

Start your FREE one-year subscription to GARDEN CENTER to secure our next issue.

Subscribe Now

BIRDING REPORT

10 plants that bring birds to the garden

In addition to specialized seeds and houses, recommend your customers support their local wildlife with these top avian attractions.

Jolene Hansen



© iStockPhoto

Birds are drawn to landscapes for many reasons, but plants are critical elements. Plants provide nectar, nesting sites and protective cover, not to mention food in the form of seeds, nuts, berries and other fruits. By choosing plants known to please a variety of bird species, your customers can be well on their way to creating ideal bird habitats.

As with native pollinators such as butterflies and bees, native birds have close associations with native plants. Plants that host healthy populations of native insects are especially important. Approximately 96 percent of all North American land birds feed insects to their young, with caterpillars as a primary source of essential fat and protein. (Don't let the idea of attracting too many insects put you or birding customers off. Entomologist and wildlife ecologist Dr. Doug Tallamy estimates that four to six baby chickadees can handle 9,000 caterpillars in the 16 days between the time they hatch and first take flight.)

You can help customers make the connection between plants, birdwatching and bird conservation by integrating bird-preferred plants into displays alongside bird houses, feeding stations, birdbaths or even birding field guides. The bird-attracting qualities of plants already in your pollinator garden promotions offer added selling points as well.



© Dreamstime | © Thinkstock

1. Purple coneflower (*Echinacea spp.*)— Coneflowers and other seed-bearing perennials and annuals are important fall food sources for many birds, particularly as other plants and insects wane with the season. Native coneflowers, black-eyed Susans (*Rudbeckia spp.*) and vibrant sunflowers (*Helianthus spp.*) are favored by goldfinches, cardinals, blue jays and many other seed-loving birds.

ARTICLE CONTINUES AFTER ADVERTISEMENT

Botanical INTERESTS
HIGH-QUALITY SEED

BABY GREENS
Superfoods
Home grown

25-35 DAYS
Seed packets
any time of year

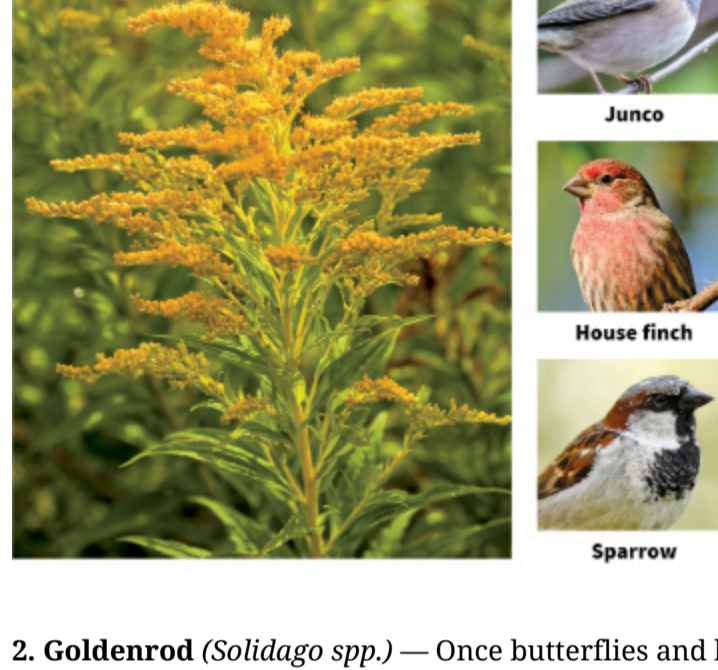
Superfood for
a super you!
A beautiful
blend of
healthy
greens
from the
season.
Only
high in
glutathione,
vitamin
and fiber,
and low
in calories.

NEW Display!

Microgreens and Baby Greens
Home grown,
Restaurant inspired

1-800-486-2647
general.sales@botanicalinterests.com

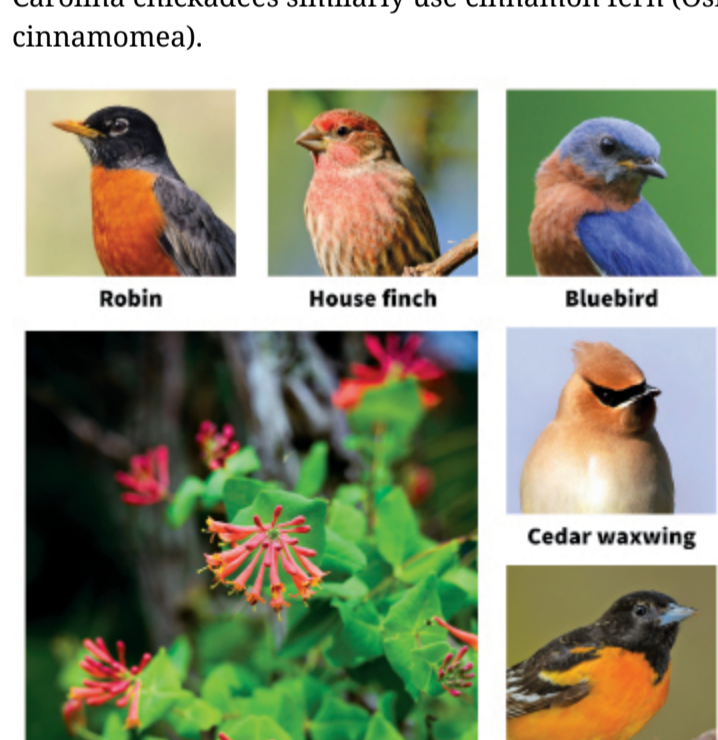
(<http://giccdn.azurewebsites.net/advertisement/click?adId=30145&issuelid=102977&subscriptionid=null>)



2. Goldenrod (*Solidago spp.*)— Once butterflies and bees finish feasting on goldenrod's fall nectar and pollen, birds such as juncos, sparrows and finches move in for the seeds. But one of goldenrod's biggest draws is the range of insects the genus hosts, estimated at more than 100 species of butterflies and moths. Asters (*Aster spp.*) host a similar bevy of the larval-based protein birds need.



3. Milkweed (*Asclepias spp.*)— Known for its role as the sole plant host for monarch butterfly caterpillars, milkweed attracts many other insects and provides added bird benefits. Goldfinches use milkweed fiber and milkweed seed down to construct and line their nests. Carolina chickadees similarly use cinnamon fern (*Osmunda cinnamomea*).



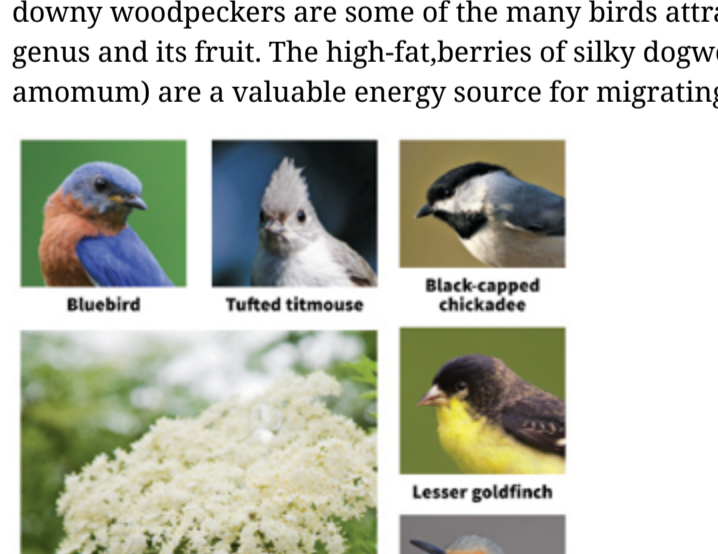
4. Trumpet honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*)— The nectar-rich blooms of trumpet honeysuckle provide an early, long-lasting nectar source for hummingbirds, but other birds love this vine, too. Baltimore orioles eat the flowers while to reach the nectar, while waxwings, robins, bluebirds, finches and others relish the fruit.



5. Bayberry (*Myrica pensylvanica*)— Packed with persistent winter berries and potential year-round cover, bayberries are a favorite attraction for many bird species. Black-capped chickadees, tufted titmouse, Carolina wrens, tree swallows and red-bellied woodpeckers are just a few of the birds that patronize this shrub alongside many other forms of wildlife.



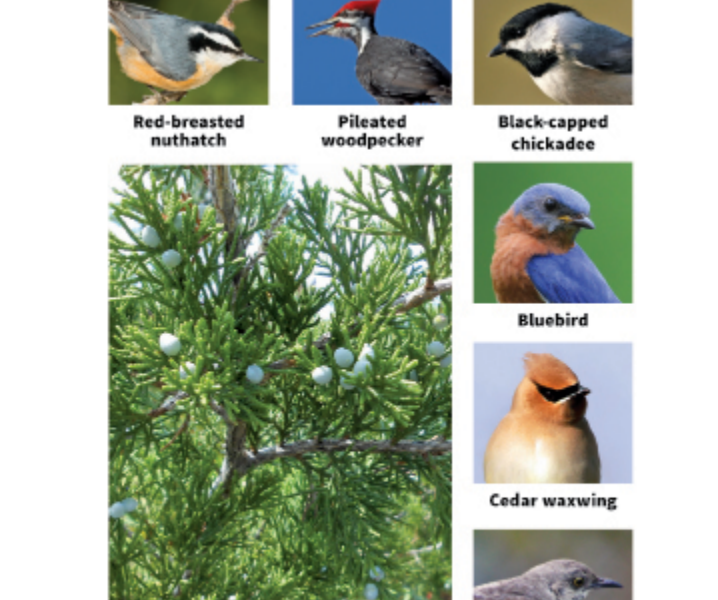
6. Dogwood (*Cornus spp.*)— From groundcover to tree form, dogwoods attract birds at every level. Vireos, grouse, wild turkeys, pheasants, cardinals, titmice, bluebirds, flickers, and red-bellied and downy woodpeckers are some of the many birds attracted to this genus and its fruit. The high-fat, berries of silky dogwood (*Cornus amomum*) are a valuable energy source for migrating birds.



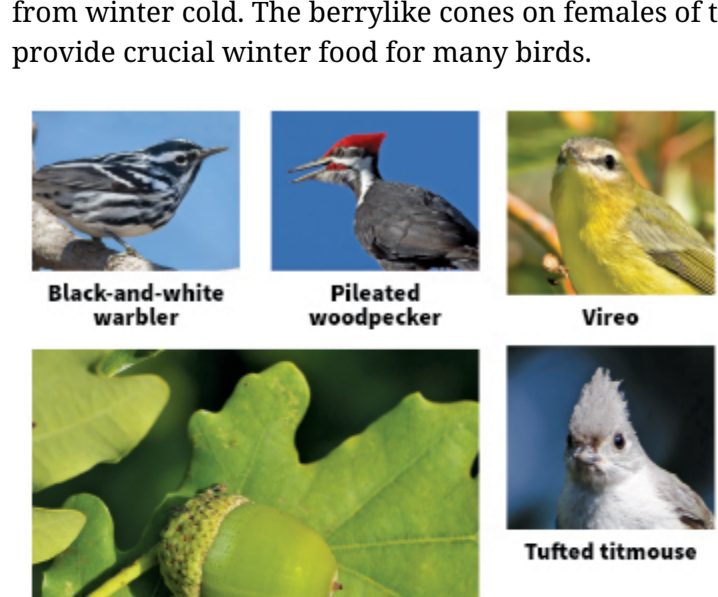
7. Elderberry (*Sambucus spp.*)— Many insect species turn to elderberries for nectar-heavy flowers, and nesting and overwintering sites. Birds follow after the insects, but also seek out elderberries for fruit. The berries attract multiple songbird species, while woodpeckers stay busy with insects year-round.



8. Serviceberry (*Amelanchier spp.*)— Serviceberry foliage hosts numerous species of butterfly larvae, which represent important protein sources for feeding birds. Birds also seek out these plants for cover and, unsurprisingly, the fruits are songbird magnets.



9. Eastern red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*)— Heavy bird traffic is a clear indicator that Eastern red cedar fulfills many bird needs. The exfoliating bark is a favorite nesting material, while the evergreen branches provide safe nesting sites, year-round cover and protection from winter cold. The berrylike cones on females of this conifer also provide crucial winter food for many birds.



10. Oak (*Quercus spp.*)— Cavities in aging oaks are popular with nesting birds, and acorns are the primary draw food. But native insects and their larvae may be the most important oaks hold for birds. Native oaks support more than 500 species of butterflies and moths, making the trees favorite sites for hunting larvae and other insects. Oaks are significant food sources for numerous bird species, from tiny tufted titmice and vireos to warblers, tanagers and various woodpeckers.

Boost sales with the original, the one-and-only Quoddy Blend Lobster Compost!



Made by Coast of Maine Organic Products!

Our original seafood compost is made with chitin-rich lobster blended with peat and compost and is excellent for high yield, healthy vegetable gardens... and high yield, healthy profit margins!

Call us today to learn more!

Coast of Maine

145 Newbury Street, Portland, ME 04101
800 345-8315 (toll-free), (207) 879-0554 (fax)
sales@coastofmaine.com (e-mail)
www.coastofmaine.com

(<http://giccdn.azurewebsites.net/advertisement/click?adId=30148&issuelid=102977&subscriptionid=null>)