

# Fall Planting for Wild Birds

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Fall is a good time to plan a landscape which will attract birds to your yard. Birds will be looking for seeds, fruits, nuts, shelter, cover, nest sites, perches, and plants which serve as host sites for invertebrates.

This is a good time to be a little messy. Leave some dead branches on trees to serve as perches. Ignore mulch leaves hidden under bushes so they serve as habitat for insects. Skip deadheading purple coneflower, sunflower, black-eyed Susans and other seed bearing flowers. Let the hummingbird feeder languish in your yard until several weeks after the last sighting because a procrastinator may stop by for an energy drink during migration. Toss your Christmas tree on a brush pile to serve as shelter and cover for birds. If safe and tolerable, let a dead tree trunk rot away and watch for hole boring birds and let them peck away for the insects under the decaying bark. If the dead trunk is unsightly it can be hidden under Virginia Creeper or wild grape. You are not being lazy, you are mimicking natural habitats.

Check your local nursery for sales of bird-friendly trees and shrubs for fall planting. Eastern Red Cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*) has nutlets and cones which attract Cedar Waxwing, Mockingbird, Robin, Mourning Dove, Purple Finch, Bluebird and more. It provides winter cover and nest sites. Spruces are another good choice. Southern magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*) provides those beautiful red drupes. Other trees of note are Mulberries, Serviceberries, Flowering Dogwood, Crabapple and White Oak. Shrubs such as Winterberry Holly (*Ilex verticillate*) planted in groups should include a male plant. Southern Arrowwood (*Viburnum* species) will yield berries, as will Red-Osier Dogwood, Staghorn Sumac and Northern Bayberry.

Here are some websites for more information:

Birdwatching at <http://athome.audubon.org/helping-birds>

Maryland native plants at <http://mdflora.org/>

Eastern wildflowers at <http://delawarewildflowers.org/>

To order a Project FeederWatch kit (\$12-\$15) for counting winter birds at your feeder go to:  
<http://www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw/>

Macy Hovland, [hmhovland@gmail.com](mailto:hmhovland@gmail.com)

Federated Garden Clubs of Maryland: District II: Birds and Butterflies

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