

Native Plants that Attract Wildlife

All wildlife requires food, water, and cover, and can only live where these requirements are met. An ideal landscape uses native plants to provide a year round food supply – such as berries, fruit, seeds, and nuts. Water is essential for wildlife, and your water source can be as elaborate as a pond with a waterfall or as simple as a dish of water. Cover needs to be provided for wildlife to breed, nest, hide, sleep, and feed. Many native plants that provide food also provide cover. Dense evergreen trees or shrubs (such as Yaupon holly or Walter’s viburnum) or thorny shrubs (such as Blackberries) are perfect cover, as well as a food supply, for a variety of wildlife. Dead trees and brush piles also provide cover. Many forest-dwelling animals require a cavity in a dead tree (snag) for nesting. If it’s possible leave a dead tree or two for the woodpeckers and the flying squirrels. Mother nature recycles everything. Wildlife requires all of the “trash” that people throw away, it is always used by some animal somewhere in the food chain. Consider constructing brush piles with fallen tree limbs and using leaves and grass clippings as mulch. Leave stumps and fallen logs for cover and foraging areas, and, most importantly, refrain from using pesticides.

Birds

Yaupon hollies and Walter’s viburnum are excellent for nesting sites and providing berries in the winter. Other winter berries are beauty berry and chokeberry.

Chokeberry (*Aronia arbutifolia*) – this deciduous shrub reaches 9 feet in height. It grows in full sun to part shade with dry to moist soil. It has beautiful little white blooms that are followed by bright red berries for the birds.

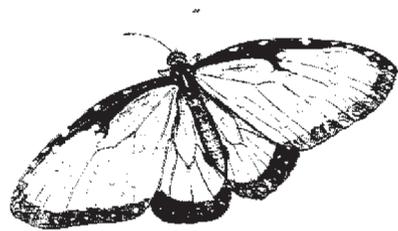
Beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*) – this deciduous shrub may reach 10 feet in height. It grows in full sun to part shade with dry to average moisture. The bright purple berries are an important winter food for the birds.

Dahoon holly (*Ilex cassine*) - an evergreen tree reaching 40 feet in height. The female has the bright red berries. It grows in full sun to part shade with average to moist soil. The berries are another important food supply for birds.

Yaupon holly (*Ilex vomitoria*) – this evergreen tree reaches 25 feet in height. Only the female has the bright red berries. It grows in sun to part shade with average to moist soil. It is another important winter food source.

Sparkleberry (*Vaccinium arboreum*) – this semi-evergreen shrub is Florida’s largest blueberry. It may reach 20 feet in height. It grows in part-shade with average moisture. The berries are edible, but do not have much flavor and tend to be rather gritty.

Walter’s viburnum (*Viburnum obovatum*) – this semi-evergreen shrub reaches 15 feet in height. It’s small, evergreen leaves make this a good candidate for using as a hedge. It grows in sun to part shade with average to moist soil. The small black berries are relished by birds in the winter.



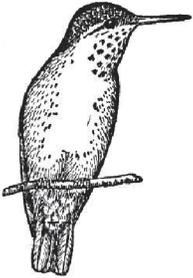
Butterflies

Nectar plants, as well as larval food plants should be provided in order to have butterflies as constant visitors to your landscape. Dense shrubs will provide cover and protection from the elements, and moist soil or mulch will provide a water source. Butterflies drink from moist soil or droplets rather than an open pond so as not to endanger themselves. Bahama cassia (*Cassia bahamensis*) – a deciduous shrub reaching 15 feet in height. Yellow flowers appear in the fall. It grows in full sun with average moisture. It is the larval food plant of a number of sulphur butterflies.

Tampa vervain (*Glandularia tampensis*) – this ‘endangered’ perennial wildflower reaches 2 feet high and grows in sun to part shade with average to moist soil. The flowers are lavender. Virginia willow (*Itea virginica*) - a deciduous shrub reaching 6 feet in height. The small white flowers are born on elongated clusters. It grows in part shade to full sun with average to moist soils.

Black-eyed susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*) – a perennial wildflower reaching about 2 feet in height. It has bright yellow flowers with black-brown centers. It prefers full sun with average moisture. Wild petunia (*Ruellia caroliniensis*) – a perennial wildflower that reaches 1 foot in height, and can spread to become a ground cover. It tolerates part shade to full sun with dry to average moisture. It has lavender blooms.

Stoke’s aster (*Stokesia laevis*) – a perennial wildflower reaching 2 feet in height. It tolerates part shade to full sun with average to moist soil. Its lavender flowers are more abundant if grown in full sun.



Hummingbirds

Coral bean (*Erythrina herbacea*) – a deciduous shrub reaching 15 feet in height. It grows in part shade to full sun with dry to average moisture. The red tubular flowers are enjoyed by hummingbirds and large butterflies. The seeds are poisonous.

Scarlet hibiscus (*Hibiscus coccineus*) – a perennial wildflower reaching 10 feet in height. It tolerates part shade to full sun with moist soil. It has large 6 inch red flowers.

Coral honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*) – an evergreen, perennial vine with red tubular flowers. It tolerates part sun to full sun with average moisture. It flowers best with full sun.

Swamp azalea (*Rhododendron serrulatum*) – a deciduous shrub reaching 15 feet in height. It tolerates shade to part sun with average to moist soil conditions. It has white flowers.

Red salvia (*Salvia coccinea*) – a perennial wildflower that may reach 4 feet in height. It tolerates part shade to full sun with average moisture. The red tubular flowers are used by butterflies and hummingbirds. It will re-seed itself.

Mammals

Raccoons and opossums relish plums and saw palmetto. Flying squirrels require cavities in dead or dying trees for nesting and protection. Rabbits prefer thorny, low growing hedges and brush piles. Bats may sleep alone in trees or in clumps of Spanish moss, and may be attracted to a roost box if one is provided.

Scrub hickory (*Carya floridana*) – a deciduous tree reaching 30 feet in height. It prefers dry soil with full sun. The nuts are edible, and an important food for wildlife. Squirrels love them.

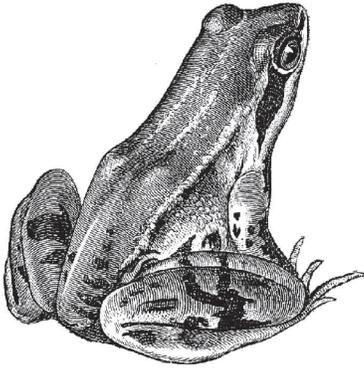
Red mulberry (*Morus rubra*) – a deciduous tree reaching 50 feet in height. It grows in full sun with average moisture. The edible fruits can be messy so plant it far from the patio. All wildlife relish the fruit.

Slash pine (*Pinus elliottii*) – this evergreen tree grows to 90 feet in height. The seeds (or pine nuts) are eaten by a variety of mammals and birds. It grows in full sun with average to moist soil.

Chickasaw plum (*Prunus angustifolia*) - a deciduous tree reaching 20 feet in height. The small, 1/2 inch, reddish plums are used by a variety of wildlife. The plums are edible, but sour. Part shade to full sun with average moisture.

Shiny blueberry (*Vaccinium myrsinites*) – a low growing evergreen shrub that reaches 2 feet in height. The berries are edible, and very sweet. It grows in full sun to part shade with dry to average moisture.





Reptiles & Amphibians

Leaves used as a mulch maintain a moisture level that in some cases is perfect for amphibians to thrive in. Slimy salamanders love moist leaf litter. Brush piles, and fallen logs are ideal foraging and shelter areas for reptiles and amphibians. Rocks in the landscape provide perfect perches for reptiles to sun themselves and catch insects.

Gopher apple, (*Licania michauxii*) – an evergreen ground cover that reaches 3 – 12 inches in height. It requires full sun with average moisture. Gopher tortoises relish the fruit.

Prickly pear, (*Opuntia compressa*) – a woody, succulent cactus reaching 2 feet in height. The flowers are yellow. Gopher tortoises eat just about every part of this cactus. It prefers full sun with dry soil.

Needle palm, (*Rhapidophyllum hystrix*) – an evergreen palm that will reach 6 feet in height. The yellow fruits are eaten by mammals and large birds. The trunk has needle-like spines which provide cover for reptiles and amphibians. It tolerates part sun to sun with average moisture.

Saw palmetto, (*Serenoa repens*) – An excellent evergreen ground cover for reptiles and amphibians and can be used underneath trees. This evergreen shrub reaches 8 to 10 feet in height. It tolerates shade or sun. The black fruits are eaten by a variety of mammals and birds.

For more information on wildlife and wildlife habitat:

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