

# Native Plants for Birds

## Gardeners Can Make a Difference – Help Protect Native Birds!

*"Because food for all animals starts with the energy harnessed by plants, the plants we grow in our gardens have the critical role of sustaining, directly or indirectly, all of the animals with which we share our living spaces"*

-Dr. Doug Tallamy, *Bringing Nature Home*

### Bird-Friendly Landscaping Tips:

- Plant drought-tolerant native plants to provide habitat for insects that support the birds.
- Plan for as long a season of bloom as possible (early spring to late fall) with at least three different sources of insects, seed, and berries present. A variety of plants ensures a variety of food for birds, and a long growing season supports their diet for a longer period of time.
- Instead of planting one of each species scattered throughout the garden, try planting at least 3 of the same species together – this helps the bird save energy.

(See CoNPS Gardening Guides for sample plans of native plant gardens – [www.conps.org/horticulture](http://www.conps.org/horticulture) )

Wildflowers listed are perennials unless otherwise noted. (\*) May be aggressive spreaders with good soil and moisture.



Plants for Insects	Scientific Name	Notes	Birds
<b>Blanket Flower</b>	<i>Gaillardia aristata</i>	Grows 12-32in., prefers full sun and well-drained soil. Blooms late Spring to Fall; most commercial varieties are non-native hybrids <i>Also good for: seeds</i>	Sparrows, finches, grosbeaks, buntings, chickadees
<b>Black-eyed Susan</b>	<i>Rudbeckia hirta</i>	Grows 1-2ft., prefers full sun and well-drained soil. Blooms early Summer to mid-Fall <i>Also good for: seeds, pollinators</i>	Waxwings, orioles, nuthatches, warblers, wrens, thrushes, jays, chickadees
<b>Goldenrod*</b>	<i>Solidago spp.</i>	Grows 3-6ft., prefers full to part sun and all soil. Blooms late Summer to Fall. <i>Also good for: bees, butterflies, and other insects</i>	Finches, sparrows, buntings, grouse
<b>Sandcherry</b>	<i>Prunus pumila besseyi</i>	Grows 4-6ft, prefers part sun and any soil. Blooms in Spring with fruit through late Summer <i>Also good for: fruit, native bees, butterflies</i>	Nuthatches, grosbeaks, orioles, vireos, jays
<b>Gamble Oak*</b>	<i>Quercus gambellii</i>	Grows 10-30ft, prefers full sun and low water. Blooms in late Spring with showy Fall foliage. <i>Host Plant for the state insect, the Colorado hairstreak butterfly</i> <i>Also good for: Shelter, seed, insects, and nesting</i>	Warblers, vireos, towhees, buntings, grosbeaks,

**Photos** by Linda Smith, Colorado Native Plant Society ([conps.org](http://conps.org)) ; Breanne Frank, Kate Hogan, & Dick Vogel, Denver Audubon ([denveraudubon.org](http://denveraudubon.org)) ; Irene Shonle, Gilpin County CSU Extension Office ([gilpin.extension.colostate.edu](http://gilpin.extension.colostate.edu)); Jane Dorn, Audubon Rockies ([rockies.audubon.org](http://rockies.audubon.org))

**References:** *Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center* <https://www.wildflower.org/> ; National Wildlife Federation <https://www.nwf.org/NativePlantFinder/Plants> ; Audubon Plants for Birds <https://www.audubon.org/plantsforbirds> ; *Bringing Nature Home*, Doug Tallamy ; The Morton Arboretum <https://www.mortonarb.org/trees-plants/tree-and-plant-advice> ; USDA PLANTS Database <https://plants.sc.egov.usda.gov/java/>



Plants for Seed	Scientific Name	Notes	Birds
<b>Blue Flax</b>	<i>Linum lewisii</i>	Grows 18-20in., prefers full sun and dry soil. Blooms early Spring to Fall <i>Also good for: bees, butterflies, and caterpillars</i>	Cardinals, chickadees, vireos, orioles, sparrows
<b>Common Yarrow</b>	<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	Grows 2-3ft., prefers full to part sun and well-drained soil. Blooms late Spring to late Summer <i>Also good for: nest material, insects; host plant for moths</i>	Chickadees, titmice, orioles, warblers, jays, vireos, thrashers
<b>Mexican Hat</b>	<i>Ratibida columnifera</i>	Grows 1-4ft., prefers full sun and well-drained soil. Blooms late Spring to Fall. <i>Also good for: bees, butterflies, moths</i>	Sparrows, finches, grosbeaks, buntings, chickadees
<b>Silver Lupine</b>	<i>Lupinus argenteus</i>	Grows to ~1ft., prefers any light and dry soil. Blooms early- to mid-Summer. <i>Also good for: nectar, native bees, butterflies, and shelter</i>	Grosbeaks, vireos, woodpeckers, jays
<b>Common Sunflower*</b>	<i>Helianthus annuus</i>	Grows 2-10ft., prefers full sun and dry, well-drained soil. Blooms mid-Summer to mid-Fall <i>Also good for: fruit, insects</i>	Sparrows, warblers, finches, vireos, woodpeckers, jays, titmice



Plants for Berries	Scientific Name	Notes	Birds
<b>Kinnikinnick</b>	<i>Arctostaphylos uva-ursi</i>	Grows 2-12in., prefers any light and all soil. Blooms early spring to early summer with berries in mid- to late Summer. Evergreen. <i>Also good for: caterpillars and butterflies</i>	Hummingbirds, thrushes, wrens, grouse, waxwings
<b>Wax Currant</b>	<i>Ribes cereum</i>	Grows 3-5ft., prefers full to part sun and dry, well-drained soil. Blooms early Spring to mid-Summer. <i>Also good for: caterpillars, bees, seed</i>	Grosbeaks, robins, jays, towhees, hummingbirds
<b>Woods' Rose*</b>	<i>Rosa woodsii</i>	Grows 3-6ft., prefers any light and all soil. Blooms late Spring to mid-Summer. <i>Also good for: insects, bees</i>	Grouse, bluebirds, juncos, grosbeaks,
<b>Serviceberry</b>	<i>Amelanchier alnifolia</i>	Grows 3-18ft., prefers any light and well-drained soil. Blooms late Spring with berries through Fall. <i>Also good for: butterflies</i>	Crows, thrushes, robins, and Western Tanagers
<b>Chokecherry*</b>	<i>Prunus virginiana</i>	Grows 10-30ft., prefers any light and well-drained soil. Blooms late Spring with berries through late Summer <i>Also good for: seeds, caterpillars, bees</i>	Over 70 species incl. woodpeckers, bluebirds, kingbirds



Nectar Plants	Scientific Name	Notes	Birds
<b>Columbine</b>	<i>Aquilegia spp.</i>	Grows 15-20in., prefers part sun to shade and well-drained soil. Blooms mid-Spring to early Summer. State flower of Colorado <i>Also good for: caterpillars, bumblebees</i>	Hummingbirds, orioles, vireos, thrashers, sparrows, warblers, waxwings
<b>Indian Paintbrush</b>	<i>Castilleja spp.</i>	Grows 1-3ft., prefers full to part sun and well-drained soil. Blooms mid-Spring to mid-Summer. <i>Also good for: butterflies</i>	Hummingbirds, sparrows, orioles, waxwings
<b>Bee Balm</b>	<i>Monarda fistulosa</i>	Grows 1-4ft., prefers full to part sun and well-drained, moist soil. Blooms late Spring to Fall. <i>Also good for: insects, bees, and butterflies</i>	Hummingbirds, wrens, vireos, woodpeckers,
<b>Penstemon; Beardtongue</b>	<i>Penstemon spp.</i>	Grows 1-3ft., prefers full sun and dry soil. Blooms vary by species. Over 60 species native to Colorado. <i>Also good for: insects, bees, and butterflies</i>	Hummingbirds
<b>Rocky Mountain Bee Plant</b>	<i>Cleome serrulata</i>	Grows 4-5ft., prefers full to part sun and dry, well-drained soil. Blooms mid-Summer to Fall. <i>Also good for: native bees, butterflies</i>	Hummingbirds, thrashers, orioles, warblers

# Additional Native Plants for Birds

## Trees and Shrubs

### **Blue Spruce** (*Picea pungens*)

Prefers: full sun; any soil  
Grows: 50-75ft.  
Growing season: evergreen  
Best for: seeds, insects, shelter  
Birds: siskins, nuthatches, crossbills

### **Boxelder Tree** (*Acer negundo*)

Prefers: full sun; well-drained soil  
Grows: 35-80ft.  
Growing season: flowers early spring, leaves till late fall  
Best for: seeds, insects, caterpillars, shelter  
Birds: woodpeckers, nuthatches, chickadees, finches

### **Red-Osier Dogwood** (*Cornus sericea*)

Prefers: full to part sun; moist, well-drained soil  
Grows: 3-9ft.  
Growing season: blooms late Spring, foliage through Summer, brilliant red bark in Winter  
Best for: butterflies, berries, perch  
Birds: Over 98 species including flicker, tanager, woodpeckers, and catbird

### **Boulder Raspberry** (*Rubus deliciosus*)

Prefers: full sun; well-drained soil  
Grows: 4-5ft.  
Growing season: Late Spring to Summer  
Best for: bees, berries, seeds  
Birds: hummingbirds, finches, chickadees

### **Rocky Mountain Juniper** (*Juniperus scopulorum*)

Prefers: full to part sun; dry, well-drained soil  
Grows: 12-36ft.  
Growing season: blooms late Spring, evergreen  
Best for: berries, shelter, nesting, insects, caterpillars  
Birds: waxwings, grosbeaks, sparrows, robins

### **Big Sagebrush** (*Artemisia tridentata*)

Prefers: full sun; dry, well-drained soil  
Grows: 6-12ft.  
Growing season: evergreen  
Best for: berries, insects  
Birds: finches, chickadees, woodpeckers, sparrows

## Perennials

### **Showy Milkweed** (*Asclepias speciosa*)

Prefers: full sun; wet, well-drained soil  
Grows: 2-3ft.  
Growing season: late Spring to early Fall  
Best for: nectar, seeds, monarch butterfly host plant  
Birds: hummingbirds, warblers, wrens, orioles, etc.

### **Tickseed** (*Coreopsis verticillata*)

Prefers: full sun to partial shade; dry, well-drained soil  
Grows: 1-3ft.  
Growing season: Summer  
Best for: seed, butterflies, caterpillars  
Birds: gold finches, sparrows, towhees, buntings

### **Showy Four O'clock** (*Mirabilis multiflora*)

Prefers: part shade; dry, well-drained soil  
Grows: 1-3ft  
Growing season: mid-Spring to early Fall  
Best for: insects, nectar  
Birds: hummingbirds

### **Rocky Mountain Iris** (*Iris missouriensis*)

Prefers: full sun; wet soil  
Grows: 1-3ft.  
Growing season: late Spring  
Best for: nectar  
Birds: hummingbirds

### **Dotted Gayfeather** (*Liatris punctata*)

Prefers: full sun; dry, well-drained soil  
Grows: 1-2ft.  
Growing season: late Summer to mid-Fall  
Best for: seeds, nectar, insects  
Birds: sparrows, vireos, waxwings, orioles

### **Blue Grama** (*Bouteloua gracilis*)

Prefers: full sun; dry, well-drained soil  
Grows: 12-14in.  
Growing season: mid-Summer to mid-Fall  
Best for: seeds, insects, host plant for 6 skippers  
Birds: sparrows, chickadees, nuthatches, finches

### **Harebell** (*Campanula rotundifolia*)

Prefers: any light; dry, well-drained soil  
Grows: 1-3ft.  
Growing season: early Summer to Fall  
Best for: nectar, insects  
Birds: warblers, sparrows, hummingbirds, vireos

### **Nodding Onion** (*Allium cernuum*)

Prefers: full sun; wet soil  
Grows: 1-3ft.  
Growing season: Summer  
Best for: nectar, insects  
Birds: warblers, mockingbirds, waxwings, sparrows

### **Smooth Blue Aster** (*Symphyotrichum leave*)

Prefers: full sun; dry, well-drained soil  
Grows: 1-3ft.  
Growing season: Fall  
Best for: seeds, insects, caterpillars  
Birds: nuthatches, sparrows, thrushes, woodpeckers

### **Narrow-Leaf Fireweed** (*Chamaenerion angustifolium*)

Prefers: full sun; moist, well-drained soil  
Grows: 3-6ft.  
Growing season: early Summer to Fall  
Best for: nectar, insects  
Birds: sparrows, orioles, waxwings, hummingbirds