

Native Plants for Birds

Gardeners Can Make a Difference – Help Protect Native Birds!

"Because food for all animals starts with the energy harnessed by plants, the plants we grow in our gardens have the critical role of sustaining, directly or indirectly, all of the animals with which we share our living spaces"

-Dr. Doug Tallamy, *Bringing Nature Home*

Bird-Friendly Landscaping Tips:

- Plant drought-tolerant native plants to provide habitat for insects that support the birds.
- Plan for as long a season of bloom as possible (early spring to late fall) with at least three different sources of insects, seed, and berries present. A variety of plants ensures a variety of food for birds, and a long growing season supports their diet for a longer period of time.
- Instead of planting one of each species scattered throughout the garden, try planting at least 3 of the same species together – this helps the bird save energy.

(See CoNPS Gardening Guides for sample plans of native plant gardens – www.conps.org/horticulture)

Wildflowers listed are perennials unless otherwise noted. (*) May be aggressive spreaders with good soil and moisture.



Plants for Insects	Scientific Name	Notes	Birds
Blanket Flower	<i>Gaillardia aristata</i>	Grows 12-32in., prefers full sun and well-drained soil. Blooms late Spring to Fall; most commercial varieties are non-native hybrids <i>Also good for: seeds</i>	Sparrows, finches, grosbeaks, buntings, chickadees
Black-eyed Susan	<i>Rudbeckia hirta</i>	Grows 1-2ft., prefers full sun and well-drained soil. Blooms early Summer to mid-Fall <i>Also good for: seeds, pollinators</i>	Waxwings, orioles, nuthatches, warblers, wrens, thrushes, jays, chickadees
Goldenrod	<i>Solidago spp.</i>	Grows 3-6ft., prefers full to part sun and all soil. Blooms late Summer to Fall. <i>Also good for: bees, butterflies, and other insects</i>	Finches, sparrows, buntings, grouse
Sandcherry	<i>Prunus pumila besseyi</i>	Grows 4-6ft, prefers part sun and any soil. Blooms in Spring with fruit through late Summer <i>Also good for: fruit, native bees, butterflies</i>	Nuthatches, grosbeaks, orioles, vireos, jays
Gamble Oak	<i>Quercus gambellii</i>	Grows 10-30ft, prefers full sun and low water. Blooms in late Spring with showy Fall foliage. <i>Host Plant for the state insect, the Colorado hairstreak butterfly</i> <i>Also good for: Shelter, seed, insects, and nesting</i>	Warblers, vireos, towhees, buntings, grosbeaks,

Photos by Linda Smith, Colorado Native Plant Society (conps.org) ; Breanne Frank, Kate Hogan, & Dick Vogel, Denver Audubon (denveraudubon.org) ; Irene Shonle, Gilpin County CSU Extension Office (gilpin.extension.colostate.edu)

References: *Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center* <https://www.wildflower.org/> ; *National Wildlife Federation* <https://www.nwf.org/NativePlantFinder/Plants> ; *Audubon Plants for Birds* <https://www.audubon.org/plantsforbirds> ; *Bringing Nature Home*, Doug Tallamy ; *The Morton Arboretum* <https://www.mortonarb.org/trees-plants/tree-and-plant-advice> ; *USDA PLANTS Database* <https://plants.sc.egov.usda.gov/java/>



Plants for Seed	Scientific Name	Notes	Birds
Blue Flax	<i>Linum lewisii</i>	Grows 18-20in., prefers full sun and dry soil. Blooms early Spring to Fall <i>Also good for: bees, butterflies, and caterpillars</i>	Cardinals, chickadees, vireos, orioles, sparrows
Common Yarrow	<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	Grows 2-3ft., prefers full to part sun and well-drained soil. Blooms late Spring to late Summer <i>Also good for: nest material, insects; host plant for moths</i>	Chickadees, titmice, orioles, warblers, jays, vireos, thrashers
Mexican Hat	<i>Ratibida columnifera</i>	Grows 1-4ft., prefers full sun and well-drained soil. Blooms late Spring to Fall. <i>Also good for: bees, butterflies, moths</i>	Sparrows, finches, grosbeaks, buntings, chickadees
Silver Lupine	<i>Lupinus argenteus</i>	Grows to ~1ft., prefers any light and dry soil. Blooms early- to mid-Summer. <i>Also good for: nectar, native bees, butterflies, and shelter</i>	Grosbeaks, vireos, woodpeckers, jays
Common Sunflower	<i>Helianthus annuus</i>	Grows 2-10ft., prefers full sun and dry, well-drained soil. Blooms mid-Summer to mid-Fall <i>Also good for: fruit, insects</i>	Sparrows, warblers, finches, vireos, woodpeckers, jays, titmice



Plants for Berries	Scientific Name	Notes	Birds
Kinnikinnick	<i>Arctostaphylos uva-ursi</i>	Grows 2-12in., prefers any light and all soil. Blooms early spring to early summer with berries in mid- to late Summer. Evergreen. <i>Also good for: caterpillars and butterflies</i>	Hummingbirds, thrushes, wrens, grouse, waxwings
Wax Currant	<i>Ribes cereum</i>	Grows 3-5ft., prefers full to part sun and dry, well-drained soil. Blooms early Spring to mid-Summer. <i>Also good for: caterpillars, bees, seed</i>	Grosbeaks, robins, jays, towhees, hummingbirds
Woods' Rose	<i>Rosa woodsii</i>	Grows 3-6ft., prefers any light and all soil. Blooms late Spring to mid-Summer. <i>Also good for: insects, bees</i>	Grouse, bluebirds, juncos, grosbeaks,
Serviceberry	<i>Amelanchier alnifolia</i>	Grows 3-18ft., prefers any light and well-drained soil. Blooms late Spring with berries through Fall. <i>Also good for: butterflies</i>	Crows, thrushes, robins, and Western Tanagers
Chokecherry	<i>Prunus virginiana</i>	Grows 10-30ft., prefers any light and well-drained soil. Blooms late Spring with berries through late Summer <i>Also good for: seeds, caterpillars, bees</i>	Over 70 species incl. woodpeckers, bluebirds, kingbirds



Nectar Plants	Scientific Name	Notes	Birds
Columbine	<i>Aquilegia spp.</i>	Grows 15-20in., prefers part sun to shade and well-drained soil. Blooms mid-Spring to early Summer. State flower of Colorado <i>Also good for: caterpillars, bumblebees</i>	Hummingbirds, orioles, vireos, thrashers, sparrows, warblers, waxwings
Indian Paintbrush	<i>Castilleja spp.</i>	Grows 1-3ft., prefers full to part sun and well-drained soil. Blooms mid-Spring to mid-Summer. <i>Also good for: butterflies</i>	Hummingbirds, sparrows, orioles, waxwings
Bee Balm	<i>Monarda fistulosa</i>	Grows 1-4ft., prefers full to part sun and well-drained, moist soil. Blooms late Spring to Fall. <i>Also good for: insects, bees, and butterflies</i>	Hummingbirds, wrens, vireos, woodpeckers,
Penstemon; Beardtongue	<i>Penstemon spp.</i>	Grows 1-3ft., prefers full sun and dry soil. Blooms vary by species. Over 60 species native to Colorado. <i>Also good for: insects, bees, and butterflies</i>	Hummingbirds
Rocky Mountain Bee Plant	<i>Cleome serrulata</i>	Grows 4-5ft., prefers full to part sun and dry, well-drained soil. Blooms mid-Summer to Fall. <i>Also good for: native bees, butterflies</i>	Hummingbirds, thrashers, orioles, warblers

Additional Native Plants for Birds

Trees and Shrubs

Blue Spruce (*Picea pungens*)

Prefers: full sun; any soil
Grows: 50-75ft.
Growing season: evergreen
Best for: seeds, insects, shelter
Birds: siskins, nuthatches, crossbills

Boxelder Tree (*Acer negundo*)

Prefers: full sun; well-drained soil
Grows: 35-80ft.
Growing season: flowers early spring, leaves till late fall
Best for: seeds, insects, caterpillars, shelter
Birds: woodpeckers, nuthatches, chickadees, finches

Red-Osier Dogwood (*Cornus sericea*)

Prefers: full to part sun; moist, well-drained soil
Grows: 3-9ft.
Growing season: blooms late Spring, foliage through Summer, brilliant red bark in Winter
Best for: butterflies, berries, perch
Birds: Over 98 species including flicker, tanager, woodpeckers, and catbird

Boulder Raspberry (*Rubus deliciosus*)

Prefers: full sun; well-drained soil
Grows: 4-5ft.
Growing season: Late Spring to Summer
Best for: bees, berries, seeds
Birds: hummingbirds, finches, chickadees

Rocky Mountain Juniper (*Juniperus scopulorum*)

Prefers: full to part sun; dry, well-drained soil
Grows: 12-36ft.
Growing season: blooms late Spring, evergreen
Best for: berries, shelter, nesting, insects, caterpillars
Birds: waxwings, grosbeaks, sparrows, robins

Big Sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*)

Prefers: full sun; dry, well-drained soil
Grows: 6-12ft.
Growing season: evergreen
Best for: berries, insects
Birds: finches, chickadees, woodpeckers, sparrows

Perennials

Showy Milkweed (*Asclepias speciosa*)

Prefers: full sun; wet, well-drained soil
Grows: 2-3ft.
Growing season: late Spring to early Fall
Best for: nectar, seeds, monarch butterfly host plant
Birds: hummingbirds, warblers, wrens, orioles, etc.

Tickseed (*Coreopsis verticillata*)

Prefers: full sun to partial shade; dry, well-drained soil
Grows: 1-3ft.
Growing season: Summer
Best for: seed, butterflies, caterpillars
Birds: gold finches, sparrows, towhees, buntings

Showy Four O'clock (*Mirabilis multiflora*)

Prefers: part shade; dry, well-drained soil
Grows: 1-3ft
Growing season: mid-Spring to early Fall
Best for: insects, nectar
Birds: hummingbirds

Rocky Mountain Iris (*Iris missouriensis*)

Prefers: full sun; wet soil
Grows: 1-3ft.
Growing season: late Spring
Best for: nectar
Birds: hummingbirds

Dotted Gayfeather (*Liatris punctata*)

Prefers: full sun; dry, well-drained soil
Grows: 1-2ft.
Growing season: late Summer to mid-Fall
Best for: seeds, nectar, insects
Birds: sparrows, vireos, waxwings, orioles

Blue Grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*)

Prefers: full sun; dry, well-drained soil
Grows: 12-14in.
Growing season: mid-Summer to mid-Fall
Best for: seeds, insects, host plant for 6 skippers
Birds: sparrows, chickadees, nuthatches, finches

Harebell (*Campanula rotundifolia*)

Prefers: any light; dry, well-drained soil
Grows: 1-3ft.
Growing season: early Summer to Fall
Best for: nectar, insects
Birds: warblers, sparrows, hummingbirds, vireos

Nodding Onion (*Allium cernuum*)

Prefers: full sun; wet soil
Grows: 1-3ft.
Growing season: Summer
Best for: nectar, insects
Birds: warblers, mockingbirds, waxwings, sparrows

Smooth Blue Aster (*Symphyotrichum leave*)

Prefers: full sun; dry, well-drained soil
Grows: 1-3ft.
Growing season: Fall
Best for: seeds, insects, caterpillars
Birds: nuthatches, sparrows, thrushes, woodpeckers

Narrow-Leaf Fireweed (*Chamaenerion angustifolium*)

Prefers: full sun; moist, well-drained soil
Grows: 3-6ft.
Growing season: early Summer to Fall
Best for: nectar, insects
Birds: sparrows, orioles, waxwings, hummingbirds