

BIRDS IN YOUR GARDEN

HUMBER NURSERIES 'GREEN THUMB GUIDE'



INVITING BIRDS TO YOUR GARDEN

All trees and shrubs will provide something of value to birds – nesting sites, food, shelter from weather, and protection from predators.

There are, without doubt, birds in your garden now. If you wish to encourage more birds and more varieties of birds around your home, you can do so by providing a variety of trees and shrubs, particularly those that provide food in the form of fruit, berries, nuts or seeds.

BIRDS LOVE CHERRIES

If you grow sweet cherries for your own use, they have to be netted to prevent the birds from taking them. **Sour Cherries** and **Chokecherry** have fruit that we do not find palatable but is enjoyed by birds.



MOUNTAIN ASH

Robins, Cedar Waxwings, and other birds eagerly devour the brilliantly coloured berries of Mountain Ash. Many varieties and forms of **Mountain Ash** are available and they are highly ornamental trees. If not eaten in the fall, berries may persist on the tree well into winter. Their height above snow cover provides food when mid-winter sources are scarce and are found in early spring by the first returning migrants.

BIRCH

Seed-eating birds such as **Redpolls**, **Pine Siskins** and **Goldfinches** find an abundance of seed on this attractive tree. It is particularly valuable to those birds such as **Chickadees** that stay with us all winter.

MAPLE AND OAK

If your garden is large enough for these tall trees you will attract **Orioles**, **Tanagers** and the **Red-eyed Vireo**, as they prefer the safety of the high upper-canopy.

CONIFERS

The dense foliage of **Spruce**, **Pine**, **Fir**, **Larch** and **Hemlock** provide secure nesting sites for many birds and an ample supply of seeds from their varied cones. **Cedar Waxwings love** the red fruit of **Yew** in early fall.

BIRDS EAT INSECTS TOO

Enticing birds to your garden with desirable fruit and seeds will also help in controlling insect populations as most birds prefer a varied diet. **Robins** may take earthworms but also ants, beetles, cankerworms, caterpillars, cutworms, crickets, flies (pupae and adults), slugs, snails, sow bugs, spiders, termites, wireworms and weevils. **Wood Warblers** are almost entirely insectivorous.

By bringing birds to your garden you add a new dimension of interest and will be rewarded by their colour, movement and song.

SHRUBS THAT ATTRACT BIRDS

Small fruits such as **currants, raspberries, blackberries** and **gooseberries** will certainly attract birds. **Blueberries** will have to be netted, as they are desirable.

Among ornamental shrubs there are many with choice fruit. The dark mature fruit of **Serviceberry** and **Elderberry** is ravenously eaten by many songbirds, including **thrushes** and **warblers**.

All **Viburnums**, except the double-flowered Snowball, have berry fruit. The brightly coloured fruit of **Highbush Cranberry** is not usually taken initially by birds, but can be a life-saving source of food in severe winters. **Nannyberry** fruit is found more palatable and is a favourite of the **Brown Thrasher**.

Here are other shrubs that are particularly attractive to birds either for edible fruit, nesting habitat, or protective environment:

Chokeberry	Russian Olive	Buckthorn
Barberry	Holly	Roses
Chokecherry	Juniper	Snowberry
Dogwood	Privet	Coralberry

WEEDS AND GRASSES

If you can provide a wild spot in your garden for **tall grasses, thistles, goldenrod** and **ragweed**, you will add greatly to your list of bird visitors – **Horned Lark, Meadowlark, Buntings, Bobolink** and others.

In a cultivated garden, **ornamental grasses** can be left to stand into winter with their supply of seeds. Many annual and perennial plants which we normally remove or cut down in fall can be left in place to provide abundant seed for birds in winter. **Sunflower, Cosmo, Zinnia**, and **Asters**, are good examples.

VIRGINIA CREEPER

A native climbing vine with brilliant red foliage in fall and a bountiful harvest of shiny black berries that is enjoyed by many birds including **Kingbirds, Flycatchers** and **Bluebirds**.



BIRD FEEDERS

The larger the menu that you offer, the more types of birds you will attract. Try dried fruit, peanut butter, suet, cracked corn and sunflower seed.

Many birds will feed from an elevated tray, while some will feed only on the ground; for others a seed-encrusted ball of suet suspended from a tree is ideal.

LOCATION OF BIRD FEEDERS

The best way to determine where most birds prefer to have their dinner in your yard is by experimenting. Remember though, that birds are creatures of habit and do not respond well to abrupt and radical changes in the position of feeders.

PROTECTING THE FEEDER

Feeding stations aren't attractive just to the birds you want to enjoy. Unwelcome guests at the banquet you offer may include squirrels and nuisance birds like starlings. Besides protecting the food you set out from these raiders, you may need to protect your visitors from predatory cats.

POPULAR BIRD SEED TYPES

Sunflower seed is without doubt the one food that appeals to almost all birds. Both the black oil type and black striped seed will bring the bright red **Cardinal** to the feeder.

Cracked corn, white millet, whole oats, peanut hearts and niger thistle seed are available individually packaged or in mixtures. A seed-encrusted suet ball hung on a tree branch is a good addition to a regular feeder and attractive to **Chickadees, Nuthatches** and **Woodpeckers**.



NUISANCE BIRDS

Both European Starlings and House Sparrows seem to prefer ground feeding, and selecting a spot well away from the house to scatter their preferred foods will do much to free your closer feeders for more desirable visitors.

SQUIRRELS

Although the antics of squirrels are fascinating to watch, they can be a considerable nuisance around bird feeders, eating a great deal of food and scaring away songbirds. If squirrels are a problem in your yard, there are some steps you can take to prevent them from reaching the feeder.

Feeders should be elevated at least 1.5 metres off the ground, as squirrels are excellent jumpers. They should be placed 3 metres away from the nearest building, tree, or overhanging branch for the same reason. Squirrels can be discouraged from running down wires or jumping onto hanging feeders by stringing a series of pie pans or smooth sheet metal discs with a hole punched in the center along the wire. The discs tip to dump the squirrels off. Separate the discs with short lengths of old garden hose. Feeders mounted on posts can be squirrel-proofed by fastening a smooth, metal funnel shaped collar around the post at least 1 metre up from the ground. Above this funnel, fasten a tight band of sheet metal around the post. A span of at least 50 cm will prevent the squirrel from gripping anything.

ATTRACTING HUMMINGBIRDS

The preferred flower for the hummingbird is red in colour and tubular in form. A massed planting is ideal because a hummingbird has to visit about one thousand blooms everyday to meet its need for sweet nectar. Next to red, they prefer orange and pink, but also visit flowers of other colours. **Petunia, Phlox, Snapdragon, Cleome, Sweet William, Nicotina** and **Zinnia** are summer flowers that they find attractive.

Favourite perennials include **Gladiolus, Red Hot Poker, Monarda, Bleeding Heart, Columbine** and **Penstemon**. **Honeysuckle** vines and shrubs have the correct shape and colouration. **Morning Glory, Trumpet Vine** and **Scarlet Runner Bean** are good vines, and flowering shrubs such as **Weigela, Beauty Bush, Butterfly Bush, Coralberry, Flowering Currant** and **Flowering Quince** are good choices.

High Protein Suet Mix for Insect-Eating Birds

- 4 ½ cups ground fresh suet
- ¾ cup dried and finely ground bakery goods (whole or cracked wheat bread and crackers are best)
- ½ cup hulled, raw and unsalted sunflower seed
- ¼ cup millet (white proso is best)
- ¼ cup dried and chopped berries (currants, raisins or dried wild berries)
- ¾ cup dried and finely ground meat (optional)

1. Melt suet in a saucepan.
2. Mix together the rest of the ingredients in a large mixing bowl.
3. Allow suet to cool until slightly thickened, then add it to the mixture in the bowl. Mix well.
4. Pour or pack into forms or suet feeders; smear onto tree trunks or overhanging limbs and branches; or pack into pine cones.

Suet Tidbit Cakes

- ½ pound fresh ground suet
- 1/8 cup canary seed
- 1/8 cup chopped peanuts
- ¼ cup raisins or currants
- 1/8 cup cooked oatmeal
- 1/8 cup cooked rice
- ¼ cup sunflower seeds
- ¼ cup fine cracked corn

1. Melt suet in a saucepan.
2. Mix together the rest of the ingredients in a large mixing bowl.
3. Allow melted suet to cool until it starts to thicken, then add dry mix and stir until evenly distributed.
4. Pour into pie pan or form, or pack into suet feeders.

Many variations are possible with this mixture. Other ingredients worth including are millet or other birdseed, cornmeal, cooked noodles or spaghetti, chopped berries and dried fruits of all kinds. You can experiment to see which proportions your birds like best.

Soft Peanut Butter Mix

Relished by a wide variety of birds, this mix is great for packing into feeders or smearing on tree trunks.

- 1 cup freshly ground suet
- 1 cup peanut butter
- 3 cups yellow cornmeal
- ½ cup enriched white or whole wheat flour.

1. Melt suet in saucepan.
2. Add peanut butter, stirring until melted and well blended.
3. In a separate bowl, mix together the last two ingredients.
4. After suet-peanut butter blend has cooled and started to thicken, add dry mixture and blend into dough. It is now ready to serve.

Hard Peanut Butter Mix

This mixture will last longer out of doors than will the soft mixture.

- 2 cups suet
- 1 cup peanut butter
- 2 cups yellow cornmeal
- 2 cups fine cracked corn.

1. Melt the suet, allow it to cool thoroughly, and reheat it.
2. Add peanut butter, stirring until melted and well blended.
3. Add dry ingredients to liquid and blend well.
4. Pour into forms or suet feeders and cool until hardened.



WATER

Hummingbirds need eight times their weight in water everyday. If your property does not include a pond or stream, providing water in a birdbath or large saucer will bring birds to your garden and keep them coming back. Sugar-water dispensers designed to attract Hummingbirds are also available. Specially designed heaters are available to keep bird baths from freezing in winter, thus providing water when few natural sources are available.

BATS

Often overlooked as a creature we want to attract to our yards, bats play a valuable roll in controlling insects. Also, their droppings (known as guano) are a prized fertilizer for the garden.

Like most animals, they require food, water and shelter. With 8 species of bats common to Ontario, encouraging them to choose your yard can be as easy as putting up a bat house under your eaves on a south or southeastern facing wall and waiting. The addition of a pond or birdbath will also help. Colony-roosting varieties may decide to take up residence and keep your insects under control, without the use of pesticides.

There are great websites available on the internet to help you attract and protect these interesting mammals. Try Bat Conservation International at www.batcon.org for more information.

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SOME EXAMPLES OF VARIOUS BIRD FEEDING STATIONS THAT ARE SUITABLE FOR YOUR GARDEN

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