

Weekly Column
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Attracting Birds

Perhaps it's just me, but the birds seem extremely excited about the warmer weather and increased sunshine. It is such a joy to hear them sing and watch them as they fly or bounce around throughout the day. Bird watching is a very popular hobby and for good reason. Seeing all the different varieties with various colors, songs, and attitudes really is an amazing experience. You can attract more birds to your backyard by considering what they need to stick around a little longer.

Birds enjoy seeds, fruits, berries, and insects. It is best to use a combination of planters and feeders. Having variety is important. Until plantings are mature, feeders provide food for birds. Planters can still be used when plants start producing food because they will still help to attract birds to your yard. It is best to use native plants because they will grow better and will be recognized by birds as a natural source of food. Water also attracts birds, whether it is a birdbath or a backyard pond.

If you would like to add feeders to your landscape, you can attract more types of birds by using different types of feeders that are mounted at different heights. Feeders should be placed out in the open so that anything trying to get to the birds cannot launch a surprise attack. Also, if possible, make sure the feeders are at least six feet away from bushes or trees so that birds can fly back and forth more easily.

Birds will also need to feel like they have reliable shelter sites in order to be more readily attracted to your yard. Shelter is used by birds for cover, roosting, and nesting. Birds need different types of shelter depending on the season. If it is the nesting season, birds will use bird houses, trees, and shrubs. For protection against harsh winter conditions and winds, birds will seek shelter in evergreen trees and shrubs.

By addressing the basic needs that birds have for survival and comfort, you can attract more of them to your yard. This is something beneficial to the birds as they can depend on your yard as a place to visit or perhaps live in. It is also beneficial to the homeowner who gets to enjoy watching and listening to different types of birds. It is a special treat that may be easier than you think to achieve. For more information on attracting birds to your yard, you can visit the web at <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/PM1351D.pdf>. You can also contact your Elkhart County Extension office for more information.

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