

# Plants for Birds



Audubon

Trinity River  
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By replacing conventional landscaping with gardens featuring native plants, we can restore vital habitats and create spaces for birds within our backyards. Exotic plants disrupt ecosystems because many native insects cannot forage on them. Birds rely on these insects to feed their young. For example, a single pair of chickadees must find 6,000-9,000 caterpillars to raise a nest of young. Without native plants, both insect and bird populations suffer.

There are 5 main native plant food groups for birds: larval hosts, nectar-producing, berry-producing, nut-producing, and seed-producing. To provide food for a variety of species, and to provide natural food sources all year round, include plants from all 5 of these groups.

An important aspect of gardening for birds is developing habitat layers. Birds nest, feed, bathe, etc. at various heights within natural spaces. Many backyards include large trees and small shrubs or flowers (>3 feet), but they are often missing mid-story level plants. Add plants of all heights and sizes to create ideal bird habitat, and also include a mixture of deciduous and evergreen species to provide cover all year round.



## Larval Hosts

**Oak species**  
*Quercus spp.*

**Button Bush**  
*Cephalanthus occidentalis*

**Flameleaf Sumac**  
*Rhus lanceolata*

**Smooth Sumac**  
*Rhus glabra*

**Butterfly Weed**  
*Asclepias tuberosa*

**Texas Black Persimmon**  
*Diospyros texana*

**Sideoats Grama**  
*Bouteloua curtipendula*



## Nectar-producing

**Red Yucca**  
*Hesperaloe parviflora*

**Red Columbine**  
*Aquilegia canadensis*

**Sage species**  
*Salvia spp.*

**Turk's Cap**  
*Malvaviscus arboreus*

**Coral Honeysuckle**  
*Lonicera sempervirens*

**Crossvine**  
*Bignonia capreolata*

**Flame Acanthus**  
*Anisacanthus quadrifidus var. wrightii*



## Berry-producing

**American Beautyberry**  
*Callicarpa americana*

**Coralberry**  
*Symphoricarpos orbiculatus*

**Holly species**  
*Ilex spp.*

**Pigeonberry**  
*Rivina humilis*

**Passion Flower**  
*Passiflora incarnata*

**Virginia Creeper**  
*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*

**Roughleaf Dogwood**  
*Cornus drummondii*



## Nut-producing

**Mexican Redbud**  
*Cercis canadensis var. mexicana*

**Texas Redbud**  
*Cercis canadensis var. texensis*

**Oak species**  
*Quercus spp.*

**Eve's Necklace**  
*Styphnolobium affine*

**Pecan**  
*Carya illinoensis*

**Mountain Laurel**  
*Sophora secundiflora*



## Seed-producing

**Indian Grass**  
*Sorghastrum nutans*

**Inland Sea Oats**  
*Chasmanthium latifolium*

**Sideoats Grama**  
*Bouteloua curtipendula*

**Switch Grass**  
*Panicum virgatum*

**Purple Coneflower**  
*Echinacea purpurea*

**Mexican Hat**  
*Ratibida columnifera*

## Contact Information

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D-Bird (window collisions, injuries, deaths):  
[www.d-bird.org/tx](http://www.d-bird.org/tx)



## Bird Feeders

- Place within 3 feet of a window or more than 30 feet away to reduce potential window collisions. Also, place out of predator reach and close to cover (trees and shrubs).
- Clean feeders at least twice a month with a 9:1 water to bleach solution.
- Feeders are designed to house specific seed
- Change hummingbird nectar every 3-4 days, and clean with hot water and a scrub brush with each nectar change. Place feeders among flowers and tie a red ribbon to new feeders to make them more noticeable. Hummingbirds can be territorial, so provide 2-3 feeders to ensure more than one will visit your yard.



## Bird Baths

- Ideal bird baths are those that resemble natural baths, such as puddles. Avoid any that provide more than 1-2 inches of water.
- To prevent mosquitoes and disease, change the water every 1-2 days.
- Position near cover, away from feeders, and in the shade if possible.
- Every bath should be fully cleaned weekly (biweekly if used heavily). Use a scrub brush with a 9:1 water to bleach solution. Scrub thoroughly and allow it to soak for a few minutes. Rinse with running water until there is no persistent foaming, and allow it to dry completely before filling it with water again.



## Nest Boxes

- Birds have specific preferences when it comes to nesting. The size of the box and entrance hole, spacing between boxes, and the height at which they are placed determines whether certain species will use your box.
- Place away from any area where a predator may be able to gain access to the box, or secure it to a post along with a predator control device.

Species	Placement Height:	Hole Size:	Width, Length, Height:	Hole to Floor Distance:	Face:	Attach to:
American Kestrel	10-30 ft	3" diameter	10", 11 3/4", 14"	9-12"	South or East	Building, post, tree.
Carolina Chickadee	4-15 ft	1 1/8" round	5 1/2", 5 1/2", 8"	6"	Any	Dead tree, live tree, pole, post.
Carolina Wren	3-6 ft	1 1/2" round	5", 6 1/2", 7"	4-6"	Any	Building
Eastern Bluebird	3-6 ft	1 1/2" diameter	5 1/2", 5 1/2", 9"	7"	East	Pole
Eastern Screech-Owl	10-30 ft	3" round	10", 11 3/4", 14"	9"	Any	Live tree, pole.
Tufted Titmouse	5-15 ft	1 1/4" round	5 1/2", 5 1/2", 8"	6-8"	Away from prevailing wind	Pole

Species	Black-oil Sunflower	Striped Sunflower	Sunflower Hearts	Nyjer (Thistle)	Peanuts	Tree Nuts	Fruit	Millet	Safflower	Milo	Cracked Corn	Suet Cakes
Bluebirds			X				X					X
Buntings			X				X	X				
Cardinals	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Chickadees	X	X	X	X	X	X						X
Doves			X	X				X	X	X	X	
Goldfinches	X		X	X				X				X
Grosbeaks	X	X	X						X		X	
House Finches	X		X	X	X			X	X			
Jays	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Juncos			X	X	X			X		X	X	
Mockingbirds							X					X
Nuthatches	X	X	X		X	X	X		X			X
Purple Finches	X		X	X				X				
Siskins	X		X	X							X	
Sparrows	X		X	X				X		X	X	
Tanagers			X				X					
Titmice	X	X	X	X	X	X					X	X
Towhees								X		X		
Woodpeckers	X		X		X	X	X					X