

Attracting songbirds to the garden

Birds bring delight to our spaces as they animate the garden with their songs and antics. They are a benefit in that they prey on many harmful insects. A small wren can consume more than 500 insect eggs, beetles and grubs in a single afternoon! Sparrows, Virioles and Towhees eat scads of flies and moths. While some birds are year-round residents, others such as chickadees, waxwings, robins and white crown sparrows add seasonal interest as they migrate through in the fall, winter and spring. You can encourage birds to visit or even take up residence in your garden by providing feeders, water (such as a birdbath), and plant material that either provides food or shelter.

FEEDING

Different seed mixes attract different types of birds. A basic wild bird food is composed mostly of millet, sunflower, and peanut. This blend will attract a variety of birds. Nut & Berry and Sunflower blends attract larger songbirds, robins, jays, waxwings and tanagers. Colorful finches and siskins adore nyjer thistle and Outdoor Finch food which contains millet as well. Check that the seed you purchase contains no *sorghum milo*! This is a waste seed used as a filler. Birds will **not** eat it and the uneaten grain will attract rodents.

WHEN TO FEED

The best time to put up a feeder is in the fall but anytime will do. Keep it well stocked through the spring. During summer months, your smaller seeds feeders won't be used quite as often since the insect population is highest but larger seeds feeders are eaten year-round (such as the little Oak Titmouse and White-breasted Nuthatch). Place feeders where birds will feel safe — position them in trees or off a deck or by hedge

and/or screen plants. Allow access for them to fly onto the feeder with no obstruction such as the side of a house or window. Windows can prove deadly if a feeder hangs directly outside one. The reflection off the glass will look like the outdoors to them and they could crash into it.

DRINKING & BATHING

Access to water for drinking or bathing is another draw to birds. Placing a bird bath or fountain in close proximity to the feeder doubles the pleasure. Be sure that the water is not too deep: 4 inches is just right. Should you have a sprinkler system, you will find that the birds will take "showers" by flying through the water. (An oscillating sprinkler on a very warm summer day also is appreciated.)

Trees and shrubs that are attractive as shelter and nesting sites are usually evergreen and dense. Many also provide fruit, berries or seeds. Here is a partial list of food plants birds utilize most:

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TREES

Albizzia julibrissin (Mimosa)

Ficus (Fig)

Quercus sp. (Oak)

Sambucus sp. (Elderberry)

Eriobotrya sp. Loquat)

Schinus molle (California Pepper)

Alnus sp. (Alder) *Prunus* sp. (Laurels, Plum, Cherry)

Malus sp. (Crabapple)

Arbutus unedo (Strawberry Tree)

Betula sp. (Birch)

Fagus sylvatica (Beech)

Cornus sp. (Dogwood and Redtwigs)

Diospyros kaki (Persimmon)

SHRUBS

Arctostaphylos sp. (Manzanita)

Viburnum sp.

Eleagnus pungens (Silverberry)

Buddleja davidii (Butterfly Bush)

Ligustrum sp. (Privet)

Callistemon citrinus (Bottle Brush)

Ceanothus sp. (California Lilac)

Heteromeles arbutifolia (Toyon)

Mahonia sp. (Oregon Grape)

Vaccinium sp. (Huckleberry/Blueberry)

Cotoneaster sp.

Berberis thunbergii (Barberry)

Ilex sp.

Euonymus sp. (Holly)

Gaultheria shallon (Salal)

Feijoa sellowiana (Pineapple Guava)

Chaenomeles sp. (Flowering Quince)

Rhamnus sp. (Buckthorn/Coffeeberry)

Myrica californica (Pacific Waxmyrtle)

PERENNIALS AND ANNUALS

Ageratum houstoniana

Coreopsis sp.

Phlox sp.

Argyranthemum (Daisy)

Helianthus sp. (Sunflower)

Liatris spicata

Cosmos bipinnatus

Salvia sp. (specially *elegans* and *uliginosa*)

Penstemon sp. (Beardtongue)

Echinacea purpurea



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