

Plants for Birds



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GARDENING TIPS

Sleeps-Creeps-Leaps: Natives take time to establish. In the first year they sleep (focus on root growth), second year they creep (a little more top growth) and third year they leap (start growing up and flowering in earnest).

Pruning: Shrubs that bloom once in spring can be pruned after blooming. Otherwise prune late February or early March. For wildflowers, leave early spring ephemerals alone. Early bloomers that are not ephemeral can be cut when the foliage looks ratty. Mid-summer bloomers can be cut by half early (e.g. when it is 6 inches cut to 3 or 4 inches). Late summer bloomers can be cut early, plus again mid-summer to prevent growing too tall and flopping. The second cut should be about a third, not more than half. Leave standing dead vegetation and seed heads for birds and insects until late winter, or you can deadhead to prevent reseeding.



American Goldfinch on goldenrod | Dan Scheiman



Deep mulch around Winterberry | Cindy Franklin

Weed Control: Deep edging keeps out lawn grass runners. Mowing prevents grass and weeds from dropping in seeds. Pull weeds before they seed. Let natives fill in and out-compete weeds. Meanwhile, cover gaps with 4-6 inches of mulch. Birds prefer leaf mulch to woodchip. Earthworms, pillbugs, insects, and spiders—songbird delicacies—will thrive as the leaves decompose.

Fall Planting: Fall is a great time to plant. In fall, summer blooming plants may look past their prime, while spring bloomers may have no above-ground parts at all. They are not dead or dying, they are dormant. A look at their roots will confirm they are alive and ready for planting. Warm soil temperature encourages root growth, aiding establishment, setting the stage for regrowth in the spring.

Take Note: Keep records of what you do. Take pictures. Review and revise each year. If something doesn't work, don't it again.

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