



# NEWS

SUMMER 2003

## CERTIFICATION SPREADS

Since its inception last spring, the Canadian Wildlife Federation's Backyard Habitat Certification program has certified 100 gardens! Applications have come from across Canada for properties ranging from tiny urban lots to large country expanses. Of course, the participants all have one thing in common — the desire to make their corner of the world a safer and more inviting place for local wildlife.

With more and more people taking an interest in ecological and wildlife-friendly gardening, we will soon see an increase in healthy green corridors across Canada. In addition to helping wildlife, these efforts result in cleaner soil, water, and air — a healthier environment for us all!

## NATIVE PLANTS IN YOUR GARDEN

### What are native plants?

Native plants are those that have grown wild in your area for centuries. For North America, it is commonly agreed that this includes only those plants that were here before the Europeans arrived in the 1500s. These plants have spent hundreds or even thousands of years evolving with the other plants and animals of the region.

### Benefits of Using Native Plants

Native plants are a better choice for several reasons:

- They have adapted to the local environment and require less maintenance in the form of irrigation and fertilization.
- Because they evolved with local insects, native plants developed defences to allow them to healthily coexist with these creatures.
- Local wildlife evolved in conjunction with native vegetation and is often dependent on its presence. Native plants are better suited to meet the needs of wildlife than exotic plants. Monarch butterflies, for example, cannot exist without milkweed.

Environmental factors — such as soil condition, moisture, sunlight, and wind, determine which plants will prosper in your garden. A plant that is native to your region but put in the wrong location will not prosper. Consider where the plant would grow in the wild and find a spot that mimics these conditions.

### Choosing the Right Plants

Choose plants that are native to, and will therefore thrive, in your region. Ontario, for example, has certain plants native to the southern tip where the climate supports different vegetation than that of central and northern Ontario. Plants and seeds promoted as “wildflowers” may come from another corner of the continent and may even be considered noxious weeds in your area.

Within each climatic region, plants are adapted to grow in specific ecosystems, such as woodland, meadow, or bog. Even within an ecosystem there are microhabitats with different temperatures, lighting, soil, and moisture. Careful consideration of these conditions in each area of your garden ➤

will allow you to choose plants that will thrive. The more attention paid to matching plants and habitat, the greater the chance they will thrive with minimal care or even none. The best source for native plants is a good local nursery. Ensure that the plants you buy are nursery-propagated, not collected from the wild. **Do not dig up** plants from the wild. You may be creating habitat at the expense of natural habitats.

Visit our *Wild About Gardening* Web site at [www.wildaboutgardening.org](http://www.wildaboutgardening.org) for a listing of native plant suppliers near you — click on Gardening Gab, then on Native Plant Suppliers — or give us a call (see page 4 for contact information).

## What's Native to Your Region?

There are numerous resources available to help you figure out which plants are native to your area. Here are some ideas:

- The Plant Encyclopedia at [www.wildaboutgardening.org](http://www.wildaboutgardening.org).
- The North American Native Plant Society at [www.nanps.org](http://www.nanps.org).
- Contact your local field naturalist club. If you can't find one, contact CWF for assistance.
- Check out a good local field guide.
- Some gardening books are specific to native plants.
- Visit a local native plant nursery.
- Also try your local horticultural society, Master Gardeners, or botanical garden.

## Some Wildlife-Friendly Native Shrubs and Perennials

Here's just a sampling of the many native plants that are particularly beneficial to wildlife.

### For Hummingbirds

#### Shrubs/Vines

*Ribes sanguineum* — red flowering currant (west coast)  
*Rubus spectabilis* — salmonberry (west coast)  
*Lonicera* — honeysuckle (avoid invasive alien species)

#### Perennials

*Aquilegia* — columbine  
*Epilobium angustifolium* — fireweed  
*Gaultheria* — salal  
*Lobelia* — cardinal flower  
*Monarda* — bergamot/bee balm  
*Penstemon* — beardtongue  
*Physostegia* — obedient plant

### For Butterflies and Other Pollinators

#### Shrubs/Vines

*Amelanchier* — serviceberry  
*Ceanothus* — New Jersey tea

*Cephalanthus occidentalis* — buttonbush  
*Cornus* — dogwood  
*Diervilla* — bush honeysuckle  
*Potentilla fruticosa* — shrubby cinquefoil  
*Prunus* — cherry  
*Rhus* — sumac  
*Salix* — willow  
*Viburnum* — viburnum

#### Perennials

*Asclepias* — milkweed  
*Aster* — asters  
*Astragalus* — milkvetch  
*Chelone* — turtlehead  
*Desmodium* — tick trefoil  
*Dicentra* — bleeding heart  
*Echinacea* — coneflower  
*Eupatorium* — Joe-Pye weed  
*Liatris* — blazing star  
*Monarda* — bergamot/bee balm  
*Oenothera* — evening primrose  
*Petalostemum* — prairie clover  
*Rudbeckia* — black-eyed Susan  
*Solidago* — goldenrod  
*Tiarella* — foamflower  
*Verbena* — vervain

*Viola* — violets  
*Zizia* — golden Alexanders

### For Birds

#### Shrubs/Vines

*Amelanchier* — serviceberry  
*Aronia* — chokeberry  
*Celastrus scandens* — American bittersweet  
*Cornus* — dogwood  
*Juniperus* — juniper  
*Parthenocissus quinquefolia* — Virginia creeper  
*Prunus* — cherry  
*Rhus* — sumac  
*Rubus* — raspberry  
*Sambucus* — elderberry  
*Viburnum* — viburnum

#### Perennials

*Cornus Canadensis* — bunchberry  
*Echinacea* — coneflower  
*Helianthus* — sunflower  
*Liatris* — blazing star  
*Rudbeckia* — black-eyed Susan  
*Silphium* — rosin weed  
*Smilacina* — false Solomon's seal

Note: Not all listed plants will have species native to your region. Choose only those plants that are regionally native and ensure they are not considered noxious in your area (check with your municipality for a list of noxious weeds).

## STAYING CHEMICAL-FREE

All gardens can be beautiful and lush without the use of pesticides (herbicides and insecticides) or chemical fertilizers. These products cost money; can harm children, pets, and beneficial wildlife; and ultimately affect the quality of our water, air and soil. It's much easier to prevent problems in the first place by encouraging healthy soil and plants.

### For a Healthy Garden

- Choose native plants — co-evolution with local wildlife created natural defenses.
- Grow a diversity of plants to minimize your garden's susceptibility to any one pest and to confuse passing pests.
- Match plants to the conditions of your garden (soil, moisture, light, etc.) to help plants thrive. A stressed plant is more vulnerable to pests.
- Provide adequate spacing between plants for good air circulation.
- Keep the soil and soil organisms healthy. Add compost or well-rotted manure each year. Where appropriate let fallen leaves remain in place.
- Water plants deeply to promote strong roots. Morning watering at soil level helps prevent disease.
- Check your garden regularly to catch problems early.
- Attract beneficial insects. Flowering herbs (coriander, dill, fennel, parsley, etc.) and flowers of the composite family (goldenrod, coneflower, sunflower, etc.) are good food sources when prey is limited. A shallow dish with stones in it provides a water source. Minimize soil disturbance to protect soil-dwelling insects.
- Practice crop rotation in non-perennial beds to keep pests to a minimum.

### Wild Birds Unlimited Sponsorship

We are pleased to welcome Wild Birds Unlimited as a retail sponsor of our Backyard Habitat program.

Wild Birds Unlimited stores in Canada will carry CWF resources, including *Creating Habitat for Wildlife* and the *Wild About* series of posters and fact sheets, that will help people create habitat to attract birds and other wildlife to their gardens.

Visit the Wild Birds Unlimited Web site at [www.wbu.com](http://www.wbu.com) to find a store near you.



### Lawn Weeds

- Weeds often indicate poor soil.
- Keep your lawn healthy by adding compost or other natural fertilizers and allowing clippings to remain on the lawn.
- Water deeply once a week or less to encourage strong roots.
- Allow the grass to grow tall enough (set mower at 3 inches) to shade out weeds.
- Introduce white clover for nitrogen fixation and improved soil texture, as well as to attract beneficial insects.
- Avoid chemical fertilizers. They are major pollutants of water systems and encourage explosive top growth at the expense of proper root development, creating shallow-rooted, chemical-dependent lawns susceptible to insect damage and drought. They can also kill off microorganisms that are needed for healthy soil.
- Learn to tolerate a few weeds.

### Tips for Managing Insect Pests

- Lawn grubs tend to prefer soft, weak roots — a sign you have over fertilized. Use natural fertilizer for slower, steadier growth all year. Fall is the best time to fertilize.
- Grubs in your lawn can be controlled naturally through the use of nematodes — microscopic worms that kill grubs and other pests. Be sure to follow the directions.
- Mix 100 millilitres (ml) of crushed hot peppers with 400 ml of water. Strain and spray on bug infested plants. (Note that hot peppers can irritate eyes and skin.) Do not spray when it is windy or during strong midday sun.
- Finely chop 10 to 15 cloves of garlic and soak them in 500 ml of mineral oil for 24 hours. Strain the solution and spray as is, or dilute it with water before applying. Use selectively as it also affects beneficial insects.
- Deter cutworms by placing collars around stems of plants (toilet paper rolls, tin cans with ends removed, etc.). Place 1 centimetre (cm) above ➤

## West Nile Virus

With summer quickly approaching West Nile Virus is on a lot of people's minds. For information on the virus and links to some informative sites go to [www.wildaboutgardening.org](http://www.wildaboutgardening.org) and click on the "What's New" icon.

▼ continued from page 3

the soil and 3 cm below the soil.

- Hose down plants and shrubs with water to rid them of aphids, whiteflies, and spider mites, being careful not to damage flowers or buds.
- Keep slugs away by finely grinding eggshells and sprinkling them in a ring around each plant.
- Make a spray for aphids, Black Spot and fungus diseases by steeping 6 rhubarb leaves in 2–3 quarts of boiling water. Apply to affected plants when water has cooled.
- Make a tantalizing trap for slugs and earwigs by pouring two or three centimeters of beer into a shallow dish (empty tuna fish cans work well). In a shaded spot, place the dish in the soil so the rim is just a bit above ground level. Every few days empty out the trap and refill. Use this method only when necessary as it can also drown beneficial creatures.

We would love to hear your tried and true ideas for deterring unwanted guests in your garden. E-mail your tips to [contact@cwf-fcf.org](mailto:contact@cwf-fcf.org) or write to us at Wild About Gardening at the Canadian Wildlife Federation.

## Tips and Stories WANTED

Share your successes and lessons learned with other wildlife-friendly gardeners. Let us know what worked for you so that we can pass it on to other gardeners who want to create vibrant wildlife habitat. Selected submissions will be made available on the Web site and in the next newsletter. Send stories and tips to [contact@cwf-fcf.org](mailto:contact@cwf-fcf.org) or post a letter to Wild About Gardening at the Canadian Wildlife Federation.

## AVAILABLE RESOURCES

CWF has created attractive and informative posters, handouts, and booklets to assist gardeners and wildlife enthusiasts alike. Contact us if you are interested in receiving any of these resources:

### Posters

**Wild About Birds:** Features 15 birds found throughout most of Canada and provides information on plants that will attract them to your garden. (Bilingual)

**Wild About Bats:** Illustrates the 19 bat species native to Canada and where they are found. (Bilingual)

**Your Backyard Butterflies:** Identifies 9 of our most visible butterflies and moths. (Bilingual)

### Handouts

**Wild About Butterflies:** Highlights plants necessary for feeding native butterflies in their young (caterpillar) and adult stages. (English or French)

**Wild About Bats:** Contains information on bats and plans for building and locating a successful bat house. (Bilingual)

### For Purchase

**Creating Habitat for Wildlife Garden Planner:** This beautifully illustrated planner can help you identify how to make your garden more attractive to wildlife. (English only) \$9 (includes taxes and postage)

**Bug Cards:** A set of 24 cards with colourful illustrations of common garden insects, with hints on attracting the good and dealing with the bad. (English only) Contact CWF for details.

Although most of these materials are available free of charge, as a non-profit organization the CWF depends on the generosity of its members and supporters. A contribution toward postage would be appreciated.

For more information, contact us at

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