



ATTRACTING SONG BIRDS TO YOUR GARDEN

In addition to the pleasure of watching finches, wrens, and cardinals flit about your garden, many song birds also consume those pesky insects that can make outdoor living a misery. Consider planting annuals, perennials, shrubs and trees that attract birds to your landscape for their benefit and yours.

Landscaping your property in order to attract birds requires some planning and careful plant selection, but will bring rewarding results in short order. Keep in mind that birds are attracted to particular plants for three specific reasons: shelter, nesting, and food. The following plants do well in Central Virginia, and each provides one or more of these functions for our varied bird population.

SHELTER/NESTING

Evergreen conifers are essential for both shelter and nesting. **Red cedar, junipers, yews, and arborvitae** all provide dense, safe habitat for birds. Taller ornamental grasses such as **Miscanthus** function well for birds that nest closer to the ground. Deciduous trees that produce plentiful fruit (e.g., **Hackberry, Mulberry, and Serviceberry**) are also used as nesting sites. Fast-growing evergreens that are commonly used for screening in Central Virginia, like **Leyland cypress** and **Cryptomeria yoshino**, provide safe homes for birds.

FOOD

Plants provide four sources of food for birds: nectar, fruit, nuts and seeds. Common summer-blooming perennials that provide seeds for songbirds include **Coreopsis, Coneflower, Black-eyed Susan, Cleome, and Cosmos**.

Shrubs and vines are the primary sources for fruit. **Pyracantha, Beauty Berry, Serviceberry, Cotoneaster, Bayberry, and Mahonia** all berry profusely, and are attractive in the landscape. Common fruits such as blueberry, blackberry and chokeberry are also good food sources, but tend to get picked clean quickly.

Providing food in the landscape is even more important in the fall and winter months. **Bittersweet, Virginia Creeper, dogwoods, and hawthorns** all have fruits which persist late into the year. Larger landscape trees such as **oaks, hickories, and walnuts**, provide nuts and acorns that blue jays and woodpeckers can feast on throughout the winter.

If you are planning a new garden, include plants that attract birds, or, in an established garden, replace any perennials or shrubs that are not performing well with some of these bird-friendly plants. Be sure to include water sources in your landscape, such as a bird bath, fountain, or pond. A combination of food, shelter, water, and feeders for the winter months will provide you with bird watching enjoyment year round.

