

CONSERVE WILDLIFE FOUNDATION OF NEW JERSEY

LANDSCAPING FOR WILDLIFE: CREATING BACKYARD HABITAT

SCRUB-SHRUB HABITAT AND HEDGEROWS

Scrub-shrub habitat is valuable for many species of wildlife. This type of habitat is known as an early-successional type, and without proper management, over time it can become a forest. When forests become fragmented, a “hard edge” is often created, with little or no transition from a forest to a lawn or meadow. Planting shrubs can create an important “transitional zone” along with food and cover for migratory and nesting birds.

To create backyard scrub-shrub habitat that is beneficial to a variety of birds, it is crucial that you select and use native species that provide food. Food-bearing shrubs are especially critical to the large number of birds, especially during migration, when they pass through New Jersey. These migrants “rest and refuel” before they continue migration. Fruits and berries are very nutritious to wildlife, and when eaten also aid in the dispersal of their seeds. It is also important to select a variety of species that flower and bear fruit at different times during the year. For example, spring and summer food sources include chokeberry and serviceberry, and some autumn sources include dogwoods and viburnums, then during winter species include bayberry and Poison Ivy.

Another important aspect of using shrubs in your backyard is for cover. Include a mix of both evergreen and deciduous shrubs on your property. Evergreen trees and shrubs protect wildlife from harsh wind, rain, and snow. It will also provide nesting sites for mourning doves, robins, and tree sparrows to nest. When choosing a site to create scrub-shrub habitat consider the overall layout of your yard or property. If you live along the edge of a forest plant shrubs along the tree line to create a “transitional” zone between the forested area and

your lawn or backyard. You can also choose to plant any of these species around your house, instead of other non-native species that may not be as beneficial to birds and many invertebrates like bees and butterflies.



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Northern bayberry (*Myrica pensylvanica*)

BENEFICIAL SHRUBS FOR BIRDS:

- Arrowwood viburnum (*Viburnum dentatum*)
- Beach plum (*Prunus maritima*)
- Black raspberry (*Rubus occidentalis*)
- Common elder (*Sambucus Canadensis*)
- Common juniper (*Juniperus communis*)
- Elderberry (*Sambuccus Canadensis*)
- Highbush blueberry (*Vaccinium corymbosum*)
- Inkberry holly (*Ilex glabra*)
- Nannyberry (*Viburnum lentago*)
- Northern bayberry (*Myrica pensylvanica*)
- Rugosa rose (*Rosa rugosa*)
- Serviceberry (*Amelanchier canadensis*)
- Staghorn sumac (*Rhus typhina*)
- Viburnums (*Viburnums spp.*)
- Winged sumac (*Rhus copallinum*)
- Winterberry holly (*Ilex verticillata*)

This fact sheet is part of the Habitat Restoration program created by Conserve Wildlife Foundation of New Jersey (CWF). CWF is a non-profit organization dedicated to protecting New Jersey's endangered and threatened wildlife and the habitats they depend on for survival. We accomplish this through research and conservation projects and education and outreach programs that advance the protection of New Jersey's rarest wildlife residents.

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What is a hedgerow?

A hedgerow is basically a living fence. They are usually comprised of several different types of vegetation, mostly woody vegetation. Most contain a row of trees and shrubs of differing heights. Hedgerows are usually placed along the edges of fields. They create a transitional or “buffer” zone that is very beneficial to wildlife. They help soften the edge from forests to grasslands.

Why are they important?

Wildlife use hedgerows for cover, shelter, and food. Migratory songbirds, gamebirds, mammals, and other wildlife use hedgerows to find cover from predators and as places to nest and raise their young. They find shelter from severe storms in evergreen trees and shrubs and use secluded passageways under the vegetation. Shrubs can provide fruits and berries year-round to many species of songbirds.

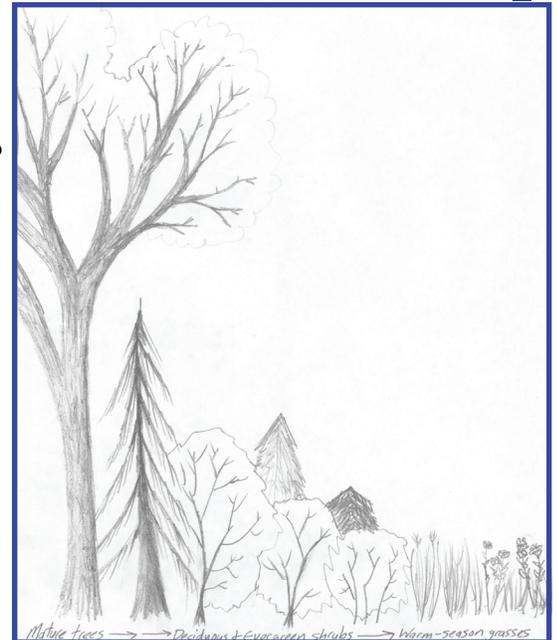
Hedgerows can also have benefits to homeowners. If you plant evergreen trees and shrubs on the NW side of your house, they can help cut energy costs in winter by blocking cold arctic wind. To save energy in the summer, consider planting a deciduous small tree or shrubs along the south side of your home to help shade your house from direct sunlight.

How to create a hedgerow:

Some of the best hedgerows are at least 20 feet wide. It is important to use a variety of native deciduous and evergreen of different sizes in your hedgerow. Choose native evergreen species like holly and juniper and deciduous species like viburnums and Northern bayberry. Look carefully at when each species blooms and yields fruit. You should try and plant species that will offer food throughout the summer and into fall and winter. At the edge of your hedgerow plant a row of tall grasses or wildflowers to enhance the overall effect.

Tips and Tricks:

- Till, plow or disc the area before planting your hedgerow. This will reduce the amount of competition from the surrounding vegetation.
- Plant in early spring (from mid-March to mid-April) while the plants are still dormant (before the leaves have emerged) for the best results.
- Dig holes that are twice as wide and deep as the root mass. To save money look for “bare-root” seedlings. Mulch around base of plantings to help discourage weed growth and retain soil moisture.
- Space trees and shrubs around 6 to 8 feet apart. Separate the rows 8 to 10 feet apart.
- You should plan on planting three rows total. One row of tall trees; one row of small trees; then two rows of shrubs. Remember to space out your plantings so the plants have room to grow.
- Leave some gaps in the rows to allow some natural vegetation grow. This will make it easier for wildlife to move around.



An example of a hedgerow “buffer” habitat type.

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