

FLORIDA NATIVE PLANTS FOR BIRDS

Plants play a fundamental part in a bird's life. They provide food, shelter, foraging areas, protective cover from predators, a stage for courting and territorial displays, nest-building material, and nest platforms. By planting a variety of trees, shrubs, wildflowers, vines, and grasses you can provide an array of resources for the birds in your landscape.

Trees

Many native trees can provide habitat as well as food for a variety of birds.

***Celtis laevigata* (Sugarberry/Hackberry)** This deciduous tree reaches 80 feet in height. It grows in part shade to full sun with moist soils. The small berries are eaten by songbirds.

***Ilex vomitoria* (Yaupon holly)** This evergreen tree reaches 25 feet in height at maturity. Only the female plant produces the red berries (dioecious). It grows in sun to part shade with average to moist soil. All hollies are important winter food sources for songbirds.

***Morus rubra* (Red mulberry)** This deciduous tree reaches 50 feet in height. It grows in full sun with average to moist soil. Greenish clusters of flowers appear in the spring and are followed by elongated purple fruits. The fruits are a favorite of songbirds and many other animals.

***Viburnum obovatum* (Walter's viburnum)** This small semi-evergreen tree reaches 20 feet in height at maturity. Sprays of small white flowers appear in the spring. It grows in sun to part shade with average to moist soil. The dark blue fruit is eaten by a variety of songbirds and other animals.

Shrubs

American beautyberry and pokeweed provide an important food supply for birds during winter's lean times.

***Callicarpa americana* (American Beautyberry)** A deciduous shrub reaching 8 feet in height. It grows in part shade to full sun with average moisture. The purple berries are eaten by songbirds and other wildlife. It is an important winter food source for many animals.

***Myrica cerifera* (Wax myrtle)** A large evergreen shrub reaching a mature height of 20 feet. It grows in part-shade to full sun with average to moist soils. The small waxy berries are eaten by a variety of songbirds.

***Phytolacca americana* (Pokeweed)** An herbaceous shrub that can reach a height of 10 feet. Racemes of small white flowers appear in the spring, summer and fall and provide a nectar source for many insects. The purple fruit is prized by songbirds and other animals. It is an important fall and winter food source for wildlife.

***Sambucus canadensis* (Elderberry)** A deciduous shrub reaching 12 feet in height. It grows in part shade to full sun with moist soil. The fruit is eaten by songbirds and other wildlife.

Vines

Incorporating vines into your landscape can provide food as well as nesting sites. Catbrier and grape are especially useful because they tend to form thickets that not only provide food, but nesting and foraging habitat.

***Parthenocissus quinquefolia* (Virginia creeper)** A deciduous vine. It grows in part-shade with average to moist soil. The dark fruit is eaten by a variety of birds.

***Smilax glauca* (Greenbrier/ Catbrier)** A clambering thorny vine that generally forms thickets. Small fragrant flowers appear in the spring and provide a nectar source for bees and other insects. Small dark fruit are produced and eaten by a variety of wildlife, especially songbirds.

***Vitis munsoniana* (Muscadine grape)** A high climbing deciduous vine. It grows in part-shade to full sun with average to moist soils. The grapes are an important food source for songbirds and other wildlife.

Wildflowers

Wildflowers are usually planted for nectaring insects particularly butterflies, however, many birds include not only wildflower seeds in their diet, but also the flowers, unopened flower buds, and tender new leaves.

***Bidens alba* (Spanish needles)** A perennial wildflower that reaches a height of 3 feet. The white flowers appear all year. It grows in full sun to part shade with average moisture, and readily re-seeds wherever it is planted. The flower buds and seeds are eaten by songbirds.

***Commelina diffusa* (Day-flower)** A small creeping wildflower. The small blue flowers appear all year. It grows in partial shade with average moisture and spreads by roots that develop at the stem nodes. The unopened flower buds, flowers, tender leaves, and seeds are eaten by game birds and songbirds.

***Viola sororia* (Florida violet)** A low growing perennial wildflower with violet to pale blue flowers that appear throughout the year. It grows in part-shade with average to moist soils and readily re-seeds wherever it is planted. The unopened flower buds, flowers, tender leaves, and seeds are eaten by game birds and songbirds.

***Geranium carolinianum* (Wild geranium / Cranesbill)** A wildflower rarely exceeding two feet in height. The small pink flowers appear in winter, spring and summer. It grows in full sun with average moisture, and readily re-seeds wherever it is planted. The seeds are eaten by game birds and songbirds.

Native Grasses

Grasses provide birds with seeds, nest building material, cover, and nesting sites.

***Andropogon glomeratus* (Florida bluestem)** Mature plants are approximately 12 inches in diameter and three feet in height. It grows in full sun with average moisture. The flower stalks can reach 5 feet in height. The seeds are eaten by birds and other wildlife.

***Eragrostis spectabilis* (Purple lovegrass)** Mature plants are approximately 2 feet wide by 2 feet in height. It grows in full sun to part-shade with average moisture. The flowers appear in early summer. The seeds are eaten by birds and other wildlife.

***Muhlenbergia capillaris* (Muhly grass)** A perennial bunch grass reaching a mature height of 3 feet. It grows in full sun with average moisture. The flower is a very striking, feathery, purple spray, and appears in the fall. The seeds are eaten by birds and wildlife.

***Setaria geniculata* (Foxtail grass)** A wiry grass, that spreads by rhizomes, with seed heads that resemble a foxtail. It grows in full sun to part-shade with average moisture. Seeds are eaten by birds and other wildlife.

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