

# lifeliving

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# Small to tall... trees for the birds

## What to plant and where to plant them

Last week I began a discussion on how best to attract birds and other wildlife to your yard. The key point to keep in mind is that there is an unbreakable link between native plant species and native wildlife. It therefore follows that if we want to attract these animals to our yards – and help to protect biodiversity in the process – we need to plant native trees and shrubs.



Drew Monkman  
OUR CHANGING  
SEASONS

The list that follows outlines some of the most desirable species that you may wish to plant. Some species may be difficult to find at garden centres or require a special order. Most, however, should be available, especially from sources such as Ecology Park, a part of Peterborough Green Up. Call 745-3238.

### SHORT TREES AND SHRUBS (2-8 METRES)

**Willows (Salix):** If you have large damp or wet habitats on your property, native willows are excellent plants to consider. Native willows are second only to oaks in attracting lepidoptera (moths and butterflies), and therefore birds. In fact, they are the host trees of some of our showiest butterflies like the viceroys. Most are small to medium-sized shrubs which work well as edge plantings. They are particularly attractive when massed. Look for Bebb's willow (*S. bebbiana*), pussy willow (*S. discolor*) and black willow (*S. nigra*). They prefer full sun.

**Chokecherry (Prunus virginiana):** Cherries rank third as the most attractive host trees for lepidoptera. They also produce copious amounts of fruit which are much appreciated by many bird species including woodpeckers, rose-breasted grosbeaks, white-throated sparrows, robins and bluebirds. Chokecherries have beautiful white flowers in the spring. They prefer full sun.

**Serviceberries (Amelanchier):** Like cherries, serviceberries (also known as junberries) are members of the rose family. In the early spring before the leaves appear, serviceberries produce drooping white clusters of flowers that are very attractive. The fall foliage, too, is striking with its reds and oranges. The fruits appear in June. Look for downy serviceberry (*A. arborea*) and oblong serviceberry (*A. canadensis*). At least 19 species of birds eat the fruits of these trees. They will grow in sun to moderate shade.

**Elderberries (Sambucus):** Both common elderberry (*S. canadensis*) and red-bellied elder (*S. racemosa*) are wonderful shrubs for attracting birds. *Canadensis* has the added appeal of producing large masses of fragrant, white flowers in early summer. A huge variety of birds eat the fruits of these species including woodpeckers, sparrows, warblers, grosbeaks, thrushes, catbirds, waxwings and cardinals. *Canadensis* produces purple-black fruits in late summer, while *racemosa*'s fruits are more reddish and appear in mid-summer. They grow in sun and part shade.

**Dogwoods (Cornus):** You should

also consider planting several pagoda dogwood (*C. alternifolia*) as well as clumps of red-osier dogwood (*C. stolonifera*). In addition to the attractive white flowers in spring and colourful fall foliage, these native dogwoods produce large amounts of fruit that birds can't resist. This is partly because dogwood fruit has a high fat content. Dogwoods prefer partly shaded locations.

**Crabapples (Malus):** According to Douglas Tallamy in "Bringing Nature Home," flowering crabapples are one genus of trees where the native and alien species are almost the same in leaf chemistry. Even non-native crabapples therefore attract a large number of native insects. Crabapple fruits are a favourite food for many birds in fall and winter including robins, waxwings and pine grosbeaks. The showing of spring flowers is nothing short of spectacular. They require full sun.

**Viburnum:** There are a number of excellent small trees in the viburnum genus, as well. These native species put on a great display of white flowers in the spring and produce large amounts of fruit. Nannyberry (*V. lentago*) does well in suburban yards. American highbush-cranberry (*V. trilobum*) does best in damp areas. *Trilobum* has spectacular orange-red fall colour and red fruits which are eaten by birds in the fall and winter. Be careful not to buy European highbush-cranberry (*V. opulus*) because the fruit is almost totally ignored by birds. Viburnums grow in full sun and partial shade.

**Hawthorns (Crataegus):** These small trees have eye-catching spring flowers and produce red fruits. The fruits often remain well into the winter, therefore adding visual interest to your yard. Cockspur hawthorn (*C. crus-galli*), downy hawthorn (*C. mollis*) and dotted hawthorn (*C. punctata*) are all good choices. Hawthorns can attract more than 20 species of birds and are especially favored by waxwings and grouse. They also provide excellent cover and protection for nesting birds, thanks to their thorns. They need full sun.

**Winterberry Holly (Ilex):** This deciduous-leaved holly produces bright, red berries that sometimes stay on the branches well into winter – if the birds don't get them first. This is therefore another shrub that adds colour to the late fall and winter garden. They will grow in nearly all light conditions.

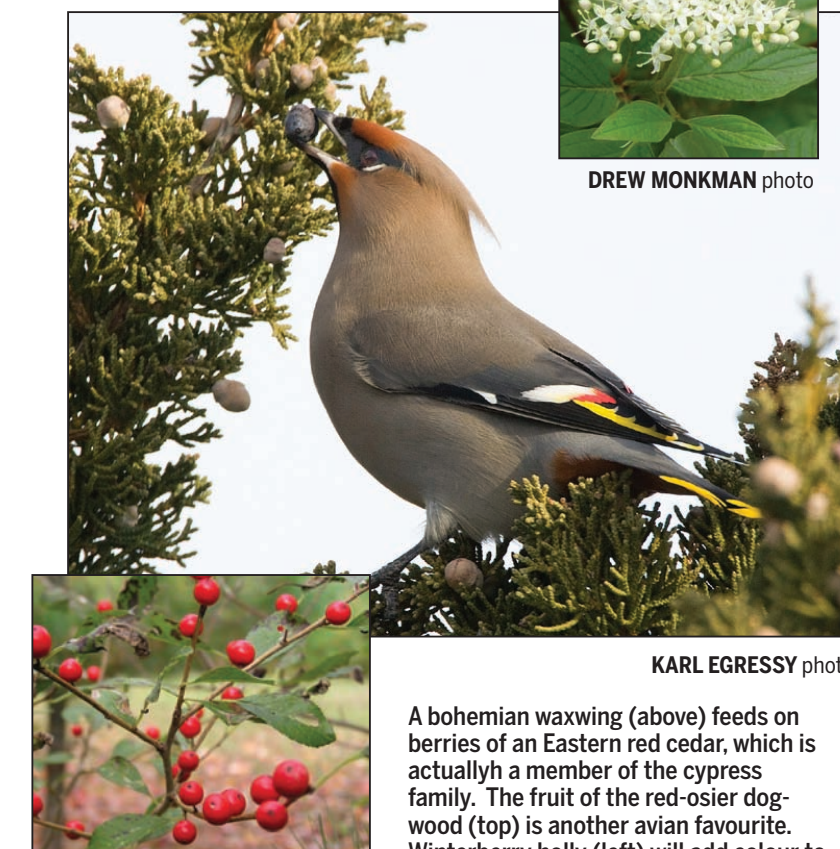
### MEDIUM TREES (9-16 METRES)

**Ironwood (Ostrya):** Also known as hophornbeam, this slow-growing tree has dark green, birch-like leaves that change to yellow in autumn. The inflated fruits look like hops. They grow in full sun to partial shade.

**Trembling Aspen (Populus tremuloides):** Attractive in all seasons, this tree has small leaves with flat stems that "tremble" with the slightest breeze. Being closely related to willows, aspens are hosts to dozens of species of lepidopterans. They need full sun.

**Pin Cherry (Prunus pennsylvanica):** The white, spring flowers, attractive fall foliage and bird-friendly fruit make this an excellent choice. They will grow in full sun to partial shade.

**Eastern Red Cedar (Juniperus vir-**



DREW MONKMAN photo



DREW MONKMAN photo



A bohemian waxwing (above) feeds on berries of an Eastern red cedar, which is actually a member of the cypress family. The fruit of the red-osier dogwood (top) is another avian favourite. Winterberry holly (left) will add colour to gardens in late fall and early winter.

KARL EGRESSY photo

**giniana):** No less than 54 bird species have been observed eating the fruit. Waxwings in particular love them. Red cedar is not actually a cedar but rather a member of the cypress family. This evergreen offers excellent winter cover and is often chosen as a nesting tree. It is a full sun species.

**Eastern White Cedar (Thuja occidentalis):** Cedars provide important shelter for birds, especially when planted in clumps or as a hedge. They grow in all light conditions.

### TALL TREES (17+ METRES)

**Oaks (Quercus):** The value of oaks as trees for both vertebrate and invertebrate wildlife can't be overstated. They produce much sought-after acorns, provide cavities as nesting sites and, maybe most importantly, attract a huge diversity of insect herbivores. No other plant genus supports more species of butterflies and moths which means no other genus provides more types of bird food. Red and burr oak are the best choices for city yards. Sun to partial shade.

**White Ash (Fraxinus americana):** One of our most spectacular trees for fall foliage, the white ash adapts well to suburban environments. Unfortunately, the accidental importation of the emerald ash borer threatens the future of ashes. In

Birches are excellent sources of food for wildlife. They are not only hosts to many species of lepidoptera but also produce seeds that are quickly gobbled up by finches. The white, exfoliating bark, too, is very appealing. Yellow birch (*B. alleghaniensis*) is also a wonderful tree if you are able to find a source. Full sun.

**American Basswood (Tilia americana):** Basswood is an excellent source of nectar and pollen for honey bees as well as many native pollinators. Small mammals love its seeds. Basswood also supports over 150 different types of caterpillars.

**Common Hackberry (Celtis occidentalis):** The common hackberry, a member of the elm family, is one of the most urban-tolerant and rapidly growing shade trees. It can also serve for erosion control. Birds such as woodpeckers and cedar waxwings will eat the sweetish fruits.

**White Spruce (Picea glauca):** In addition to providing cover, white spruce produce seeds for nuthatches, crossbills and pine siskins. It is also a host to many moths and butterflies. Blue spruce (*P. pungens*) and Norway spruce (*P. abies*) are not native to this area and less attractive to birds such as crossbills.

**White Pine (Pinus strobus):** White pines make majestic specimen trees but can also serve as privacy screens. The mature seeds nourish small mammals as well as birds like nuthatches and crossbills. Pines are also host to the larvae of moths, butterflies and sawflies. These insects, in turn, are highly prized by birds. Full sun.

**Eastern Hemlock (Tsuga canadensis):** Hemlocks have delicate, silvery foliage and small, pendant, brown cones making them one of our most beautiful forest trees. They can serve as both specimen trees and as a privacy screen. They are a favourite tree of yellow-bellied sapsuckers and blackburnian warblers. Hemlocks grow in shade and partial shade.

**Tamarack (Larix laricina):** Our only deciduous conifer, tamaracks turn a very attractive smoky yellow in the fall. The delicate, pastel-green needles are also beautiful in the spring. Crossbills are attracted to the seeds. Full sun.

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