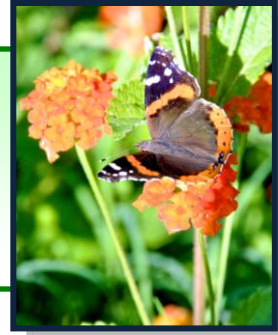


Gardening for Wildlife



Austin is a Special Place for People and Wildlife

The capital city is a unique mix of forests, prairies, springs, caves, sprawl, and Austin's growing population that continues to expand into the city's natural areas. Habitat destruction and fragmentation is one of the biggest threats to wildlife. The way we design landscapes within the city can help butterflies, songbirds and other wildlife find what they need to keep calling Austin home.

Gardening for wildlife means that our landscapes keep the needs of animals in mind. We can start to recreate natural habitats by taking design cues from nature. For example, simply planting an understory of smaller trees like redbuds, Mexican plums, and yaupon hollies will increase the number and diversity of visiting birds and other critters.

Austin Parks and Recreation Department's Wildlife Austin program can help you create a vibrant landscape that is a habitat haven for monarch and swallowtail butterflies, chickadees, hummingbirds, green anoles and other interesting wildlife. The program promotes the creation and conservation of wildlife habitats through community-wide collaboration and public education and helps bridge existing city initiatives that encourage a well-balanced and healthy urban environment for people and wildlife.

Creating a Wildlife Habitat Is As Easy As 1, 2, 3, 4!

Providing these habitat elements is all you need to create habitat for wildlife today:

FOOD -- Native plants provide wildlife with a buffet of nectar, pollen, nuts, seeds, berries and more. Plant diversity increases the number of species found in your habitat.

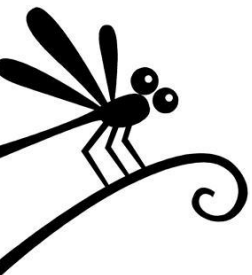
WATER -- A reliable water source is a key element for a variety of wildlife. Animals need water for drinking and some need it for breeding.

COVER -- Evergreen shrubs and stacked rock walls are two ways to offer wildlife shelter from predators and bad weather. Layers of vegetation also ensure safe places for critters.

PLACES TO RAISE YOUNG -- Dense shrubs, a nesting box or pond are examples of places wildlife need to mate and raise their young.

Wildlife Austin also encourages:

SUSTAINABLE GARDENING PRACTICES -- How you manage your garden can have an effect on the health of the world around you. Techniques like capturing rain water,



xeriscaping, mulching, avoiding pesticides, and composting are just a few examples of how you can make your garden conservation-savvy!

Go Native!

Native plants should be the foundation of any well-designed wildlife habitat. Native plants are adapted to our climate, rainfall and soils, and they support native pollinators. They typically require less maintenance, water, fertilizers and pesticides once established. Learn which native plants are best for attracting butterflies, birds and other wildlife. Visit the [Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center's](#) native plant database to find natives for your habitat. Also visit our [Resources](#) page for more helpful information!



Make it Official – Get Your Yard Certified!

You can certify your habitat with either the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) or Texas Parks and Wildlife, or both! Backyards, schoolyards, community gardens, places of business and worship of all shapes and sizes are eligible for certification.

[National Wildlife Federation Certified Wildlife Habitat Program](#)

[Texas Parks and Wildlife Department- Texas Wildscapes Program](#)

[Best of Texas Backyard Habitats- TPWD & NWF's joint certification program](#)

Why Should I Create a NWF Certified Wildlife Habitat?

- **It's fun!** Watching wildlife in action can be fun and relaxing for everyone. Your habitat may attract beautiful songbirds, butterflies, frogs, and other interesting wildlife for viewing from your very own window.
- **Curb appeal!** Replacing grass lawns with native wildflowers, shrubs, and trees will increase the beauty of your property and provide a nurturing refuge for wildlife.
- **Save money!** Save a surprising amount of money on water and yard maintenance bills by getting rid of your lawn and installing drought-tolerant native plants.
- **Bring wildlife a home!** Restoring habitats where commercial and residential development have degraded natural ecosystems can be your way of giving back to wildlife.
- **Eco-friendly!** Gardening practices that help wildlife, like reducing the use of chemicals, conserving energy and water, and composting also help to improve

air, water and soil quality. Your yard will sequester carbon and reduce the need for air-polluting maintenance practices, such as lawn mowing, through the use of native plants. You can also improve area water quality by reducing the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides.

- **Community!** Gardening for wildlife can help you share your love of wildlife with your neighbors and help them get involved in creating a home for wildlife. Help people deepen their understanding of nature and increase their connection to the outdoor world.

QUESTIONS? Contact us at 512-978-2606 or wildlife@austintexas.gov

[RETURN TO WILDLIFE AUSTIN HOMEPAGE](#)

