

FACT SHEET: Attract Wildlife

LYNN BARBER, B.A.

FLORIDA YARDS & NEIGHBORHOODS AGENT

In the United States, Florida has the third most diverse wildlife population. Increasing urban development, especially in coastal communities, continues to destroy our native wildlife habitats. We can make a difference in our Florida-Friendly yards providing for wildlife by using a diversity of plant materials and creating natural corridors of plants that connect to bordering properties, allowing animals to travel from one natural area to another.

The needs of wildlife are the same as ours: shelter, food and water. All can easily be incorporated into your landscape. Shelter is provided by the vertical layering your landscape plants. By using low growing plants, like groundcovers, and shrubs and trees, you can create a safe place for birds and animals to hide, rest and nest. Bird and bat houses are a plus. Great food sources for wildlife include plants that produce berries, fleshy fruits, nuts and acorns. Just be willing to have your seed-bearing, fruit, foliage and flowers consumed by birds, larval butterflies or caterpillars and adult butterflies. Water can be easily provided in a birdbath which can catch rainwater. By regularly changing the water, mosquito breeding and bacterial contamination can be prevented.

Managing pets is important in attracting wildlife. Allowing cats and dogs free reign in wildlife areas will significantly decrease the likelihood of attracting birds and other wildlife whose preservation instincts will relocate them to areas that are provide more security and serenity.

It's important to decrease the amount of insecticides you use in your landscape. By killing the bad bugs, which are less than 1/10th of one percent, you also kill the good bugs. Insects are an important source of food for birds. Birds and other animals that consume chemical affected insects can become poisoned by some chemicals.

Your yard could be recognized as a Florida Backyard Landscape for Wildlife. For more information about Florida's wildlife and creating a wildlife-friendly landscape, visit: <http://wec.ufl.edu/extension/landscaping>

