

HOW TO ATTRACT WILDLIFE THROUGH THE USE OF HERBACEOUS PLANTS

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Wildlife is thought of as something that exists in the wilderness, yet very few gardeners realize what an exciting addition they can make to the landscape. Wildlife creatures are truly amazing. The Monarch butterfly for instance, makes a yearly migration of over 2,000 miles from the eastern United States to their wintering home in El Rosario, Mexico (Ernst, 1987). Bats are the only mammals capable of true flight. Hummingbirds buzz around with speeds up to 50 miles per hour and have the most rapid wing-beat of all birds, up to 200 beats per second (Harrison, 1985). Why do we as gardeners often overlook the beauty and excitement these creatures add to the landscape? Do we consider it so hard to attract them to our gardens? Whether it be insects, birds, or mammals, it is easier than one may think to get these valuable guests to come for a visit. With the help of herbaceous plants, an abundance of wildlife can be attracted to the home of any gardener.

Butterflies add grace and beauty to the landscape. They feed on the nectar of flowers, preferring flowers of bright colors such as red, orange, yellow, and blue (Ernst, 1987). Several species of butterflies in the Southeast can be attracted to the garden (Table 1, adapted from Lewis, 1995). These butterflies may be attracted by a specific plant or many plants (Table 2). The key is to know which butterflies are found in your area and which plants they prefer. Butterflies also will appreciate a puddle of water and rotten or fermented fruit. These prove to be a vital source of nutrients that butterflies can't get from the nectar (Ernst, 1987). Another way you might make butterflies feel at home is by providing a butterfly box. This structure will serve as a nighttime retreat and give the butterflies protection from predators and may also serve some species as a hibernation site (Gilmer, 1996). These boxes can be purchased at many garden centers.

Other insects also should be welcomed guests to your garden. Remember, where there are insects, there will be birds and mammals to prey on them. So, by attracting different insects you can attract numerous other creatures. Insects serve as key pollinators of flowers and some plants are more attractive to them than others (Table 3).

Birds can add a whole new dimension to the landscape. Birds have three basic needs: food, water, and shelter. When these needs are met, their arrival and stay are almost guaranteed. Food can be supplied through the plants (Table 4) and should be supplemented through

bird feeders. Take note as to which birds come to your garden already to make sure you are sufficiently providing for these species. By keeping food year round, you can meet the needs of your visitors and attract migrating birds as well. Water also should be provided year round. Some kind of running water, like a fountain or small waterfall, works best to attract feathered friends. Whatever the water source, make sure it is shallow and that the surface is rough to prevent birds from drowning, which is why concrete works very well. For winter months, a water heater can be added to assure birds get the water they need. The third basic need is shelter. Before building or buying any birdhouses, once again take note of the existing species. Birds are very specific as to what structures they inhabit. Each species has certain needs. Plans for birdhouses can be found in most bird books. Additional shelter can be added in the form of plants such as hollies. Look for shrubs and trees that not only offer shelter and protection, but also will feed bird guests (Vriends, 1990).

Hummingbirds deserve special mention because they not only grace our gardens but serve as much needed pollinators. Their needle-like bill and long tongue are adapted for tubular blossoms, with red being their favorite color. These animals thrive on the flower's nectar and the tiny insects that live inside the blossoms. Plants that may succeed in attracting hummingbirds have lots of nectar (Table 5). Remember, when planting annuals, planting in the same spot year after year works best. The birds have long memories and will return to plants once they have found them. Hummingbirds like tall plants best, so they can hover up to the blossoms. They also feel safer with an open area around the plants for visibility. A nearby perching site also will prove beneficial in attracting these small creatures. To get the birds closer to the house, try hanging sugar-water feeders. The contents should be a mix of four parts water to one part sugar and can be colored with red food coloring (Harrison, 1985). You may also try hanging basket of your favorite annual. This can add the needed height attraction for hummingbirds. By following a few of these suggestions, you will see how surprisingly easy it is to attract hummingbirds.

Plants also can be used to attract our furry friends, the mammals. Grasses and plants that readily form seeds tend to be the best (Table 4). Once again take note of the animals in your area and cater to their needs: food, water, and shelter. The grasses and seed plants along with

insects, may attract a number of small mammals including rabbits, squirrels, chipmunks, skunks, wood mice, raccoons, and moles (Ernst, 1987). A pool of water also will prove beneficial in attracting these creatures. Shelter can be provided using shrubs and trees, once again using those that fruit will be the most beneficial at attracting wildlife. Some species can be lured in by using special structures. Many bats will gladly roost in a bathhouse. These houses can be obtained at your local garden center. Sixteen species of bats are found in Alabama, all of which are insectivorous. Through the use of echolocation these creatures can devour up to 3,000 insects a night. This can prove to be a very desirable natural control to night insects such as mosquitos (Armstrong, 1994). Squirrels also can be catered to through the use of corn feeders. These little structures have places for the attachment of dried ears of corn (Gilmer, 1996). The sight of a squirrel using his feeder can be quite amusing and add a little comedy to the landscape.

It can be very simple to attract wildlife to the garden. Although all species have their special needs, by meeting the three basic ones--food, water, and shelter you probably can attract the species you desire. Whether it be butterflies and other insects, birds, or mammals, you

may now attract the interesting wildlife in your area. Try it! It may cause you to see gardening from a whole new perspective.

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(Tables and Figures will be found on Pages 54 and 57!)

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Table 1. Common butterflies of the Southeast.

1. Eastern Tiger Swallowtail	10. Silver-spotted Skipper
2. Gulf Fritillary	11. Orange Sulphur
3. Question Mark	12. Gray Hairstreak
4. Red-spotted Purple	13. American Lady
5. Viceroy	14. Pearl Crescent
6. Sleepy Orange	15. Eastern Tailed Blue
7. Great Spangled Fritillary	16. Spring Azure
8. Buckeye	17. Cabbage White
9. Monarch	(Adapted from Lewis, 1995)

Table 2. Herbaceous Plants and the Butterflies They Attract

Common Name	Scientific Name	Butterflies attracted (from Table 1)
1. Fernleaf Yarrow	<i>Achillea filipendulina</i>	10, 12
2. Butterfly Weed	<i>Asclepias tuberosa</i>	all
3. New England	<i>Aster novae-angliae</i>	9, 10, 12, 13, 14
4. Red Varerian	<i>Centranthus ruber</i>	7
5. Tickseed	<i>Coreopsis lanceolata</i>	5, 11, 14, 15, 16
6. Pinks	<i>Dianthus</i>	1
7. Purple coneflower	<i>Echinacea purpurea</i>	1, 5, 7, 10, 12
8. Gaillardia	<i>Gaillardia pulchella</i>	1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 10
9. Lantana	<i>Lantana camera</i>	all
10. Bee Balm	<i>Monarda didyma</i>	various
11. Starflower	<i>Pentstemon lanceolata</i>	all
12. Scarlet Sage	<i>Salvia officinalis</i>	1, 2, 9, 12
13. French Marigold	<i>Tagetes patula</i>	13
14. Verbena	<i>Verbena bonariensis</i>	1, 11
15. Zinnia	<i>Zinnia elegans</i>	all

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June 12 - 14, 1997 Greenville, South Carolina

Table 3. Herbaceous Plants That Attract Other Insects.

	Common Name	Scientific Name	Insects attracted
1.	Bee Balm	<u>Monarda didyma</u>	Bees
2.	Butterfly Weed	<u>Asclepias tuberosa</u>	Bees and Others
3.	Candytuft	<u>Iberis sempervirens</u>	Others
4.	Coral Bells	<u>Heuchera sanguinea</u>	Bees
5.	Coreopsis	<u>Coreopsis tinctoria</u>	Others
6.	Impatiens hybrid	<u>Impatiens wallerana</u>	Others
7.	Lantana	<u>Lantana camara</u>	Bees
8.	Foxglove	<u>Digitalis purpurea</u>	Bees
9.	Sweet William	<u>Dianthus barbatus</u>	Others
10.	Verbena	<u>Verbena</u>	Others

Table 4. Herbaceous Plants That Attract Birds and Mammals

	Common Name	Scientific Name
1.	Pinks	<u>Dianthus spp.</u>
2.	Marigold	<u>Tagetes spp.</u>
3.	Sunflower	<u>Helianthus angustifolia</u>
4.	Zinnia	<u>Zinnia elegans</u>
5.	Blue Fescue	<u>Festuca ovina var. glauca</u>
6.	Japanese Silver Grass	<u>Miscanthus sinensis</u>

Table 5. Herbaceous Plants That Attract Hummingbirds

	Common Name	Scientific Name
1.	Scarlet Salvia	<u>Salvia splendens</u>
2.	Impatiens Sultana	<u>Impatiens sultana</u>
3.	Flowering Tobacco	<u>Nicotiana glauca</u>
4.	Petunia	<u>Petunia x hybrida</u>
5.	Gladiolus	<u>Gladiolus x hortulanus</u>
6.	Canna	<u>Canna x generalis</u>
7.	Painted Cup	<u>Castilleja coccinea</u>
8.	Fire Pink	<u>Silene virginica</u>
9.	Cardinal Flower	<u>Lobelia cardinalis</u>
10.	Bee Balm	<u>Monarda didyma</u>
11.	Butterfly Weed	<u>Asclepias tuberosa</u>
12.	Columbine	<u>Aquilegia x hybrida</u>
13.	Coral Bells	<u>Heuchera sanguinea</u>
14.	Foxglove	<u>Digitalis purpurea</u>
15.	Geranium	<u>Geranium x hortorum</u>
16.	Phlox	<u>Phlox divaricata</u>

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