What Types of Plants Best Attract Birds to the Garden?

Local and migratory birds have evolved to depend on native plants for food and shelter.

Some local birds eat many types of berries, seeds, or insects. But some have a very restricted diet, and only eat from specific native plants.

Not all plants imported from other habitats are bad for birds. However, invasive plants, like Japanese barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*) and English ivy (*Hedera helix*), are bullies, crowding out the native plants that some birds need to thrive.

A diverse, healthy ecosystem containing native plants best meets the needs of wild birds.

Three Good Native Plants for the DC Garden

Blackhaw Viburnum

(Viburnum prunifolium)

This dense, twiggy shrub provides nesting shelter for birds in the spring and early summer and yummy blue-black fruits in the late autumn into winter. The glossy dark green leaves turn red and purple in the fall.

Wax Myrtle

(Morella cerifera)

Birds love the small, grayish berries of this native, evergreen shrub. And this plant needs the birds—they digest the waxy covering from the fruit and poop out the seeds. Wax myrtle berries provide fat and fiber for more than 40 species of birds throughout the lean winter months.

Purple Coneflower

(Echinacea purpurea)

The flower blooms in late May and early June with a orange-brown, cone-shaped center and droopy lavender petals. Bees and butterflies drink the nectar in early summer. But come autumn when the seed heads ripen, the purple coneflower provide a feast of seeds.

You can replace ornamental invasive plant species in your garden with native plants that have beautiful flowers and delicious berries for birds.

Check with your local cooperative extension office or plant society for recommendations of plants that are appropriate for your area.