

WHY GARDEN FOR BIRDS?



Black-capped Chickadee

Habitat loss is one of the most significant reasons for population declines in birds. Although urban gardens cannot replace natural habitats, they can provide needed food and resting spots for many migratory species and offer safe nest sites for others. Try gardening

with wildlife in mind to create bird-friendly spaces that are also inviting to butterflies, bees, and other creatures. Like us, birds and other wildlife need food, shelter, water, and a safe place to bring up their young.

PLANNING YOUR GARDEN

Map your garden to see what resources and plants exist, and then identify what you need to add. Birds have different requirements depending on species, so plan a variety of plant heights, food source types, water, perches and shelter needs. You will also have to determine what sort of soil texture you have (very sandy, very clayey or in between), how dry or wet the soil is normally, how much sun and shade the garden receives and how much space you have to plan for plantings. Consider paving stones or gravel beneath feeder areas since falling seeds debris tends to smother anything below. Strive to always use native plants, since birds are already adapted to these food sources.

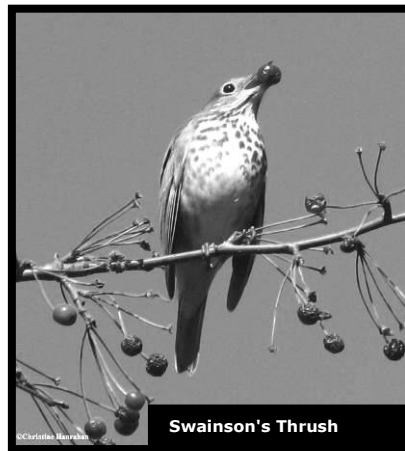
Grasses are an easy way to add height to a smaller garden, and birds use the seed heads as food into the winter. Small shrubs can be found, but you may have to prune if your space is small. Some larger shrubs act like trees, such as Pagoda Dogwoods. Consider these types of woody plant if a tree would overpower or create too much shade in your garden – in particular, if there is no access to your backyard for larger tree pruning machines. A trellis with arbour can be used to create shady spaces, with fruit-bearing vines running overtop. Wild Grapes can also be eaten by humans!

Plant flowers in clumps of three to five plants, depending on how much area they will fill. Assume they will only reach 2/3^{ds} of the size expected from them. Remember, you can always transplant things years later and help a friend begin their own garden! Planting densely provides birds with a safer environment. Try groundcovers instead of lawn where traffic is not a concern. Don't deadhead your flowers until spring, leaving a food source all winter. Create a brush pile, if you have the room.

FOOD

Plant a variety of native seed- and berry-producing plants, choosing species that produce food at different times of the year. Don't forget to plant nectar sources for hummingbirds. Plant grasses such as Panic Grass (*Panicum virgatum*) in masses and let go to seed. Many birds eat insects so plant flowers attractive to insects such as Sweet Cicely (*Osmorhiza claytonii*) or create a log pile for insect habitat. Supplement the natural food source with bird feeders. You may choose to feed all year or only in the winter. Provide a variety of seed, suet, and fruit. During early spring and summer maintain a hummingbird feeder (make sure you clean it frequently and well). House finches and other birds also enjoy sipping at this "nectar."

SHELTER



Swainson's Thrush

Birds need safe shelter from predators and inclement weather. If you have space, hedgerows and thickets provide great cover and nesting sites. For smaller sites, conifers and cedars offer warmth, hiding places and nest sites. Instant shelter is created by making a brush pile. Gather pruned or fallen branches from your own trees or ask a

neighbour for theirs, and layer them to a height of about a metre. Situate in a corner, against a fence or by a hedge. Thick tangles of vines trained over a fence or brush pile or allowed to climb the side of a house also offer cover and roost sites for birds; as a bonus, many provide food as well.

Tree snags attract woodpeckers who, while probing for insects, create cavities that are used for roosting and nests by many bird species. Snags offer warm, insulated winter cover. For those with less space, roosting boxes are similar to nest boxes but are airtight and contain two or three perches inside to accommodate many bird species huddling together in the coldest weather. Nest boxes left up all winter will offer some respite from the cold. Be sure to clean out bird houses once not in use to prevent mites and disease.

WATER

Use a clay saucer on a raised surface or a ready-made bird bath to hold water, but ensure a rough surface and shallow bowl. Be sure to clean it out regularly to prevent scum and dirtiness. Replace the water every few days if there is no rain. Baths must be big enough to allow a bird to bathe as well as to drink. Place a flat rock in the middle of the bath or pond to serve as a perch. Slow dripping water acts as a magnet for birds. Punch a few tiny holes in a bucket, fill with water and suspend over the pond or bath. Or, prop a garden hose on the rim of the bird bath and turn it on just enough to allow a very slight dribble of water to escape. Consider a small, solar-powered trickle water fountain.

NEST SITES

Finding a safe place to nest can be tough. Birds may nest in inappropriate places for lack of anything better but success is precarious. Snags offer natural sites for cavity nesting birds such as chickadees, wrens, tree swallows, and woodpeckers. Bird boxes are an alternative if snags are not available. Different species require different size boxes and entrance holes. Make sure they are well constructed and well-ventilated, and never use a perch under the entrance hole, as this makes it easier for predators, such as jays, to grab eggs or young birds. Consider putting up nesting platforms for robins and Eastern Phoebe. Locate your bird houses in safe places, not easily accessible to predators. Consider providing nesting material for birds like dog hair, short lengths of wool and thread, bits of fabric, lint from the dryer, and feathers. Stuff these into an empty wire suet holder and hang from a branch.

SOME PLANTS FOR BIRDS

Legend: Light: Sh = shade, Su = sun; Soil: W = wet, M = moist, D = dry

Fruit-bearing Shrubs and Trees

Black Cherry (*Prunus serotina*) to 22 m [Su-Sh, D,M]
Chokecherry (*P. virginiana*) 2-3 m [Su-part Sh, M,D]
Common or Canadian Elder (*Sambucus canadensis*) to 3 m [Su, M,D]
Downy Serviceberry (*Amelanchier arborea*) to 12 m [Su-Sh, D, M]
Flowering Raspberry (*Rubus odoratus*) 1-2 m [Su-Sh, M]
Hawthorns (*Crataegus* spp.) to 12 m [Su, D,M]
Pagoda Dogwood (*Cornus alternifolia*) to 12 m [Sh, M,D]
Red-berried Elder (*Sambucus pubens*) to 4 m [Sh, D]
Red Osier Dogwood (*C. stolonifera*) 1-3 m [Sh, M]

Staghorn Sumac (*Rhus typhina*) to 6 m [Su-Sh, M, D] (spreads quickly, keep in check by pruning)
Pin Cherry (*P. pensylvanica*) to 12 m [Su, D,M]

Vines

American Bittersweet (*Celastrus scandens*) [Su-part Sh]. Need both male and female plants for fruit.
Virginia Creeper (*Parthenocissus vitacea* and *P. quinquefolia*) [Sh-Su, 5 m +]
Wild Grape (*Vitis riparia*) [prefers sun, 5 m +]

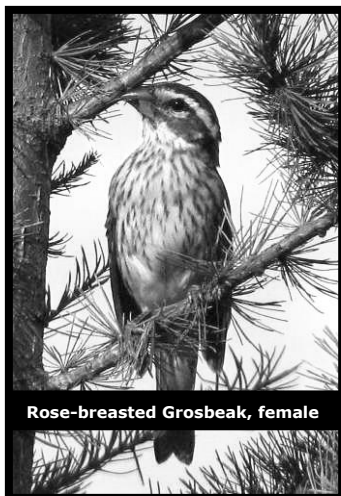
Seed and Nut-bearing Shrubs and Trees

Paper Birch (*Betula papyrifera*) to 25 m [Su, M, D]
Eastern White Cedar (*Thuja occidentalis*) to 15 m [Sh-Su, M,D]
Hazelnut (*Corylus cornuta*) 3-4 m [Sh-su, M,D]
Jack Pine (*Pinus strobus*) to 30 m [Su, D, M]
Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*) to 25 m [Su-part Sh, M]
Sugar Maple (*A. saccharum*) to 35 m [Sh-Su, M]
White Pine (*Pinus banksiana*) to 20 m [Su, D]

Herbaceous Plants

Bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*) [Su,Sh, D] Nectar
Butterfly Weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) [Su, D] Nectar
Canada Goldenrod (*Solidago canadensis*) [Su, D, M] Seeds
Common Evening Primrose (*Oenothera biennis*) [Su, D] Seeds
Fireweed (*Epilobium angustifolium*) [Su, D, M] Nectar
Gray-headed Coneflower (*Ratibida pinnata*) [Su, D] Seeds
Jewelweed (*Impatiens capensis*) [Su-Sh, M] Nectar
New England Aster (*Aster novae-angliae*) [Su, D, M] Seeds
Panic Grass (*Panicum* sp.) [Su, D] Seeds

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GARDENING FOR WILDLIFE

Loss of natural space is a major factor in the decline of many plant and animal species. The Fletcher Wildlife Garden was established in 1990 to encourage the creation or restoration of wildlife-friendly gardens and plantings in urban and rural areas. The Garden includes a variety of habitats: two woodlots, an open field, an amphibian pond, a ravine, and a butterfly meadow that is also a Monarch butterfly waystation. Our Backyard Garden demonstrates local plants suitable for various growing conditions. Our website and publications explain how you can use local plants to attract and support local birds, butterflies, pollinators, and other creatures; how to deal with invasive plants; and where to find other helpful information.

The Fletcher Wildlife Garden is a project of the Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club, which has an agreement with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada for the use of the land. We also liaise with the Friends of the Central Experimental Farm.



45° 23' 12" N 75° 42' 15" W

Visit us online to read our blog and newsletters, view photo galleries, and learn about volunteering opportunities. Friend us on Facebook!
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This brochure was redesigned with the support of the TD Friends of the Environment Foundation.

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How To

CREATING GARDENS FOR BIRDS

**CREATE A SAFE SPACE FOR BIRDS
THAT MEETS THEIR EVERY NEED**

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