

# ATTRACTING BIRDS TO YOUR YARD



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Although putting up bird feeders will do much to attract birds, it is wise to take a broader look at your yard's environment. The birds you see at your feeders are still largely relying on natural food sources. By planting trees and shrubs to the birds' advantage, you can greatly increase the amount of activity in your yard.

Several factors are at work in determining the abundance and variety of birds you see. In addition to needing a food source, birds require shelter from weather and predators, appropriate nesting locations, and water. The lack of available water in the winter is a prime reason why some birds leave an area that is otherwise desirable. Consider installing a bird bath with a warmer to aid birds with this vital winter requirement.

The birds you entice to your yard are influenced by the natural setting and how you modify that setting. If you live in a wooded area, you will see thrushes and purple finches that might not visit open fields where cowbirds or goldfinches reside. A typical suburban setting will attract such birds as nuthatches, chickadees, jays, and wrens. A yard abutting a lake will, of course, be good habitat for ducks and other water birds. Fall and winter somewhat expand your opportunity to see different kinds of birds. Migration patterns may bring species to your feeders which normally aren't seen. Winter's harsh weather makes shyness a liability and forces some birds to frequent any suitable area.

Consider the following plants when you are landscaping for birds:

<i>Grape</i>	Bluebirds and cardinals	<i>Snowberry</i>	Grosbeaks
<i>Hackberry</i>	Thrashers and robins	<i>Sumac</i>	Robins
<i>Maple</i>	Grosbeaks, finches, nuthatches	<i>Cherry</i>	Robins, waxwings
<i>Oak</i>	Jays	<i>Mountainash</i>	Waxwings
<i>Serviceberry</i>	Thrushes	<i>Crabapple</i>	Many types of birds

Take a look at your property and see how you might better accommodate birds. Placing your bird feeders within 20' of sheltering shrubs will give the birds a sense of security. However, if your feeders are close to the ground, don't place them too close to shrubs that might be a hiding place for cats.

Good bird habitat includes a diversity of plants that provides a multi-layered environment. These habitat edges should be both vertical and horizontal. Vertical edges are where the different edge layers meet - ground cover/lawn, shrubs, small trees, and large canopy trees. Horizontal edges result in a mosaic consisting of different plant species or plants of different ages next to each other. For example, observe the area where a hedge abuts the open lawn. The lawn provides food in the form of seeds and insects. The hedge provides food (berries and decomposing plant material that harbors insects), protective cover, and nesting sites. The more edges, the richer the environment will be for birds. While it is very popular to mulch around the plantings, it is a good idea to leave some areas under shrubs in open soil or leaf litter if you are attempting to attract birds. These areas will draw ground-foraging birds. Plantings that are composed of both deciduous and evergreen species are especially valuable because of the many microedges they provide.

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