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## Backyard Wildlife

Your backyard can be a haven for wildlife if you plan for their needs as well as your enjoyment. Birds and other animals can bring pleasure and sometimes can be very annoying. Male cardinals and robins who have a love-hate relationship with their own reflections in a window usually only brings pleasure to friends who find humor in your frantic plight.

I visited a home recently with a glass enclosed porch surrounded by yard and windbreak. A quality habitat for numerous bird species with nesting areas, food sources, water and space.

Your first task is to ask yourself what type of area you want and are there particular bird species you want to attract. I enjoy my martin houses and the daring aerial exploits of the intercontinental fliers. They demand a sizable open area away from trees. They also like lines near the house so they can rest and observe the house. This means a new plan for my yard to move the martin houses to a more open area as trees in the current site grow up and over the house location.

Variety is probably the best approach to bringing a rich diversity of birds to your yard. Each specie of tree, shrub, vine, and perennial brings a different kind of cover, insect population, seed and fruit production and nesting cover. Many birds like dense cover along open areas of lawn or perennial beds combining good cover for hiding and nesting with foraging areas. Adding nesting sites to these areas can add to the birds using the area. Cardinals and robins usually prefer natural nesting sites, while adding a wren house can get you scolded while doing lawn chores.

Selection of shrubs for your yard can have a large impact on wildlife attraction. They can provide food and cover options throughout the year. Forsythias, lilac, and redbud provide some cover but little in the way of food. Shrubs like dogwood, elderberry, various sumacs, plum, chokecherry, cotoneaster, honeysuckle, various viburnums, firethorn, buffaloberry, caragana, quince, Manchurian apricot, various cherries, etc., provide food and cover year around. Several of my plantings have not only helped the birds, but have been pruned naturally by rabbit and deer.

Many backyards are big enough for only a limited number of larger trees. When making selection for your home look around the immediate neighborhood and make selections of trees you like, but also trees that will ad diversity to the entire area. Some trees which quality landscape trees and wildlife friendly are bur oak, white oak, red oak, hackberry, crabapple, pines, hickory, spruce, and hawthorn. Vines like American bittersweet, Virginia creeper, trumpet creeper, and wild grape can add both food and cover. Small fruits like currant, raspberry, blackberry and gooseberry are also quite useful.

With planning and forethought your backyard can be home for may enjoyable species of plants and animals. Add a water source and winter feed and our enjoyment will be year around.

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