

# Tips on Gardening for Birds

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Your broad objectives should be:

- 1) Develop structural diversity. Key considerations are A) to incorporate both vertical and horizontal elements in your garden design, i.e. trees and shrubs. If you have a small plot to work with, then key off of nearby trees in the alley or along the property line. B) avoid large gaps between plants, by growing connectivity in three dimensions between trees to big shrubs to small shrubs to perennials and ground covers. C) use dead wood, small snags, brush piles and leaves where you can.
- 2) Develop biological diversity by using as many species as possible. This diversity provides an array of plant products, especially flowers and fruits over a longer period of time. It also provides opportunities to attract more insects to your garden for birds to hunt. Diversity doesn't necessarily mean having one of everything. There are good design and biological reasons to use two or three or more plants of any given species, so do some planning.
- 3) Use native plants as much as possible. These species are not invasive. They are in synchrony with native birds and insects. They also support greater insect diversity and biomass than non-native species. Don't forget that some natives may be better adapted to your garden site than others. Consider soil type, shade/sun, slope and irrigation objectives when selecting plants.

Resources:

- OSU Extension Service has several publications that you can download for free. Check these pages.  
<http://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog/results.php?cat=Gardening> follow the links for "Flowers, Shrubs and Trees" and "Wildlife"
- OSU Landscape Plants. Photos and descriptions of an exhaustive assortment of trees and shrubs.
- "Bringing Nature Home" by Douglas Tallamy.

Plant List. These are some of the trees and shrubs mentioned in my presentation and are among my favorites. You will find more comprehensive lists in other references.

- *Acer circinatum*, Vine Maple. Small tree that assumes different forms in sun or shade.
- *Amelanchier*, Serviceberry. Deciduous shrub/tree bearing white flowers in spring and producing purple berries in late summer that are eagerly sought by birds. Several varieties have been selected.
- *Arbutus menziesii*, Pacific Madrone. Wonderful tree for the native plant enthusiast, but messy and tricky to grow. Requires sun, good drainage and very careful summer water.
- *Arctostaphylos columbiana* and *A. manzanita*. Beautiful, easy to grow species of manzanita. Drought tolerant, but these species tolerate some summer water.
- *Baccharis pilularis*, Coyote Bush. Shrub and ground cover forms noted for hosting remarkable numbers of insects, but almost unknown in gardens. Easy to grow. Best in sun, seems to be adaptable to various soil and water conditions.

- *Ceanothus* sp.: Blue Blossom, Buckbrush, Deerbrush. Shrubs for sunny, well-drained sites and little or no summer water. Very attractive to bees.
  - *Cornus nuttalli*, Pacific Dogwood forms a tall, narrow tree with lovely white flowers. Sensitivity to various stresses and disease make it difficult to grow. Preference for part shade, no direct summer water. Several varieties available. Worth the challenge.
  - *Cornus sericea*, Red-osier Dogwood. Small shrub with attractive red stems in winter.
  - *Cornus canadensis*, Bunchberry Dogwood. Elegant groundcover for the shade garden.
  - *Garrya* sp., Silk-tassel. Shrubby species with male and female forms. Some male forms selected for ornamentation of winter catkins. Females set purple fruit.
  - *Gaultheria shallon*, Salal. Tough spreading shrub.
  - *Mahonia* (3 species) Oregon Grape. Various sizes and leaf shapes on these species, but all have rich, yellow flowers followed by purple fruit.
  - *Myrica californica*, Pacific Wax Myrtle. Elegant, large shrub which can be pruned to form small tree. Flowers and fruits are not showy, but fruits attract Yellow-rumped Warblers in the winter.
  - *Oemleria cerasiformes*, Indian Plum. Return of Rufous Hummingbird is timed with flowering of this shrub. Nice, early spring flower display. Birds avidly seek fruit.
  - *Pinus contorta*, Shore Pine. Most of our conifers grow to huge size, but this is a medium-sized tree.
  - *Pinus ponderosa*, Ponderosa Pine. Willamette Valley sub-species casts less dense shade than other conifers.
  - *Prunus virginiana*, Chokecherry. Upright, suckering shrub or small tree that produces thickets. May want to use in-ground container to restrict spread. Cedar Waxwings like the summer-ripening fruit.
- \*Oaks host an extensive array of insects. Below is a range of species of different sizes.
- *Quercus garryana*, Oregon White Oak. Not a species for the small garden, but if you have one cherish it. Very productive species for birds. Brewer's Oak is a smaller subspecies.
  - *Quercus kelloggii*, California Black Oak. Larger, deciduous tree.
  - *Quercus berberidifolia*, Scrub Oak. Evergreen shrub or small tree.
  - *Quercus chrysolepis*, Canyon Live Oak. Medium evergreen.
  - *Quercus sadleriana*, Deer Oak. Shrubby evergreen.
  - *Quercus vaccinifolia*, Huckleberry Oak. Shrubby evergreen.
  - *Rhamnus purshiana*, Cascara. Very modest shrub or small tree produces black fruit that attract Swainson's Thrush during fall migration.
  - *Rhododendron occidentale*, Western Azalea. Gorgeous alternative to other azaleas.
  - *Ribes sanguineum*, Red-flowering Currant. If you are going to plant one native species, this should be the one. Great flower display attracts hummingbirds and Orange-crowned Warblers in spring. In fall, warblers and vireos glean for insects.
  - *Sambucus*, Elderberries. Blue Elderberry forms large shrub or small tree. Usually loaded with blue fruit in September. Red Elderberry is a shrubby form that prefers shade and moist conditions. Birds love fruit of both species.
  - *Sorbus*, Mountain Ash. Shrubby species with nice corymbs of white flowers followed by orange fruit. Usually excellent fall foliage color.
  - *Tsuga mertensiana*, Mountain Hemlock. Pretty conifer that is usually slow-growing in the garden, so stays small in our lifetime.
  - *Vaccinium ovatum*, Evergreen Huckleberry. Very ornamental evergreen shrub that produces fruit for birds.