

Landscaping for Wildlife



Mid-Atlantic Ecological Landscape Partnership
(MAEscapes)
York County Conservation District

Presenter

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Introduction

- ❑ *Landscaping for wildlife can restore critically needed habitat and beautify your yard at the same time.*
- ❑ *Many excellent native trees, shrubs, and vines offer four seasons' interest with their fragrant flowers, eye-catching fruit, brilliant fall color, and sculptural forms in winter.*
- ❑ *The same plants can attract a diversity of wildlife with the food, cover, and nest sites they supply.*
- ❑ *This program presents guidelines for selecting woody plants (trees, shrubs, and vines) and designing your landscape with the goal of providing wildlife habitat and its enjoyment.*

Content

- Landscaping for Wildlife: Trees, Shrubs and Vines
 - Selecting Plants
 - Designing Your Landscape
 - Questions to ask when planning, selecting, and planting
 - References
 - For more information

Selecting Plants



- ❑ *Many excellent native trees, shrubs, and vines offer four seasons' interest with their fragrant flowers, eye-catching fruit, brilliant fall color, and sculptural forms in winter.*
- ❑ *The same plants can attract a diversity of wildlife with the food, cover, and nest sites they supply.*

Selecting Plants



Select plants that provide a year-round source of food.

- ❑ Many woody plants produce soft mast (fruit) or hard mast (nuts) that provides food for both birds and mammals. When selecting plants, choose a combination that will supply food throughout the year.
- ❑ Dogwoods, mountain ash, and spicebush produce fruit in late summer and early fall and are an important food source for fall migrants.
- ❑ Hawthorn, crabapple, holly, highbush cranberry, and staghorn sumac retain their fruit through winter into early spring, the time of greatest food scarcity.

Selecting Plants



Select plants that provide a year-round source of food.

- ❑ Oaks, hickories, beech, and other trees that produce nuts provide food for mammals like squirrels, chipmunks, and deer, and for birds such as bluejays.
- ❑ These are often large trees, which also offer shade from the summer sun and nest sites for many birds.
- ❑ Many other plants, such as grapevines, provide multiple benefits including an abundant food supply, dense cover, and nest sites.

Selecting Plants



Select plants that provide a year-round source of food.

- ❑ Although we often associate butterflies with wildflowers instead of woody plants, the larval caterpillars feed on a number of woody species.
 - For example, tiger swallowtail caterpillars feed on the leaves of cherry, willow, sassafras, trees; and the spicebush swallowtail, true to its name, feeds on spicebush leaves.
- ❑ By providing a food source for the caterpillars, you will attract more butterflies to your flowers.

Selecting Plants



Select plants that provide cover and nest sites.

- ❑ Cover is a key ingredient in the success of your wildlife garden.
- ❑ In winter, wildlife species need shelter from the cold and wind.
- ❑ Evergreen trees and shrubs make some of the best shelters, especially those which keep their branches close to the ground.
- ❑ They provide shelter for many types of wildlife, particularly if they are located on the northwest side of your lot where they block cold winds.

Selecting Plants



Select plants that provide cover and nest sites.

- ❑ Deciduous shrubs with dense branching habits also make good cover.
 - Examples are raspberries and blackberries; lilacs (which readily sprout suckers); red-osier, gray, and silky dogwoods; and elderberries.
- ❑ Diverse types and sizes of cover plants are useful to include in your landscape plan, because individual species of wildlife have different preferences in the amount and location of cover.

Selecting Plants



Select plants that provide cover and nest sites.

- ❑ Fallen trees provide cover for salamanders and small mammals.
- ❑ Brush piles and rock piles are sources of cover, nest sites, and den sites for many wildlife species.
- ❑ A trailing ground cover, such as a ground rose, or a vine such as Virginia creeper can gracefully camouflage your brush or rock pile, blending it with other landscape features while providing an additional source of food and cover.

Selecting Plants

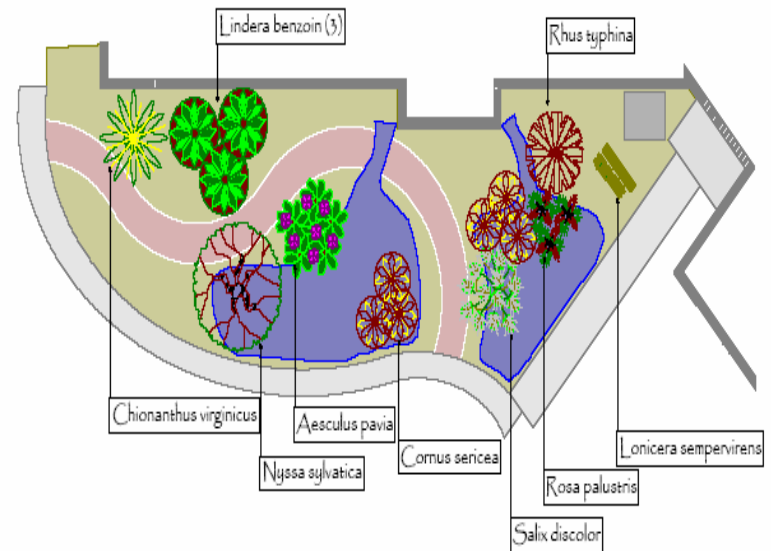
Select plants that provide cover and nest sites.



- ❑ Nesting places are vitally important for wildlife.
- ❑ Trees and shrubs that offer cover from predators and inclement weather also serve as sites for birds to build nests and raise their young.
- ❑ Tree cavities in both living and dead trees provide nest sites for a variety of species including woodpeckers, nuthatches, chickadees, flying squirrels, and gray squirrels.

Designing Your Landscape

- *The following guidelines will help you with selecting woody plants (trees, shrubs, and vines) and designing your landscape with the goal of providing wildlife habitat and its enjoyment.*



MAEscapes West Rain Garden
Plan View
Woody Trees and Shrubs

Design by Mark Willoughby
Spring 2005
Mark@TheGardensEdge.com

Designing Your Landscape

- ❑ As you design your landscape, let nature be your guide and try to copy what you see in nature.
- ❑ Plant trees and shrubs in groups instead of as isolated individuals.
- ❑ Plant corridors to connect islands of trees and shrubs with other natural areas.



Designing Your Landscape

- ❑ Whenever possible, plant combinations of tall trees, smaller trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants together.
- ❑ This is important because different types of wildlife will find food and cover at varying heights.
- ❑ Draw your plan on paper!



Questions to Ask When Planning, Selecting and Planting

- ❑ *To avoid problems, there are questions you should ask friends, commercial growers, and other “experts” when you select plants and develop your landscape plan.*



Questions to ask...



Will this plant produce fruit?

- ❑ You may be selecting a plant because of the value of its fruit for wildlife and be disappointed to discover it does not produce fruit.
- ❑ Many ornamental trees and shrubs have been bred to produce no fruit.
 - For example, ornamental fruit trees, such as flowering cherry, flowering peach, or flowering plum, usually produce only showy flowers and no fruit.

Questions to ask...



Will this fruit tree, nut tree, or small fruit shrub need cross-pollination with a plant of a different variety to yield a crop?

- ❑ Many fruit-producing trees need cross-pollination with a different variety to bear fruit.
- ❑ Most nut trees yield a crop only if a tree of the opposite sex is planted nearby.
- ❑ Holly, sumac, and spicebush require both sexes to set fruit.
- ❑ Thus it is best to ask about pollination requirements when you purchase your plant.

Questions to ask...



Will this plant be hardy in my area?

- ❑ Winter climate zones in this state are zone 5 (average minimum temperature -20° to -10° F) and zone 6 (-10° to 0° F).
- ❑ Your area may include microclimates where temperatures may be colder or warmer than these zones.
- ❑ Your county extension office can tell you the temperature range for your area.

Questions to ask...



How much moisture does my plant need?

- ❑ It's important to determine how much moisture a particular plant requires so that it will thrive where you plant it.
- ❑ If you establish a native plant in its preferred site, then watering and fertilizing beyond the first year may not be necessary.
- ❑ Mulch the area under the canopy to conserve water and maintain a consistent root temperature.

Questions to ask...



What will the ultimate dimensions of this plant be? How much space will it need?

- ❑ It is good to site a plant where it can reach normal size without excessive pruning.
- ❑ Plants placed too close to buildings or driveways may not grow well or live long.
- ❑ Nursery personnel can tell you what the mature size will be.

Questions to ask...



Which exposure is best for this plant (north, south, east, or west side of the house)?

- ❑ Some plants need a shady, cool location on the north side and do poorly in the warmth of a southern site.
- ❑ Others require full sun and protection from prevailing winds.
- ❑ Fruit and nut-bearing plants normally need full sun to produce a good yield.
- ❑ You can also observe the environment where the plant grows in the wild, or consult a native plant book for cultural information.

Questions to ask...



What type of soil does this plant prefer? How alkaline or acidic should the soil pH be for this plant?

- ❑ Types of soil include loam, sandy, or clay soil.
- ❑ You can find out what soil type and pH your plant needs from the nursery where you bought the plant.
- ❑ You can determine the pH of your soil by submitting a sample to your county extension office for testing.

Questions to ask...

How should I plant and care for my new plant?

- Upon request, most nurseries will supply information about how to plant, water, and nurture your new plant so that it will thrive.



Summary

- Landscaping for Wildlife: Trees, Shrubs and Vines
 - Wildlife-Habitat Relationships
 - Selecting Plants
 - Designing Your Landscape
 - Questions to ask when planning, selecting, and planting
 - References
 - For more information

References

Pennsylvania Wildlife:

1. Wildlife-Habitat Relationships
2. Attracting Wildlife: Sources of Assistance
3. Managing Habitat for Eastern Bluebirds
4. House Finch Conjunctivitis
5. Meadows and Prairies: Wildlife-Friendly Alternatives to Lawns
6. Attracting Hummingbirds
7. Landscaping for Wildlife: Trees, Shrubs, and Vines
8. Gardening for Butterflies
9. Managing Habitat for Eastern Cottontails
10. Neighborly Natural Landscaping: Creating Natural Environments in Residential Areas
11. Winter Bird Feeding: The Basics
12. Warm-Season Grasses and Wildlife
13. Managing Habitat for American Kestrels
14. Water for Wildlife: Bird Baths and Backyard Ponds
15. Vernal Ponds: Seasonal Habitats for Wildlife
16. Riparian Buffers for Wildlife

■ *Available from county extension office.*

For more information

- ❑ Mid-Atlantic Ecological Landscapes (MAEscapes) Demonstration Gardens, York County ANNEX, York, PA
- ❑ Pennsylvania Department of Conservation & Natural Resources, Landscaping with Native Plants in Pennsylvania
- ❑ USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service, Backyard Conservation, 2000
- ❑ U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Native Plants for Wildlife Habitat and Conservation Landscaping – Chesapeake Bay Watershed, 2003
- ❑ York County Conservation District, Soil Survey of York County, Pennsylvania, 2000