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Creating a Wild Backyard - Wild Acres Wildscape

Wild Acres Wildscape was designed to give you ideas on turning your outdoor space into a wildlife garden, with helpful tips on how to arrange food, water and shelter elements of habitat for wildlife. The Wild Acres packet can also help you as you plan your garden with more detailed information on specific topics such as butterfly and hummingbird gardens. Always be sure your wildscape plans comply with local ordinances.

Once your wildscape is planted, the fun really begins as you observe and discover wildlife as your wildscape is discovered. The wildlife species that will visit your backyard is determined largely by the location of your backyard in relation to other backyards or undisturbed open spaces.

The wildlife that visit backyards in western Maryland may differ from the wildlife on the Eastern Shore, but a variety of birds, deer, frogs, turtles, butterflies, squirrels, rabbits, and chipmunks are just a few of the species you may observe enjoying your wildscape.

The age of your neighborhood also plays a part in what species will be attracted. Wildlife that need old trees for residences will frequent neighborhoods with large trees, but are species that are usually absent in newer neighborhoods.

The [landscape drawing](#) was created exclusively for Wild Acres by landscape designer Melissa Gerber, of Gerber Landscapes, Queenstown. Accompanying the drawing is a plant list that details each plant's wildlife use, along with a description of the different kinds of food, water and shelter elements used in the drawing. Some of the plants listed do not have a wildlife use indicated. When designing your wildscape, some plants should be selected because they compliment their companion plants or simply because you might like them.

A substitution plant list is also included that will enable you to create and personalize your own wildlife garden. When choosing plants, always be sure of the light, soil and watering requirements of each plant and whether or not those needs will be met in the place it will be planted. Local nurseries and garden centers are good sources for plant care information in your area. Whenever possible, use organic solutions for insect and disease problems instead of pesticides.

Diversity is the Key to Habitat

Many yards are comprised of grass with very little landscaping. The key to creating excellent wildlife habitat, regardless of the total size of the yard, is to offer a diverse habitat. First, plant a variety of trees, shrubs, flowers and grasses that fulfill different roles in the habitat scheme. Also, select plants that do "double duty" in the wildlife garden by serving as both food and cover. Create a diversity of vertical components by planting the largest trees and shrubs as the "backbone" of the garden with lower growing flowers and grasses. Plants arranged in this way form layers of habitat that are attractive to a greater number of wildlife species. How much grass should you keep? If you have children or pets, some grasses may be necessary. A general rule of (green) thumb is to have 60 percent or more of your yard area (excluding the house) planted in something other than lawn. The acre wildscape drawing reflects an informal naturalistic arrangement similar to that found in a woodland.

Habitat Elements

Food

Trees, shrubs, flowers and grasses represent important food components of the wildlife garden. Plants provide food in the fruit they produce, including berries, nuts, seeds or serve as food themselves. Plants should be chosen so that a variety of plants flower and produce fruit all season, which ensures a natural food supply will always be available to wildlife. Also, keep in mind the fruiting characteristics of plants. Inkberries and yews are dioecious, meaning that male and female flowers are on separate plants. If berries are desired as a food component for the wildscape, then a male and female must be planted near each other. It's also imperative to carefully prune shrubs at the proper time of year so that you do not prune off your future food supply. The other chosen plants are annuals and perennials and grasses that either are excellent sources of nectar for hummingbirds, butterflies, bees and moths or produce seeds after flowering that are eaten by songbirds. Be sure to select flower varieties that produce single rather than double flowers because singles are richer sources of nectar. Annuals usually flower for a longer period than perennials and can provide vivid colors. Perennials should be chosen so that something is flowering throughout the season. Some of the best bee and butterfly plants are herbs and an herb garden can be planned for the kitchen as well as for butterflies.

Water

Fresh water is probably the most important habitat element that you can add to your wildlife garden. There are many kinds of pedestal birdbaths commercially available. A ground birdbath placed in the garden with a circulating pump and mister or drip may attract shy warblers and is a good choice for yards that aren't accessible to free-roaming predators. A shallow saucer or dish filled with fresh water does just as well. There are also birdbaths commercially available that can attach directly to porch and deck railings that are just as useful for birds to drink and bathe. Saucers filled with sand and kept wet

provides water and nutrients for butterflies too!

The drawing also includes a water garden project. This type of garden should be placed in an area that receives at least four hours of sunlight daily, and contains both plants and fish to keep the pond in balance and reduce maintenance for the gardener. Keep in mind that fish will eat tadpoles. Nurseries that stock water garden plants and supplies can help you in the planning process.

Shelter

Besides bird nest boxes, evergreen shrubs and bushy or thorny deciduous shrubs can provide shelter for wildlife, even when planted next to the house in a foundation bed. Wildlife need shelter from the weather and safe places to rest and nest away from predators. As shown in the drawing, the arrangement of trees and shrubs along the perimeter of the property provides this protection. Some animals, such as chipmunks, prefer rock-pile retreats. Brush piles and rock piles can be tucked away in a little seen corner of the yard or hidden behind evergreen shrubs. Vines can be trained to grow on these structures providing added shelter.

Key to Wildlife Value Symbols					
WB	winter berries	S	seeds	HN	hummingbird nectar
FB	fall berries	SH	shelter	BN	butterfly nectar
SB	summer berries	N	nesting	MN	moth nectar
BC	butterfly plant caterpillar plant	BEN	bee nectar	ON	oriole nectar

Plant List

American Arborvitae - Evergreen - S, SH, N
 American Cranberry Viburnum - Deciduous shrub - FB, SH
 Bayberry - Deciduous shrub - FB, SH, N
 Black Gum - Deciduous tree - FB
 Coralberry* - Deciduous shrub - BN, Hn, FB, SH, BC, BEN
 Crabapple - Deciduous tree - WB, SH, N, BC
 Eastern Red Cedar - Evergreen tree - WB, SH, N
 Eastern Redbud - Deciduous tree - BEN, HN
 Flowering Dogwood - Deciduous tree - FB, N
 Hawthorn - Deciduous tree - WB, SH, N, HN
 Highbush Blueberry - Deciduous shrub - SB, BEN
 Hollies* - Deciduous and evergreen varieties - WB, SH, N, BEN
 Inkberry* - Evergreen shrub - FB, SH, N
 Mock Orange* - Deciduous shrub - BN, BEN
 Pinxter Azalea* - Deciduous shrub - BN, HN
 Raspberry - Deciduous shrub - SB, SH, N, BN
 Red Maple - Deciduous tree - S, SH, N
 Red Oak - Deciduous tree - NU, SH, N
 Rhododendron* - Evergreen shrub - SH, HN, BN
 Sassafras - Deciduous tree - FB
 Sourwood - Deciduous tree
 Sunflowers - Annual and perennial varieties - S
 American Bittersweet - Perennial vine - WB
 Sweet Pepperbush - Deciduous shrub - BN
 Sweetbay Magnolia - Evergreen tree
 Willow Oak - Evergreen tree - NU, SH, N
 Winterberry* - Deciduous shrub - FB, SH, N
 Witch-hazel - Deciduous tree - S

Medium To Large Trees

Ashes - Deciduous - S, SH, N
 Balsam Fir - Evergreen - S, SH, N
 Black Cherry - Deciduous - SB, SH, BN
 Black Walnut - Deciduous - NU
 Butternut - Deciduous - NU, SH
 Douglas Fir - Evergreen - SH
 Eastern Hemlock - Evergreen - S, SH
 Eastern White Pine - Evergreen - S, SH, N
 Hickories - Deciduous - NU
 Hackberry - Deciduous - WB, BN
 Scotch Pine - Evergreen - SH
 Sweet Gum - Deciduous - S
 Tulip Tree - Deciduous - S, HN
 White Spruce - Evergreen - S, SH, N

Small Trees

American Hazel - Deciduous - NU, SH
 American Holly - Evergreen - WB, SH, N
 American Mountain Ash - Deciduous - FB
 Chokecherry - Deciduous - SB, SH
 Serviceberries - Deciduous - SB, SH, N

Shrubs

Hollies* - Deciduous and evergreen varieties - FB/WB, SH, N, BEN
 Huckleberries* - Deciduous and evergreen varieties - FB, SH
 Junipers* (dwarf varieties) - Evergreen - SH
 Lilac - Deciduous - BN, BEN
 New Jersey Tea - Deciduous - BN, HN
 Pyracantha - Evergreen - FB, SH, N
 Roses - Deciduous - WB, SH, N
 Spicebush - Deciduous - FB, BC
 Spireas - Deciduous - S, SH, N, BN
 Sumacs - Deciduous - WB
 Viburnums (fertile) - Deciduous and evergreen varieties - FB/WB
 Yews* - Evergreen - FB, SH, N

**Useful in Foundation Plantings*

Window Boxes

Geraniums - Annual and perennial varieties - HN
 Impatiens - Annual - BN, HN, S
 Marigolds (genus Tagetes) - Annual - BN, BEN, BC
 Nasturtium - Annual - BEN
 Petunias - Annual - BN, BEN, MN, S
 Wax Begonia - Annual - HN

Vines For Railings/Trellises

Clematis - Perennial - HN
 Scarlet Runner Bean - Annual - HN
 Scarlet Trumpet Honeysuckle "Dropmore" - Perennial - HN, ON
 Sweet Pea - Annual - BEN

Hanging Baskets

Fuschia - Annual - HN
 Impatiens - Annual - HN
 Petunia (cascade forms) - Annual - BN, BEN, MN, S
 Waxleaf Begonia - Annual - HN

Herbs

Anise - Annual - BC
 Bergamot - Perennial - BN, MN
 Boneset - Perennial - BEN
 Catnip - Perennial - BEN, S
 Cretan Dittany - Perennial - BEN
 Dill - Annual - BEN, BC
 Garden Sage - Annual - BEN
 Hyssop - Perennial - BN, BEN
 Lavender - Semi-evergreen shrub - BN, BEN
 Leadplant - Perennial - BN
 Lemon Balm - Perennial - BEN
 Lovage - Perennial - BEN
 Marjoram - Perennial - BEN
 Parsley - Perennial - BEN
 Peppermint - Perennial - BEN
 Rosemary - Perennial - BEN
 Selfheal - Perennial - BEN
 Spearmint - Perennial - BN, BEN
 Thyme - Perennial - BN, BEN
 Winter Savory - Perennial - BEN

Plants For Containers

Ageratum - Annual - BN, S
 Amaryllis - Perennial - HN
 Asters - Annual and perennial varieties - BN, BC
 Canterbury Bells - Biennial - BEN
 Daffodil - Perennial - BEN
 Dusty Miller - Annual - BN
 Flowering Tobacco - Annual - HN, MN
 Garden Balsam - Annual - HN, S
 Garden Verbena - Annual - BN
 Geranium - Annual and perennial varieties - HN
 Gladiolus - Perennial - BEN
 Globe Candytuft - Annual - BN, BEN, S
 Heath Aster - Annual - BN, BC, BEN
 Heliotrope - Annual - BN, MN
 Hyacinth-Flowered Candytuft - Annual - BN, BEN, S
 Marigolds (genus Tagetes) - Annual - BN, BEN, BC
 Moss Pink - Perennial - HN, S
 Petunia - Annual - BN, BEN, MN, S
 Pot Marigold - Annual - BN
 Primrose - Perennial - BN
 Sweet William Phlox - Perennial - BN, MN, HN, S
 Annual Phlox - Annual - HN, S
 Scarlet Sage - Annual - HN, BEN, S
 Wax Begonia - Annual - HN
 China Pink - Annual - HN

Zinnia - Annual - BN, S

Groundcovers

Juniper - Evergreen - SH
 Lowbush Blueberry - Deciduous - SB, BEN
 Sweet-scented Sumac - Deciduous - S

Perennials/Annuals

American Columbine - Perennial - HN, BN
 Arrowhead - Emergent - SH, S
 Asters - Annual and perennial varieties - BN, BC
 Black-eyed Susan - Perennial - BN, BC
 Blazing Star - Perennial - BN, S, HN
 Boneset - Perennial - BN, BEN
 Bulrush - Emergent - SH, S
 Burreed - Emergent - S, SH
 Butterflyweed - Perennial - BN, BEN, BC
 Candytuft - Perennial - BN, BEN
 Canterbury Bells - Annual - BEN
 Cardinal Flower - Perennial - MN, BEN, HN
 Coral Bells - Perennial - HN
 Cordgrass - Emergent - SH, S
 Cosmos - Annual - BN, BEN
 Delphinium - Perennial - HN, BEN
 Dwarf Blue Gentain - Perennial - MN
 Fireweed - Perennial - MN, BEN, HN
 Flowering Tobacco - Annual - MN, S
 Four O'Clock - Annual - MN, S, HN
 Foxglove - Perennial - BEN, HN
 Gladiolous - Perennial - HN
 Goldenrods - Perennial - BN, BEN
 Hollyhock - Biennial - BN, BC, BEN, HN, ON
 Iris - Perennial - BN
 Joe-Pye Weed - Perennial - BN, BEN
 Larkspur - Annual - HN
 Lupine - Perennial - BN, BC
 Marsh Marigold - Emergent - HN, BN
 Milkweed - Perennial - BN, BEN, BC
 Obedient Plant - Perennial - BEN, MN
 Oxeye Sunflower - Perennial - BN
 Penstemon - Perennial - HN, S, BEN, BC
 Phlox - Perennial - BN, BEN, MN, S
 Primrose - Perennial - MN, BEN, S
 Purple Coneflower - Perennial - BN
 Scabiosa - Annual and perennial varieties - BN, HN
 Scarlet Bergamot - Perennial - BN, MN, HN
 Sedum - Perennial - BN, BC
 Smartweed - Emergent - S
 Spider Flower - Annual - BEN, S, HN
 Spike Rush - Emergent - S
 Sunflowers - Annual and perennial varieties - BN, S
 Sweet William - Annual - BN, MN, HN
 Turk's Cap Lily - Perennial - HN, ON
 Turtlehead - Perennial - BN, BEN
 Widgeon grass - Submergent - SH
 Wild Celery - Submergent - S
 Wild Millet - Emergent - S
 Wild Rice - Emergent - SH, S

Grasses/Legumes

Big Bluestem - Perennial grass - SH, S
 Leadplant - Perennial legume - SH, BN
 Little Bluestem - Perennial grass - SH, S, BC
 Sideoats Grama - Perennial grass - SH, S
 Switchgrass - Perennial grass - SH, S

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Invite Wildlife to Your Backyard...

[Email us](#) with questions, comments, and suggestions.
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