

Gardening for Birds

How to Get Started



Look & Find

- First ask yourself where you are going to plant. Find a space that works for you to add one or more native plants.
- After choosing your spot, consider the soil, moisture, and light conditions. You'll want to select plants that will do well in their new home.
 - To explore what plants are native and might do well in your region, take a peek at these resources:
 - [Pollinator Partnership Planting Guides](#)
 - [Audubon Native Plant Database](#)
 - [Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center](#)
 - [Database of Vascular Plants of Canada \(VASCAN\)](#)

Plan & Find

- A simple diagram, including plant placements, may help you when planning your garden. Take into account how tall your chosen plants may grow and how wide they expand as well.
- If you are new to gardening, start small! Adding one plant a year is a great approach.
- For more elaborate garden designs, see these [FREE layouts from WildOnes](#).
 - Once you are ready to find plants, here are three options:
 - **Local nurseries:** We recommend calling ahead to ensure they carry natives. Natives can be identified through their scientific name and may be confused with cultivars, artificially bred plants that behave well in native regions but don't support wildlife. The [Audubon Native Plant Database Tool](#) will provide nursery locations based on your zip code.
 - **Neighbor or plant sales:** People who grow natives are generally happy to split and share plants or provide seeds. Cooperative Extensions may have connections to local gardeners to ask or dates for upcoming plant sales.
 - **Garden for Wildlife:** An online, mail-order resource to find native plants based on your state.



Get Planting!

- If you are using pots or a pre-existing garden space, the soil can be easily prepared by adding fresh nutrient-rich soil, however this is not always necessary as most native plants will already be equipped to live in your soil conditions.
- Consider lightly loosening the soil with a hoe or shovel in preparation for planting.
- If you are establishing a new garden alongside an existing lawn, here are three options to consider:
 - **Directly planting into the ground-** This method works best for trees, bushes and flowering shrubs.
 - **Sheet mulching-** This tactic works great if you want to quickly create an extensive flower garden.
 - **Grass/sod removal-** This approach is advantageous if you want to manually eliminate grassy areas before planting.
 - **[A complete step-by-step guide](#)** that outlines these methods may be helpful.



Sustain, Maintain, Watch, & Relish

- Maintaining a native garden is easier than you think. Most plants will establish quickly and be productive in year two or three. No watering is needed after the first month.
- Now that the initial work is over, it's time to enjoy your beautiful habitat garden. Watch your garden for changes in bird, bee, and butterfly visitors as they happily forage in your garden and consider adding markers to keep track of plant growth!
 - Remember, it will take time for the plants to establish and provide resources for your regional wildlife.
 - Thinking about adding more plants? Consider using the [Planting Palette Tool](#), a great resource to inventorying your garden and maximizing plant diversity.