



# A Selection of Regionally Native Vegetation for Birds

Although some adult birds may supplement their diet at bird feeders, the vast majority of North American land birds depends heavily on insects for sustenance, such as insect larvae (especially caterpillars), spiders, and other insects.

In North America, it's estimated that more than 440 bird species rely on insects during at least part of the annual nutrition cycle. Insects provide birds with protein to sustain not only themselves but their offspring as well.

Since regionally native plants are the foundation of food webs and usually have specialized relationships with particular insects, maintaining a wide range of native vegetation in your own garden and yard will increase not just insect volume and biomass, but also a variety of different insects.

## Native Shrubs/Small Trees

Shadblow Serviceberry (*Amelanchier canadensis*)

Allegheny Serviceberry (*Amelanchier laevis*)

Black Chokeberry (*Aronia melanocarpa*)

Pagoda Dogwood (*Cornus alternifolia*)

Gray Dogwood (*Cornus racemosa*)

Red-osier Dogwood (*Cornus sericea*)

Winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*)

Pin Cherry (*Prunus pennsylvanica*)

Chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana*)

Smooth Sumac (*Rhus glabra*)

Pussy Willow (*Salix discolor*)

American Elderberry (*Sambucus canadensis*)

Coralberry (*Symphoricarpos orbiculatus*)

Nannyberry (*Viburnum lentago*)



Photos by Travis Bonovsky

## Native Trees

Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*)  
Paper Birch (*Betula papyrifera*)  
River Birch (*Betula nigra*)  
Shagbark Hickory (*Carya ovata*)  
Common Hackberry (*Celtis occidentalis*)  
Eastern White Pine (*Pinus strobus*)  
Quaking Aspen (*Populus tremuloides*)  
American Plum (*Prunus americana*)  
Black Cherry (*Prunus serotina*)  
American Basswood (*Tilia americana*)  
Oak (*Quercus*) species native to the region, including:  
    White Oak (*Quercus alba*)  
    Swamp White Oak (*Quercus bicolor*)  
    Northern Pin Oak (*Quercus ellipsoidalis*)  
    Bur Oak (*Quercus macrocarpa*) — #1 wildlife tree!

## Wildflowers

Milkweed (*Asclepias*) species native to the region:  
    Swamp Milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*)  
    Showy Milkweed (*Asclepias speciosa*)  
    Sullivant's Milkweed (*Asclepias sullivantii*)  
    Common Milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*)  
    Butterfly-weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*)  
    Whorled Milkweed (*Asclepias verticillata*)  
Wild Columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*)  
Blue False Indigo (*Baptisia australis*)  
Meadow Blazing Star (*Liatris ligulistylis*)  
Dense Blazing Star (*Liatris spicata*)  
Wild Bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*)  
Foxglove Beardtongue (*Penstemon digitalis*)  
Prairie Phlox (*Phlox pilosa*)  
Gray-headed Coneflower (*Ratibida pinnata*)  
Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*)  
Compass Plant (*Silphium laciniatum*)  
Cup Plant (*Silphium perfoliatum*)  
Stiff Goldenrod (*Solidago rigida*)  
Smooth Blue Aster (*Symphyotrichum laeve*)  
New England Aster (*Symphyotrichum novae-angliae*)

## Grasses & Sedges

Big Bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*)  
Side Oats Grama (*Bouteloua curtipendula*)  
Pennsylvania Sedge (*Carex pensylvanica*)  
Sprengel's Sedge (*Carex sprengelii*)  
Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*)  
Indian Grass (*Sorghastrum nutans*)  
Prairie Dropseed (*Sporobolus heterolepis*)

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Thank you to Travis Bonovsky for contributing to content.

We typically only notice birds carrying insects during nesting season when parents are seen returning to their nestlings with mouthfuls of bugs and larvae. People are often surprised to learn how dependent birds are on insects, as insect-eating behavior often goes unnoticed.

When birds forage for themselves, they quickly consume their prey and continue looking for more food. For example, when the small and colorful warblers return to our area each spring, they spend most of their time searching for easy-to-grab, calorie-dense caterpillars to replenish their energy. It's challenging to spot a warbler with an insect in its mouth unless it is foraging for food for its young.

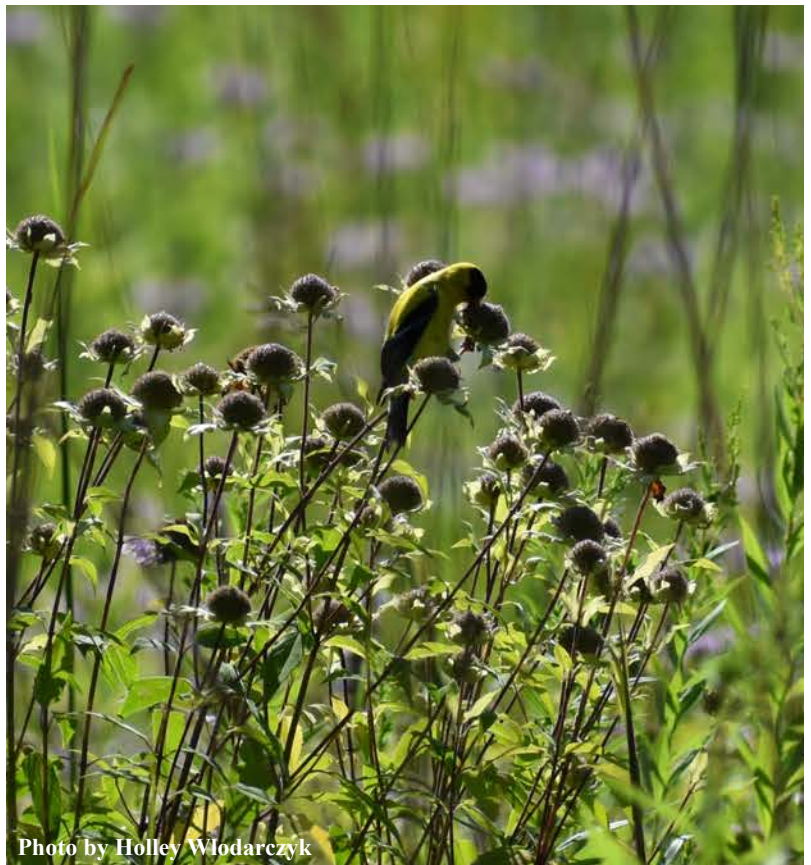


Photo by Holley Włodarczyk

In addition to insects, many birds also prize the highly nutritious seeds and fruits of native plants, and even sip nectar from plants, shrubs, and trees.

Fruits on trees and shrubs are often gobbled down quickly after being discovered. Common fruit-eating birds include the American robin, cedar waxwing, gray catbird, scarlet tanager, rose-breasted grosbeak, eastern kingbird, and various vireo species.

Vegetation with fragrant blossoms such as crabapple or wild plum often attract Baltimore orioles, ruby-throated hummingbirds, and many different warbler species.