

ATTRACT WILDLIFE



LANDSCAPING PRINCIPLES FOR FLORIDA-FRIENDLY YARDS

<http://www.epa.gov/epaoswer/non-hw/green/pubs/brochure.htm>



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Florida has the third most diverse wildlife population of any state. But rapidly growing urban development, particularly in coastal communities, is destroying native wildlife habitat. As our communities expand, we lament the loss of birds and other wildlife, but often our own yards are partly to blame.

Your Florida-Friendly Yard can provide habitat for wildlife in two major ways:

1. By increasing biodiversity, in part by using a variety of plants in your yard's design.
2. By creating landscaped islands and natural corridors of plants that connect bordering properties. Animals use these corridors to travel from one natural area to another, which in turn fosters and benefits wildlife on a larger neighborhood scale.

As you create a new landscape or improve your existing one, add a few features for wildlife, and you will bring your yard to life with birds, butterflies and beneficial insects. Just remember that food, water and cover attract wildlife, but providing habitat is not enough. You also need to maintain your yard so the impact it has on the environment is minimal.

Try a few of these ideas for luring wildlife to your yard:

- n **Food** — Provide food in the form of plants that bear seed, fruit, foliage or flowers that you're willing to have eaten by birds, larval butterflies (caterpillars) or adult butterflies. Berries, fleshy fruits, nuts and acorns are all treats for wildlife. Wildlife find meadow grasses especially attractive, and they add a graceful feature to any landscape.
- n **Running Water** — The sound of running water will attract wildlife to your yard. This sound could come from a natural feature, such as a pond, creek or other body of fresh water. A fountain will also beckon wildlife. Even a simple



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UF Backyard Wildlife Habitat Program:

birdbath that captures rainwater can suffice. Empty and clean your birdbath every few days. Do not clean it with soap or bleach; just physically scrub all surfaces with a brush or scouring-type sponge. Changing water regularly prevents mosquito breeding and bacterial contamination.

n **Birds** — To attract birds, design planted areas that include a tree canopy, smaller understory trees and shrubs, and grasses or flowers. Allow grasses and flowers to go to seed on occasion — this is a real draw for birds.

n **Butterflies** — A combination of both larval (caterpillar) and nectar plants will attract a variety of butterflies to your yard. Nectar plants are those that unfurl flowers, and profuse bloomers are even better. See the plant list at the back of this handbook or consult your county's UF/IFAS Extension office for examples of plants that attract butterflies.

n **Caterpillars** — These are the larvae of butterflies and moths. Each butterfly species lays its eggs on a preferred host plant, which may differ from the adults' preferred nectar source. The caterpillars of butterflies must eat to grow large enough to form a **chrysalis**, so they often strip larval plants of leaves. If you want to attract butterflies to your yard, expect a certain level of damage. One way to keep outdoor living areas attractive and to cultivate a



Photo by: UF/IFAS

There are many ways to provide water for wildlife, such as this small pond.

FYN Glossary Box



Chrysalis: the pupa (last stage before adult) of a butterfly



crop of butterflies is to intersperse larval and nectar plants in a bed. Or devote an entire planting area that is out of view to larval plants.

- n **Snags** — Leave dead trees in place if they do not create a hazard. Many birds use snags for perching, nesting and feeding.
- n **Manage Pets** — If you permit pets to harass wildlife, you will only frustrate any efforts you make toward attracting wildlife. This is especially true for house cats allowed to roam in yards. If you permit your cat to wander in your yard, it is better not to try to attract birds and other animals whose lives would be in danger.
- n **Reduce Insecticide Use** — Each time you apply an insecticide to your landscape, you reduce insect populations, which form an important food source for birds. Some chemicals also can poison birds and other animals that feed on affected insects.
- n **Reduce the Amount of Mowed Lawn Area** — Over time, unmowed areas contain more plant species than mowed areas. Reduce the mowed area around your house, especially in low-traffic areas, such as corners of the yard. In other spots, trade turf for diverse plant species that will create shelter and food for many animal species. Plant diversity attracts more wildlife species.
- n **Increase Vertical Layering** — Plant a variety of plants in different sizes and heights. This provides more cover and feeding opportunities for wildlife species.
- n **Extension's Urban Wildlife Program** — For more information on wildlife in Florida and help in creating a wildlife-friendly landscape, visit the Florida Wildlife Extension website:
<http://www.wec.ufl.edu/extension/landscaping.htm>. Your yard could be recognized as a Florida Backyard Landscape for Wildlife.

