

# Welcoming Wildlife

Wildlife is present in every community from cities to subdivisions and everywhere in-between. Take time this week to find ways to welcome wildlife to your space with these tips on meeting their needs for food, water and shelter.

## Food

**Native plants provide food for a variety of animals including birds, beneficial insects, and mammals. This week, take some time to evaluate what you already have in your outdoor space and make a plan to make it more welcoming for wildlife.**

Diversity is the key meeting animals' needs through native plantings. When considering what native plants to add to your space, keep the following in mind:

- Do the plants need full sun, partial sun or shade? What are the lighting conditions in your space?
- What are the moisture and soil requirements for the plants? How does that fit with your space? (When these are closely matched, native plants are easier to manage.)
- What time of the year do the flowers bloom? It is helpful to have flowers blooming throughout the growing season so there are always food sources for the insects and other animals.
- Check out *Landscaping with Native Plants of Michigan* by Lynn M. Steiner for great suggestions.
- Native plants will be available at CNC's annual plant sale May 28-30 and may also be purchased from The Michigan Native Plant Producers Association member nurseries found at [www.mnppa.org](http://www.mnppa.org).

In addition to landscaping for wildlife, you can provide supplemental food through bird feeders. Year-round bird feeding helps support birds during spring migration, the summer nesting season, and the harsh conditions of winter.

To attract a diverse set of bird species, consider a variety of feeder types and foods.

- Platform feeders with black-oil sunflower seeds attract a wide variety of birds.
- Hopper-style feeders limit access for squirrels and deer and work well for small birds.
- Nijer thistle feeders are used by finches and are generally ignored by squirrels and deer.
- Suet feeders attract woodpeckers, nuthatches and many other species.
- Remove moldy seed and clean feeders regularly to avoid spreading disease between birds.
- Bird feeding stations must not feed deer due to baiting bans and concerns over chronic wasting disease. You can find details at [www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/Bird\\_feeding\\_tips\\_264152\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/Bird_feeding_tips_264152_7.pdf).





## Water

Animals need water for drinking, bathing, and cooling off. Clean, fresh water can be hard to come by and offering it is a great way to welcome wildlife to your backyard. Natural and man-made options are both used by wildlife.

- To provide water for insects and small birds put together a shallow container with rocks, glass beads, shells or other objects that can act as landing and perching spaces.
- A plant saucer placed on the ground with a rock to keep it in place makes water easy to get to for birds and small mammals.
- A raised bird bath offers a safe spot for birds and squirrels to drink and bathe.
- Installing a small pond or artificial stream welcomes a wide variety of wildlife. Ensure the sides offer an easy exit for wildlife.

## Shelter

**Shelter is necessary for animals to rest, find protection from inclement weather, hide from predators, and raise their young. Consider some of these tips to add more shelter for wildlife in your space:**

- Place your brush in a pile for small mammals and birds.
- Create rock piles for reptiles to sun bathe.
- Leave patches of bare ground for nest sites of beneficial insects.
- Provide shallow mud patches to become “puddling” spots for butterflies.
- Place leaves and grass clippings as mulch in flower beds.
- Allow safe, dead trees to remain standing for cavity nesting birds.
- Ensure that there are plants growing at different heights such as wildflowers and ferns, shrubs and trees.
- Remove invasive species to allow native plants to grow.
- Build man-made nest boxes and place them strategically in your yard. [Follow these plans](#) from the Cornell Lab and [watch this video](#) for some tips.

