundles contain trees and shrubs ideal for wildlife. Orders are taken this winter at local Extension Offices for spring delivery of the plants.

Birds also need a source of water. Whether you provide a bird bath, or excavate a small

pond, be sure to keep the water from freezing in the winter. As long as birds are feeding around your home, they will continue to need water. When locating the water source, place it in an area where it can easily be seen from the house or patio. The results will be hours of entertainment as the birds drop by for a drink or dip in the pool.