



**Ahh – To Grow A Garden – So Get Up and Get Growing –Taylorsville City - Tree Of The Month Article – October 2010
- Creating A Wildlife Habitat In Your Yard - For reference Taylorsville City is USDA Hardiness zone 7A.**

Attracting birds and pollinators (bees, butterflies, bats, moths, and humming birds) is a hobby the whole family can share. Having a bird and wildlife friendly yard has never been more important with nearly 80% of wildlife habitat in the United States (US) in private hands. Add the fact that an average 2.1 million acres is reported converted from rural to residential use each year. To have a wildlife friendly habitat in your yard and earn the distinction of being part of National Wildlife Federation (NWF) Certified Wildlife Habitat program is very cool. There are approximately 150,000 NWF Certified Wildlife Habitats in the US. My yard in Taylorsville is one of the NWF Certified Wildlife Habitats, becoming one in 2006. I have had fun watching the birds, bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds that come and visit my yard. All you need to do is provide elements from each of the following areas: food, water, places for cover, places to raise young, and use of sustainable gardening techniques.

Supply Food for Wildlife. Everyone needs to eat. Planting flowers, shrubs, and trees is an easy way to provide the foliage, nectar, pollen, berries, seeds, and nuts that will attract many species of wildlife to your yard and help them survive and thrive. You can also incorporate bird feeders too. Choose foods that appeal to the birds you want to attract. Popular foods used to attract birds include: seeds, nectar, fruits, insects, food scrapes, nuts, suet, eggshells, and mealworms. Peanuts attract magpies, crows, jays, and grouse. Cracked corn attracts quail, ducks, and grackles. Safflowers seeds attract morning doves, finches, grosbeaks, and nuthatches. Black sunflower seeds attract chickadees, nuthatches, titmice, goldfinches, and finches. Niger and thistle seed attracts goldfinches, morning doves, grosbeaks, juncos, song sparrows, and starlings. Birds do love giant sun flowers (the summer flower). Humming birds are fond of red feeders, and the flowers of Mimosa, Rose of Sharon, and Honeysuckles.

Supply Water for Wildlife. A source of clean water for drinking and bathing is necessary for birds, bees, and other wildlife for survival, and may attract birds that don't visit your feeders. Natural sources of water include ponds, lakes, rivers, springs, oceans, and wetlands; and man-made sources include bird baths, waterfalls, and ponds. Birds are attracted to moving or flowing water, it is also more visible and it can be heard from a great distance. My two front ponds attract two Mallard ducks each spring.

Create Cover for Wildlife. Wildlife and birds require places to hide in order to feel safe from people, predators, and inclement weather. One fourth of the perimeter of your yard should be planted in trees. Other things that provide the necessary cover include flowering shrubs, flowers, ornamental grasses, creation of thickets, even dead trees. Spruce and Pine Trees provide great places to shelter birds, as do bird houses and Cotoneaster Hedges which is an evergreen shrub with edible berries. I have several bird and bat houses in my yard. Interestingly, the birds that took up residence in the bat houses were barn shallows.

Give Wildlife a Place to Raise Their Young. Birds need a sheltered place to their raise offspring. Many places for cover can double as locations where birds can raise young. Providing trees, shrubs, bird house, nesting boxes do wonder for creating nesting areas for birds. Wildflower or perennial borders provide butterflies and moths areas where they can lay their eggs.

Let Your Garden Go Green. How you maintain your landscape can have an important effect on the health of the soil, air, and water, provide habitat for native wildlife, as well making a safer human community for those nearby. Reducing chemical use, composting, mulching and reducing turf grass in your yard are important steps to greener gardening. How we landscape our yard and deal with insects and weeds can make the difference between a bird, butterfly, and bee haven or one they need to void.

Once you have provided these above five essential elements to make a healthy and sustainable wildlife habitat, you can join the thousands of wildlife enthusiasts across the country, earning the distinction of being part of NWF Certified Wildlife Habitat program. Providing food, nesting areas, water, and natural habitat can attract birds, bees, and butterflies to our backyards, giving us a nicer view of them and, when done properly, it makes life easier for the birds and bees too. By creating small patches of pesticide-free safe havens for birds and pollinators, you can play a small but vital role in reversing the dramatic pollinator and bird habitat decline. It may not seem like much, but magnified across our state and country, these gardens can serve a vital role by feeding and protecting many threatened birds and pollinators. Refer to my article in September of 2020, Attracting Bees to Your Garden, and my article on August 2010, Attracting Butterflies to Your Yard. An application to the NWF Certified Wildlife Habitat program is available at the NWF web site at www.nwf.org, then click on the Tab (In Your Back Yard), when their clink on the tab (Certified Wildlife Habitat). The application can be filled out on-line. The application fee is \$20.00, and you can purchase a yard sign for \$30.00. The NWF can be contacted at 1-800-822-9919 or emailed at info@nwf.org.

