

The December HORT REPORT

LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE:

- Continue mowing cool-season lawns on a regular basis.
- Remove leaves from cool-season grasses OR mow with a mulching mower.
- Continue to control broadleaf weeds in well-established warm or cool-season lawns with a post emergent broad leaf weed killer.
- If soil is dry, irrigate all plantings at least 24 hours before hard freezing weather.
- Review the years schedule and make plans for next year improvement.

WINTER BIRDS IN OKLAHOMA

Oklahoma has 476 bird species putting us somewhere in the “Top 20” of all states for the number of bird species. Our location, in the middle of the country, straddling several climate zones, puts us on the border between Eastern and Western birds.

We are in an area where a number of species either come through Oklahoma or winter here because our major water sources, large lakes and rivers, don't freeze over. As long as they have habitat and water sources, some species winter here.

Our state bird, the Scissor Tail Flycatcher, migrates south through Oklahoma to Texas, Mexico, and Central America. Oklahoma is one of seven states where the bird nests.

WELCOMING WINTER BIRDS

Attracting your favorite feathered friends in winter requires a little bit of effort... but it will all be worth it when colorful songbirds arrive making your snow-covered landscape merry and bright.

Become host to a bevy of backyard visitors with these cold weather tips:

- **WATER...** Finding water is always a challenge. Dirt encrusted feathers don't insulate against cold as effectively as clean ones do. A clean bird is a warm bird! Bird baths are a safe way for them to access water. Use an electric or solar heater designed especially for outdoor bird baths so birds can stay tidy and have a drink on icy days. Remember to keep snow cleared off the edges.
- **FOOD... COME AND GET IT!** Serve their favorite foods. Have more than one feeder to boost food supply. A buffet of seeds, suet, and fruit will delight winter birds.
- **ROSS WILD BIRD SEED** IS A FAN FAVORITE! Sunflower seeds and cracked corn are also great choices for attracting a variety of birds.
- **SUET...** Many winter birds appreciate suet for its high fat content. Peanut butter and pure lard are good substitutes.

- **GO NUTS...** Chickadees, Nuthatches, Woodpeckers, and Blue Jays LOVE peanuts!
- **FRUIT...** Offer a feast of fruit including oranges, apples, grapefruit, and chunks of melon.
- **DRIED CRANBERRIES...** Mix sugar-free dried cranberries into bird seed medley for a sweet snack.
- **PUMPKINS...** Hold onto pumpkins and gourds after Halloween - those porch decorations are a treat for wildlife. Cut a hole in each pumpkin and set it under a feeder. Squirrels and other creatures enjoy the flesh and birds pick at the seeds inside.
- **WINTER SQUASH...** When cooking Autumn dinners, save squash seeds - they're an excellent source of protein for birds. Just leave the seeds on a tray to dry for a day or two. In the summer, try the same thing with melon seeds.

THINKING AHEAD

The most ideal time to fill feeders and bird baths is mid-afternoon, before the birds go to sleep, so they can eat well before settling in for the long, cold night.

SEEDS & SUET 101

Most birds that stay in our area during the winter months eat seeds, as insects become increasingly difficult to find.

Offer a variety of seeds in multiple feeders to attract a wide range of birds:

- **ROSS BLACK OIL SUNFLOWER SEED...** Cardinals, Woodpeckers, Blue Jays, Goldfinches, Chickadees, and Titmice LOVE sunflower seeds. Place in hanging feeder to deter squirrels.
- **NYJER (THISTLE) SEED...** Nyjer is coveted by Goldfinches for its high fat and protein content. Use feeders that resemble long hanging tubes.
- **SAFFLOWER SEED...** Safflower is a white seed that is smaller than sunflower seeds. Chickadees, Titmice and Downy Woodpeckers LOVE safflower and squirrels DON'T like it!
- **ROSS WILD BIRD SEED...** A wonderful blend of BLACK OIL SUNFLOWER SEEDS, MILO, MILLET, and WHEAT. A blend our Oklahoma birds PREFER!!!
- **SUET...** Birds love suet. Its solid fat rendered from beef and venison, which gives birds the concentrated energy they need in the winter. We offer many flavors to choose from.

SHELTER

When the leaves have dropped and most trees and shrubs are bare, it's hard for birds to find a safe habitat for roosting and shelter. It's easy to create a winter comfort zone by growing evergreen trees, bushes, vines and groundcovers. Hanging up a few

birdhouses is a real plus in bringing family enjoyment as you watch a pair of birds select it as their home and raise their young.

Not all backyard birds use houses, but enough common birds do nest in birdhouses to make it worthwhile to set up a few and see what happens. About 30 different species are called “cavity” nesters, which means they use a birdhouse. Some common species are Bluebirds, Purple Martins, House Wrens, Chickadees, Tree Swallows, and Common Sparrows.

HABITAT

Grow plants to serve a menu of tasty treats and berries as a snack for birds year-round. They're especially important in chilly months, when natural food supplies decrease, birds flock to berry producing trees and shrubs for much needed shelter and fruit. Look for Winterberry, Beautyberry, Black Chokeberry, and Snowberry. All zoned for our area (zone 7) as good choices for Oklahoma winter wildlife.

Growing vines on fences and other supports can turn a part of the yard into prime real estate for food, nesting, and shelter. Good choices are Trumpet Creeper, Clematis, and Honeysuckle.

When these flowers fade, their seeds feed hungry songbirds... Cosmos, Marigold, Purple Cone Flower, Zinnia, Black-eyed Susan, Aster, Daisy, and Sunflower.

Create and maintain a four-season habitat and make your yard a safe haven by providing food, shelter, and water year-round.

A GOOD GARDEN TIP

Load your small tools in a ROSS TRUE VALUE 5 GALLON BUCKET! It's easy to carry around and the lid protects the tools from dirt and rain. It also doubles as a stool for weeding and pruning. It fits great in my little red wagon... my SECOND FAVORITE tool! Available at ROSS SEED CO... Your destination station for ALL your gardening and horticulture needs!

CUSTOMERS ASK

“Do I need to trim my perennials once frost kills them?”

Let healthy perennials, including grasses, stand for winter. This increases hardiness as plants provide added insulation for the roots by catching more snow, nature's winter mulch. Standing plants provide motion and texture, and seed heads attract and feed the birds that add color to an often-drab winter's landscape. Many beneficial insects spend winter in the stems, under the plants, and in the leaf litter too. Wait as late as possible in Spring to remove the top growth and compost.