

A HOME &amp; GARDEN

# Home Guide

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## Make garden for the birds

By Virginia Wright

A love of nature and the outdoors is probably inherent in most of us.

Where we differ greatly is the degree of work we are willing to undergo in order to indulge that passion.

There is no doubt about it, a wide variety of birds love the home landscape. Chances are that your home grounds already suit the tastes of many species, as our human ideals of beauty and usefulness in the garden frequently result in concentrations of food, water and shelter that are particularly appealing to birds.

If your intent is to attract birds to your home landscape, you are probably asking, "How do I begin?" That is the easiest part. You do not actually need a feeder. Suet broken into small pieces attracts birds. From that point on, it is a matter of refinement; add a feeder, provide water in a shallow rough-textured container, buy some birdseed and you are on your way.

It's as easy as that. Well, almost. Once you start, especially in lean times for the birds, there's the moral obligation to keep going, to be consistent. If birds learn to depend on your handouts, you ought to make sure that they continue to get food.

Plants are an important element in the garden — to the birds as well as to us. No matter what size your garden is, whether it's formal or naturalistic in style, you can use plants to enhance its attractiveness to birds.

To attract birds year round, develop a suitable blend of trees and plants — ones that will please both birds and humans. These can include crabapple, flowering



Submitted photo

**A hummingbird enjoys a meal at a bird feeder. Once folks start feeding the birds it's best to keep the obligation going.**

dogwood trees, blueberry, and Japanese barberry. Alternatively, consider Tatarian honeysuckle shrubs, spreading juniper and holy evergreens.

My underlying argument for feeding birds? I think we have a responsibility to them. We have interfered extensively with their environment as our population has expanded. It is true that the extinction of species occurs naturally; man's interference, however, has accelerated the rates alarmingly. I believe that we owe the birds. This debt can be paid in part by making our property more hospitable to birds and wildlife.

To find out which plants grow best in our area, and which plants to choose for their usefulness and attractiveness to birds and to you as a gardener, contact your Delaware Cooperative Extension Offices at Delaware State University and University of Delaware.

### Garden Tales

*Editor's note: Virginia Wright is a Master Gardener from the class of 2007. Master Gardeners classes are held every two years. The graduates then serve as the volunteer outreach component of the Delaware Cooperative Extension System (Delaware State University and University of Delaware).*

*As volunteers, Master Gardeners staff the Garden Helpline, offer workshops, plant and maintain demonstration gardens, and educate and advise Delaware residents about their Home Horticulture concerns.*

*For information about upcoming workshops and/or become a Master Gardener, call the Garden Helpline in Kent County at (302) 857-6426 or (302) 730-4000 or Sussex County at (302) 856-2585 Ext. 535.*