

FLORIDA PLANTS FOR FLORIDA BIRDS

by Greg Bretz

Florida is on the way to almost anywhere as far as the birds are concerned. Or else it's home. Because of this, birds can fill your yard year 'round if you plant the things they like as well as having bird feeders and bird baths. A knowledgeable selection of food-producing trees, shrubs, and vines will attract a wide variety of fine-feathered friends.

The type of birds you want to attract and the amount of space you have to work with will determine your plantings. Here are some general plant types with some of the species of birds that may be attracted to them:

TREES - Trees, large or small, flowered or seeded, are needed for bird habitat.

- Pines (*Pinus spp.*) - chickadee, nuthatch, tufted titmouse, brown thrasher, blue jay, pine warbler, pine siskin.

- Bayberry (*Myrica cerifera*) flicker, downy woodpecker, tree swallow, eastern phoebe, Carolina wren, catbird, thrasher, towhee, white-eyed vireo, yellow-rumped warbler, eastern bluebird.

- Mulberry (*Morus rubra*) - cardinal, thrushes, orioles (northern and orchard), vireos, yellow-billed cuckoo, cedar waxwing, tanagers (summer and scarlet), woodpeckers, and a large number of warblers.

- Red cedar (*Juniperus silicicola*) - robin, mockingbird, blue jay, catbird, bluebird, and cedar waxwing.

- Holly (*Ilex spp.*) - catbird, crested flycatcher, mockingbird, orioles, robin, thrasher, thrushes, waxwing, and woodpeckers.

My favorite tree for attracting birds is the silk oak, but unfortunately, it's not native. In the spring when orange blossoms cover the tree, many migrating birds are attracted to the blooms and to the insects that frequent the blooms. I have had as many as ten northern orioles in my silk oak at one time. Other birds I have recorded in this tree are catbirds, red-headed woodpeckers, red-bellied woodpeckers, black-throated blue warblers, Cape May warblers, and redstarts.

SHRUBS - This category of plants includes low bushes and hedges as well as fruit and berry producing plants.

- Blackberry (*Rubus spp.*) - vireo, oriole, woodpeckers, thrushes, towhee, catbird, cardinal, waxwing, robin, great crested flycatcher.



TRUMPET CREEPER
(*CAMPSIS RADICANS*)

- Blueberry (*Vaccinium spp.*) - robin, titmouse, chickadee, waxwing, cardinal, tanager, catbird, oriole, thrush, thrasher, towhee.

- *Pyracantha* (also not a native, but not a destructive exotic) - bluebird, waxwing, thrasher, robin, mockingbird.

- *Viburnum* (some *spp.* are native, some are not) - bluebird, thrush, flicker, robin, waxwing.

VINES - A large number of vines provide both food and cover for birds. Among the more popular varieties that are used in home landscaping are: honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*), trumpet vine (*Campsis radicans*), Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*), wild grape (*Vitis spp.*), and greenbrier (*Smilax spp.*).

A great variety of birds feed upon the fruits and berries that are produced on these vines: the towhee, vireo, woodpeckers, robin, catbird, mockingbird, waxwing, titmouse, all thrushes, and the meadow-lark. But perhaps the most exciting benefit of all is that the blossoms of many of these vines — especially the ones with red, bright orange, or pink blossoms — attract the ruby-throated hummingbird. A favorite hummingbird vine of mine is the coral jasmine. During the spring and summer months the hummers are

regular visitors to this vine on our back porch.

These trees, shrubs, and vines only scratch the surface of the number and types that can be planted for the birds. The greater variety you have in your plantings, the greater number and variety of birds you will find in your yard. There is great fun and satisfaction in trying different and unusual plants to see what birds will like them. You will also find it fun to keep track of the birds that are drawn to your garden by your efforts.

Good planting, and good birding!

References:

Terres, John K. **SONGBIRDS IN YOUR GARDEN** Thomas Y. Crowell Co 1953

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McKenny, Margaret **BIRDS IN THE GARDEN & HOW TO ATTRACT THEM** Grosset & Dunlap 1939

Schultz, Walter E. **HOW TO ATTRACT, HOUSE AND FEED BIRDS** Collier Books 1955

DO YOU KNOW WHERE ANY RARE SPECIES ARE?

Andrew F. Robinson Jr., Ph.D., Regional Botanist in the Endangered Species Program for the U.S. Dept. of the Interior, is looking for amateur botanists who are willing to be contacted concerning their knowledge of the locations of particular rare species. He wants to evaluate the distribution and the threats facing particular species being considered for inclusion on the Endangered Species List. If you are interested, please write to Dr. Robinson at the U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 75 Spring Street, S.W., Atlanta, GA 30303-3376.

WANTED: ARTICLES

Articles of interest to readers of **The Palmetto** are needed: articles on legislation, endangered species, landscaping with native plants, selling them, saving them, finding them, protecting them, conserving energy with them, and especially propagating them. Also articles on early Florida botanists.

If you have ideas, but words fail you, call the Editor, who will take down your information and form an article with your expertise. Send to: **The Palmetto**, Peggy Lantz, Editor, Rt. 3, Box 437, Orlando 32811, 305/299-1472.