



# Simple Steps to Create a Native Plant Garden in Your Yard

Like us, birds need food, water, and shelter. You can transform your yard into a bird sanctuary that also saves resources such as water and combats climate change. The secret to success lies in choosing locally native plants, which brim with nutritious insects, berries, nectar, and seed to give birds vital food and refuge. Use the steps below to create and maintain a bird-friendly habitat that attracts colorful birds and sweet melodies. If you don't have a yard, you can grow native plants in containers on a patio or balcony.

- 1 Select a site that's practical to convert into a garden and allows room to expand. Consider:**
- Do you have full sun? Partial sun? Shade? Is the soil rocky, loamy, sandy, clay, or gravel? Does it drain well? Is your site flat or hilly? Near water? What's the elevation?
  - Learn what's optimal from your local native plant society or gardening organization.

- 2 Plant in the spring or fall months and on cooler days.**
- Follow planting instructions carefully and get tips on mulching around plants. Water only as needed when young plants are adapting to their new habitat.

- 3 Prepare your garden well to save headaches later.**
- You may need to dig up lawn, remove invasive plants, and add organic compost to the soil. An easy method is to lay down newspaper at least six sheets deep, with plenty of overlap; wet it down; cover it with 4 to 6 inches of mulch, and let it sit until you are ready to plant. Use deep edging to keep out lawn grass.

- 4 Plan for a variety of shapes, sizes, and kinds of plants to give vertical structure to your garden.**
- Cluster the same plant species together.
  - Design for color palettes and seasonal blooms.
  - Add habitat features like hollowed boulders that catch rainwater for birds to drink and bathe in.

- 5 Make your native plant garden a complete habitat.**
- Provide nest sites by planting trees and shrubs.
  - Leave fallen leaves, dead trees, and branches.
  - Add a brush pile to provide shelter.

- 6 Focus on plants that support a high variety and quantity of bird food.**
- Red tubular flowers such as columbine, honeysuckle, and penstemon serve up nectar for hummingbirds.
  - Native sunflowers, asters, and cone-flowers produce seeds for songbirds.
  - Bushes with berries ripen at different times, so include a seasonal variety to sustain birds: serviceberry; dogwood and spicebush; cedar and holly trees.

## The Impact of Native Plants

**557**

Number of butterflies and moths a native oak tree supports. A non-native ginkgo tree hosts just five.

**Water-wise, drought-tolerant native plants reduce water use, especially critical in drought-stricken, arid parts of our country.**

**1,200**

U.S. crops that depend on pollinators to grow. Native plants are essential for pollinators like birds, bees, butterflies, and bats.

**96**

Percentage of land birds that feed insects to chicks. Native plants are nature's bounty.

**80 million**

Number of pounds of pesticides homeowners apply to the 40 million acres of lawns in the U.S. each year. Native plants, on the other hand, support a vibrant balance of predator and prey insects and thrive without pesticides.

**Your native garden joins a collective effort to give back to birds and plant hope for their future.**

**Spend more time with birds and less time with noisy lawn mowers that pollute the air and water.**

**800 million**

Estimated number of gallons of gas Americans burn in lawn mowers annually. This produces significant amounts of CO<sub>2</sub> and other greenhouse gases that drive climate change.

### MORE INFORMATION:

Audubon's Plants for Birds program: [audubon.org/plantsforbirds](http://audubon.org/plantsforbirds)

Search our native plants database: [audubon.org/nativeplants](http://audubon.org/nativeplants)

Buy *Bringing Nature Home* by Doug Tallamy: [bringingnaturehome.net](http://bringingnaturehome.net)



A program of Audubon's Coleman and Susan Burke Center for Native Plants