

Neighborhood Wildlife Stewards

Teaching our Highlands neighbors how to live safely with wildlife and keep the wildlife wild.

Wildlife-Friendly Gardens

Despite their large size, bears are attracted to bird seed, which is why it's important to bring in your bird feeders when our local bears emerge from their dens in the spring. Putting out your bird feeders at night and removing them early in the morning, or hanging your bird feeders high over the ground doesn't work. The bears will still be attracted to any seeds the birds knock to the ground. Hummingbird feeders also attract bears.

Instead of putting out bird feeders, you can plant a wildlife-friendly garden to:

- Attract wild birds and pollinators, such as butterflies and bees.
- Help keep our local bears safe and wild by not attracting them to your house.

For information about creating a certified wildlife habitat, see:

www.nwf.org/backyard

The Four Garden Essentials

A wildlife-friendly garden provides birds and pollinators with sufficient food, water, shelter, and places to nest. Avoid using toxic chemicals in your garden. See the *Green Gardening* article in the April issue of *Connections* for eco-gardening tips.

Food

To attract the widest variety of birds and pollinators to your garden, you need to include a mixture of plants that provide buds, seeds, nectar, berries, fruit, and nuts throughout the year. Insects attracted to the plants will themselves become a good food source for some species of birds.

Depending on the size of your garden, you can limit your wildlife garden to annuals and perennials; or include vines, shrubs, and even trees. By not clipping off the faded flowers, the plants will be able to set seed. To avoid attracting bears, only plant berry- and fruit-producing shrubs and trees if you have a high fence surrounding your garden and bears aren't a problem in your area.

For suggestions on inviting birds and other pollinators to your garden, see:

www.audubonathome.org/yard/index.html

For a list of flowering plants that attract hummingbirds, see:

wdfw.wa.gov/wlm/backyard/humming-flowering.htm

Without butterfly caterpillars, there wouldn't be any adult butterflies. To attract butterflies to your garden, you need to provide food sources for both. Butterfly caterpillars will only eat specific "host" plants (and mostly leave your other plants alone). Adult butterflies prefer nectar-producing plants and aged fruit.

For a list of plants to attract butterflies, see:
wdfw.wa.gov/wlm/backyard/butterflies-plants.htm

Bees are the most important pollinators of flowering plants. To attract bees to your garden, plant a variety of native plants, wildflowers, and herbs. For the past decade, wild honey bees have been in decline due to parasitic mites and gardeners are turning to native bees, such as the orchard mason bee (*Osmia lignaria*).

For mason bee information and supplies, see:
www.knoxcellars.com

When selecting plants for your wildlife garden, avoid varieties that have been designated as invasive, noxious plants; otherwise, they'll spread throughout your garden and Issaquah Highlands.

See the Washington State Noxious Weeds List:
www.nwcb.wa.gov/weed_list/weed_list.htm

Water

Birds and pollinators require a clean source of water. You can either purchase a commercial birdbath or make one yourself by burying a large plastic plant tray that is no deeper than 3" in your garden. Change the water every few days and place the water source in a safe spot—at least 10 feet away from a covered spot where predators might hide. On cold winter days, you'll need a water heater—never use antifreeze.

Butterflies like to hang out in damp garden areas. To create one, bury a plastic container filled with sand in a protected spot and keep the sand moist. You can also place large, flat rocks in protected sunny spots where the butterflies can warm themselves afterwards.

Shelter

Birds require cover to protect them from weather extremes and predators. Plant shrubs and trees of different heights and densities for a variety of bird species, and include evergreens for year-round shelter. Small brush piles and rock shelters can be used as hiding spots for foraging birds.

Nesting

Different bird species have different nesting requirements. They may prefer to nest in cavities; or use open nests in a tree, on a ledge, or hidden on the ground.

For tips on nest boxes and providing nesting materials, see:
wdfw.wa.gov/wlm/backyard/nestboxes.htm

Neighborhood Wildlife Stewards Meetings

If you care about the welfare of the wildlife in our area, want to learn more about living safely

with the wildlife, and would enjoy meeting your neighbors, join us for our monthly meetings.