



Neighbor-Friendly Wildlife Gardening

The typical American landscape of lawn and ornamental plants doesn't offer much habitat for birds, bees, butterflies and other wildlife. Using native plants and creating a wildlife habitat garden might seem strange to your neighbors. A wild-looking landscape can stand out in suburban or urban areas or even violate municipal or Homeowners' Association landscape codes.

The good news is that a wildlife habitat garden doesn't have to look messy and wild. Remember, when you create a garden or landscape that helps wildlife, you are an ambassador for the idea of natural landscaping. You want your neighbors to be excited about what you've done, not to turn them off to the idea of restoring habitat.

Did you Know?

Avoid conflicts with your neighbors by explaining natural landscaping and the benefits it brings to wildlife and your local environment.

Tips & Info

Neighbor-Friendly Wildlife Gardening Tips

The following tips can help you to avoid misunderstandings about your natural landscape and could even encourage neighbors to try new gardening practices:

1. **Design your landscape** to mesh with your neighborhood aesthetic, especially your front yard. If you plant natives you'll provide wildlife with great habitat even if it doesn't have a "wild" look.
2. **Before you begin creating your wildlife habitat garden**, explain to your neighbors what natural landscaping is and why it's important for the local environment.
3. **Review your Homeowners' Association rules**, community covenants or local weed ordinances that may apply to your property. If landscape rules are overly restrictive, get involved to update them to accommodate natural, wildlife friendly landscapes.
4. **Use native plants with pretty blooms**, interesting foliage and colorful berries that are appealing to people as well as wildlife.
5. **Reduce the size of your lawn**, but you don't need to eliminate it totally. If you do keep some lawn, maintain it without pesticides and fertilizers.
6. **Start small or in phases as you transform the total landscape**. Starting small gives neighbors time to get accustomed to your yard's look.
7. **Ornamental birdbaths, garden benches, statues and water features** add visual interest and make things seem less wild-looking.
8. **Borders, paths, hedges, plant islands and fences**, frame garden areas and add a neat appearance.
9. **Limit the number of bird feeders**. Rake up spilled seed and hulls weekly.
10. **Avoid feeders or brush piles** in places where rats could be a problem, and avoid brush near homes in fire-prone areas.
11. **Register your yard or garden as a Certified Wildlife Habitat** with the National Wildlife Federation and post a yard sign. This lets your neighbors know you've created a landscape with purpose and that wildlife and your local environment are benefiting from it.



Focus on attracting birds and butterflies. Most people love these kinds of wildlife and will welcome your efforts to create a garden that supports them.

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