



Creating a Backyard Wildlife Habitat

The following information should serve as a guide when developing a Backyard Wildlife Habitat. Use the information to create your own personal garden to attract wildlife to your landscape.

Components of a Backyard Wildlife Habitat

A Backyard Wildlife Habitat should contain four (4) essential elements to support and attract wildlife:

- Food, Water, Shelter, and Nesting areas/Places to raise young.

Native plants are most often used in these habitats to maintain and enhance biological diversity. Native plants are the best source of food for wildlife. Plants that have “grown up” in the environment (native plants) are acclimated to the temperature, precipitation, and soil type of an area, and are relatively pest-free.

Assess your landscape

It is just as important to restore and conserve an existing habitat, as it is to create a new one.

- Survey your landscape for areas that may already support wildlife (squirrels, birds, butterflies).
- Study the plants already growing in your landscape and their health.
- Note areas that are wet or dry, sunny or shady, and soil type. A soil test is recommended. This can be purchased from a garden center or a sample mailed to the local extension office.
- Locate the nearest water source and consider what type of irrigation will be used.
- Note any sidewalks, driveways, or structure that would affect the habitat.
- Identify any above ground or below ground utilities.
- Where will this area be viewed from most often? What view would you like from this area?
- Note if chemicals have been used in the landscape and the location.

Determine the design of your Backyard Wildlife Habitat

- The amount of time you want to spend in this area will determine the design and size of your habitat.
- Decide what wildlife you want to support within your habitat, this will help to determine the types of plants used.
- Ensure the Backyard Wildlife Habitat easy to access and include room to work in the garden.
- Use local Native Plant Societies, Botanical organizations, and National Wildlife Federation as a resource for information on garden design and plant choices.
- Review books, publications, and Internet sites for information on habitats.
- Visit other Backyard Wildlife Habitats to see how the garden works and is used by wildlife and people.
- Go to local nurseries and local plant sales for plant selections.
- What features would you like to include?
 - (Bird feeders, birdbaths, pond, snag)

Creating the Garden

- Outline the space for your habitat garden. Designate pathways, ponds, or other structures that will be a part of the garden.
- If there are existing plants in the garden space, perform any necessary pruning or transplanting before new plants are installed.
- Be sure to properly prepare the soil for your habitat garden. Ensure that the soil is well drained and not compacted. The soil test will tell you about the soil nutrients and any necessary amendments. If additional nutrients are needed, use organic matter (compost) as an amendment.
- Lay out the new plants in groups or clusters, this provides a more natural look to the garden. Be sure to place plants in the appropriate place for their requirements. (Shade-loving plants in shade, not a sunny area)

- Follow the planting instructions and water in the new plantings.
- Apply a 2-3 inch layer of shredded leaves, pine straw, or shredded mulch to the planted areas. This will insulate the soil, protect plants from drought, and keep weeds to a minimum.
- Personalize your Backyard Wildlife Habitat with bird feeders, birdbaths, toad abodes, and items that reflect your personality.
- Use broken clay pots or Popsicle sticks to label your plants.
- Keep a journal of the wildlife that is observed in your habitat, you might be surprised by what you find!

Resources

Internet

The National Wildlife Federation – www.nwf.org
 The Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center – www.wildflower.org
 Creating a Backyard Habitat - www.backyardwildlifehabitat.info
 Family of Nature websites – www.birdwebsite.com
 Georgia Native Plant Society – www.gnps.org
 Georgia Botanical Society – www.gabotsoc.org
 Georgia Wildlife Federation – www.gwf.org
 Junior Master Gardener – www.jmgkids/wildlifegardener

Books

National Wildlife Federation Attracting Birds, Butterflies, and Other Backyard Wildlife
 by David Mizejewski
 Gardening with Native Plants of the South by Sally Wasowski
 Wildflowers of the Eastern United States by Wilbur H. Duncan

See the Georgia Native Plant Society web site for a recommended reading list for Wildlife Gardening and plant sources.

Your local Cooperative Extension is a great resource for ideas and assistance with your landscape.

Plant Sources

Zoo Atlanta Spring Plant Sale
 Fernbank Science Center Spring Sale
 Pike Family Nurseries (Atlanta, GA)
 Habersham Garden Center (Atlanta, GA)
 Hastings Garden Center (Atlanta, GA)
 Goodness Grows (Lexington, GA)
 Randy's Perennials & Water Gardens, Inc (Lawrenceville, GA)
 Glade Springs Nursery (Jackson, GA)

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Zoo Atlanta's Georgia Wildlife Backyard Habitat

Zoo Atlanta's Georgia Backyard Wildlife Habitat is a unique exhibit of native plants, not only to the Southeastern US, but some plants native only to Georgia. In addition, most plant genus are native within fifty (50) miles of Atlanta! Cross-referencing native plant lists from the Georgia Native Plant Society and the Atlas of Vascular Flora of Georgia compiled by the Georgia Botanical Society created the list of plants.

This garden was designed to educate the public on urban biodiversity, native plants, and gardening techniques that can be used to attract local wildlife. This garden can also be used for public and school events, teacher training, and stewardship programs.

The following list of plants will provide the essential four elements (food, cover, water, and places to raise young) for a Wildlife Backyard Habitat. Some species may not always be visible as many native wildflowers are only seen in Spring.

Plant List (*bold species found in this exhibit)

Trees

American Holly	<i>Ilex opaca</i>
Sassafras	<i>Sassafras albidum</i>
Serviceberry	<i>Amelanchier arborea</i>
Sweetbay Magnolia	<i>Magnolia virginiana</i>
Two-winged Silverbell	<i>Halesia diptera magniflora</i>
Mountain Silverbell	<i>Halesia monticola</i>
Franklinia	<i>Franklinia altamaha</i>
Big-Leaf Magnolia	<i>Magnolia macrophylla</i>
Possumhaw	<i>Ilex decidua</i>
Winterberry Holly	<i>Ilex verticillata</i>
Southern Magnolia	<i>Magnolia grandiflora</i>
Pawpaw	<i>Asimina triloba</i>
Carolina Cherrylaurel	<i>Prunus caroliniana</i>
Sycamore	<i>Platanus occidentalis</i>
Dogwood	<i>Cornus florida 'Plena'</i>
American Styra	<i>Styrax americanus</i>

Shrubs

American Beautyberry	<i>Callicarpa americana</i>
Florida Leucothoe	<i>Leucothoe (Agarista) populifolia</i>
Fothergilla	<i>Fothergilla major</i>
Oakleaf Hydrangea	<i>Hydrangea quercifolia</i>
Carolina Allspice/Sweetshrub	<i>Calycanthus floridus</i>
Sweet Pepperbush	<i>Clethera alnifolia</i>
Virginia Sweetspire	<i>Itea virginica</i>
Red Buckeye	<i>Aesculus pavia</i>
Red Chokeberry	<i>Aronia arbutifolia</i>
Hearts a' bustin	<i>Euonymus americanus</i>
Spice Bush	<i>Lindera benzoin</i>
Mountain Laurel	<i>Kalmia latifolia</i>
Witchhazel	<i>Hamamelis virginiana</i>

Rabbiteye Blueberry
Florida Azalea
Flame Azalea
Piedmont Azalea
Catawba Rhododendron
Smooth Witherod Viburnum
Bracteated Viburnum

Vaccinium ashei
Rhododendron austrinum
Rhododendron calendulaceum
Rhododendron canescens
Rhododendron catawbiense
Viburnum nudum
Viburnum bracteatum

Perennials

Columbine
Virginia Bluebells
Lily-of-the-valley
Butterfly Weed
False Indigo
Mouse-Ear Coreopsis
Bleeding Heart
Bloodroot
Pale Joe Pye Weed
Purple Coneflower
Swamp Sunflower
Alum Root
Bee Balm
Mountain Mint
Pale Coneflower
Goldenrod
Stokers Aster
Trillium Yellow
Trillium White
Foamflower
Spiderwort
Celadine Poppy
Tall Ironweed
Columbine
Black Cohosh
Mayapple
Meadow Rue
Soapwort Gentian
Shuttleworth Ginger
Swamp Hibiscus
White Gaura
American Wood Anemone
Green and Gold
Virginia Bluebells
Lily-of-the-Valley
Yellowroot
Cut-leaved toothwort
Autumn Bride Coral Bells
Beardtongue
Christmas Fern
Cinnamon Fern
Marginal Wood Fern

Aquilegia canadensis
Mertensia virginica
Convallaria majalis
Asclepias tuberosa
Baptisia australis
Coreopsis lanceolata
Dicentra exima
Sanguinaria canadensis
Eupatorium fistulosum
Echinacea purpurea
Helianthus angustifolius
Heuchera americana
Monarda didyma
Pycnanthemum muticum
Echinacea pallida
Solidago rugosa
Stokesia laevis
Trillium luteum
Trillium grandiflorum
Tiarella cordifolia
Tradescantia virginica
Stylophorum diphylla
Vernonia altissima
Aquilegia canadensis
Cimicifuga racemosa
Podophyllum peltatum
Thalictrum aquilegifolium
Gentiana saponaria
Hexastylus shuttleworthii
Hibiscus coccineus
Gaura lindheimeri
Anemone quinquefolia
Chrysogonum virginianum 'Eco Lacquered Spider'
Mertensia virginica
Convallaria majalis
Xanthorhiza simplicissima
Dentaria laciniata
Heuchera villosa macrorrhiza 'Autumn Bride'
Penstemon 'Huskers Red'
Polystichum acrostichoides
Osmunda cinnamomea
Dryopteris marginalis

Grasses

Blue-eyed Grass
Switch Grass

Sisyrinchium angustifolium
Panicum virgatum

Vines

American Wisteria
Coral Honeysuckle
Crossvine

Wisteria frutescens
Lonicera sempivirens
Bignonia capreolata