

Backyard Birding Guides

#6 - Landscaping for the Birds

by Chuck Otte

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Many birds are attracted to landscape and garden plants. Just as a bird feeder or a bird bath in and of itself is not a guarantee of attracting birds, appropriate plants are not guaranteed to always attract birds either. BUT, if you combine feeders, water, habitat, structures and plants, you will eventually have success. Be aware, however, that what attracts birds will also attract other forms of wildlife, so be prepared! Be careful using pesticides in landscapes where you are attracting wildlife. Use them only as a last resort; use the safest material available. Consider using pesticides like insecticidal soap, BT, etc. Remember that birds are often predators of insect pests. If you are patient, they MAY take care of the problem without too much loss of plant material.

Following are some groups of plants and species to consider planting for wildlife in Kansas.

Annuals - Amaranthus, Bachelor Button, Calendula, California Poppy, Coreopsis, Cosmos, Gloriosa Daisy, Annual Ornamental Grasses (Quaking Grass, etc.), Marigold, Pinks, Portulaca, Sunflower, Zinnia.

Perennials - Aster, Black-eyed Susan, Chrysanthemum, Coreopsis, Goldenrod, Globe Thistle (Echinacea spp., including purple coneflower), Grasses (include the natives, i.e. the bluestems, switchgrass and indiagrass), Dianthus, Scabiosa, sedums (especially the Stonecrops), Statice, Sunflower.

Woody Species - Shrubs - Aromatic Sumac, Boxwood and Holly (in protected locations), Dogwoods, Elderberry, Euonymous (Wintercreeper and Winged Euonymous, a.k.a. Burning Bush), Honeysuckle, Juniper, Mugo Pine, Privet, Pyracantha, Rose, Sumac spp., Viburnum, Witchhazel, Yew.

Small Trees - Japanese Maple, Crab Apple, Apple, Hawthorn, Amur Maple, Cherry and Plum (edible and ornamental, all prunus spp. are good, this includes such things as wild plum and choke cherry), and Mountain Ash.

Medium/Tall Trees - Maple spp., Pine, Hackberry, Elm, Mulberry, Oak

Vines - Bittersweet, English Ivy, Grape, Honeysuckle, Trumpet Vine, Virginia Creeper.

Plants that attract hummingbirds (also orioles) - Trumpet Vine, Catalpa, Trumpet Honeysuckle, Coralberry, Weigela, Nicotiana, Petunia, Salvia (Lady in Red or traditional), Agastache, Scarlet Runner Bean, Cardinal Climber, Hollyhock, Columbine, Delphinium, Foxglove, Gentian, Gladiolus, Daylily, Hibiscus (Rose of Sharon), Liatris, Tiger Lily, Penstemon, Phlox, Sweet William, Snap Dragon, Larkspur.

Plants that attract hummingbirds also will attract butterflies (as well as bees and wasps!). Good habitat also will attract other wildlife, including some that may be a problem (see Backyard Birding Guide #7).

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