



Landscaping for wildlife has become a focus for people who love nature and are concerned about the environment.

Maybe you'd like to become part of this movement too, but you have only a small amount of property to call your own.

Landscaping 1/8 Acre For Wildlife

If you think that it seems unlikely that you could do anything that would really make a difference, nothing could be farther from the truth. With some careful thought and planning, you can design a habitat that will attract a number of wildlife species, bring you hours of enjoyment, and add interest to your landscape throughout the year.

Four Elements

All wildlife has four essential needs: food, water, cover, and space. Although you may not be able to provide the amount of space needed for large mammals, you can certainly offer an attractive environment for creatures like birds, butterflies, frogs, squirrels, and rabbits.

While not as attention-grabbing as deer, foxes, or other large animals, these smaller wildlife species are also

suffering from loss of habitat and traditional food sources. They need your help.

1/8 Acre

This brochure builds on a landscape plan for a townhouse with 1/8 acre of land. The suggestions offered are just to get you started, and to let you see some of the possibilities.

Your own property and personal preferences will influence what you include in your habitat, and you will find many alternative plant suggestions in catalogues and at local nurseries.

Your main concern should be to provide variety, because that will make it possible for you to attract the greatest number of species. Wildlife make different choices for food and shelter just as people do, and your landscape needs to reflect that diversity.

WindStar Wildlife Institute emphasizes the use of “native” plants because they have evolved to satisfy the needs of local wildlife, as well as generally being hardier and less susceptible to disease.

However, there are many valuable non-native species and cultivars, and you should make your final choices based on what is pleasing to you.

Evaluate Surroundings

No matter what size property you are landscaping, it's important to do some homework before you begin.

Take the time to become familiar with the type of soil you have, how much sunlight reaches the yard, what amount of rainfall is typical for the area, and what climate zone you live in (maps are available in plant catalogues, at nurseries, or from your local Cooperative Extension Service).

Always remember to think about the mature size of whatever plants you are considering, and whether or not they will block a view or crowd an existing structure as they grow.

Although it can be daunting to read the scientific names of plants, we are including them to avoid confusion when you go shopping. “Common” names can vary from region to region, so relying on them can mean coming home with something that you never intended to buy.

Latin names are also useful when you are researching a particular plant to see if it's suited to your locale.

Scale For Space

Trees are the largest element in most landscape designs. In our plan, the trees have been chosen for their smaller size, as well as their value for wildlife.

This keeps the scale of the design appropriate for the space, and means that the trees won't shade out other plantings.

An exception to the smaller size is the black gum (*Nyssa sylvatica*). This tree is large, growing 30' to 60', but its berries are popular with birds and squirrels. In addition, its red fall color starts early and lasts a long time.

Try Grouping Trees

The American arborvitae, or northern white cedar (*Thuja occidentalis*), can also reach 40', but it is very slow-growing. Grouped evergreens provide privacy and a windbreak for you, as well as food and cover for wildlife.

Dogwood (*Cornus*) offers spring flowers and fall berries, while sourwood (*Oxydendrum arboreum*) has flowers and fruit in summer, color in the fall, and interesting bark through the winter.

The dwarf cherry (*Prunus*) can be any one of the many ornamental varieties available, all of which have lovely spring blooms and attractive fruit.

A variety of shrubs form the backbone of this landscape design, providing benefits for wildlife as well as seasonal interest for you.

In spring the garden will be filled with the color and scent of lilac (*Syringa*) accompanying the dogwood and cherry blossoms and other early flowers.

Moving into summer, you'll enjoy the blooms of coralberry (*Symphoricarpos orbiculatus*), hibiscus (*Malvaceae*), sweet pepper bush (*Clethra alnifolia*), and abelia (*Abelia grandiflora*), a special favorite of butterflies.

Autumn is the time for berries, and you can watch the birds coming to feast on coralberry, yew (*Taxus*), pyracantha (*Pyracantha coccinea*), inkberry (*Ilex glabra*), red twig dogwood (*Cornus siberica*), and holly (*Ilex*).

Winter doesn't have to be a dull time in the garden. Some of the berries will persist into the colder months, providing valuable winter food for wildlife, and the red twig dogwoods will supply a bright spot of color.

Many of the plants are evergreen, including the yew, arborvitae, holly, and inkberry. They will give the yard interest and structure while offering cover for wildlife.

Instead of traditional lawn, which requires effort to maintain and is costly to keep healthy, consider using ground covers like ivy or vinca to fill some areas.

Those spots in the yard that are shaded can benefit from plantings of ferns and hostas, or other shade-tolerant perennials.

Flowerbeds For Wildlife

While shrubs and trees supply the framework for your landscape, choosing plants for the flowerbeds lets you play more freely with colors and textures.

The choices are almost endless, and you can find many selections that will be attractive to hummingbirds, butterflies, and other insects.

Grouping plants into blocks of color and varying the heights

will be more pleasing to the eye and get more attention from wildlife.

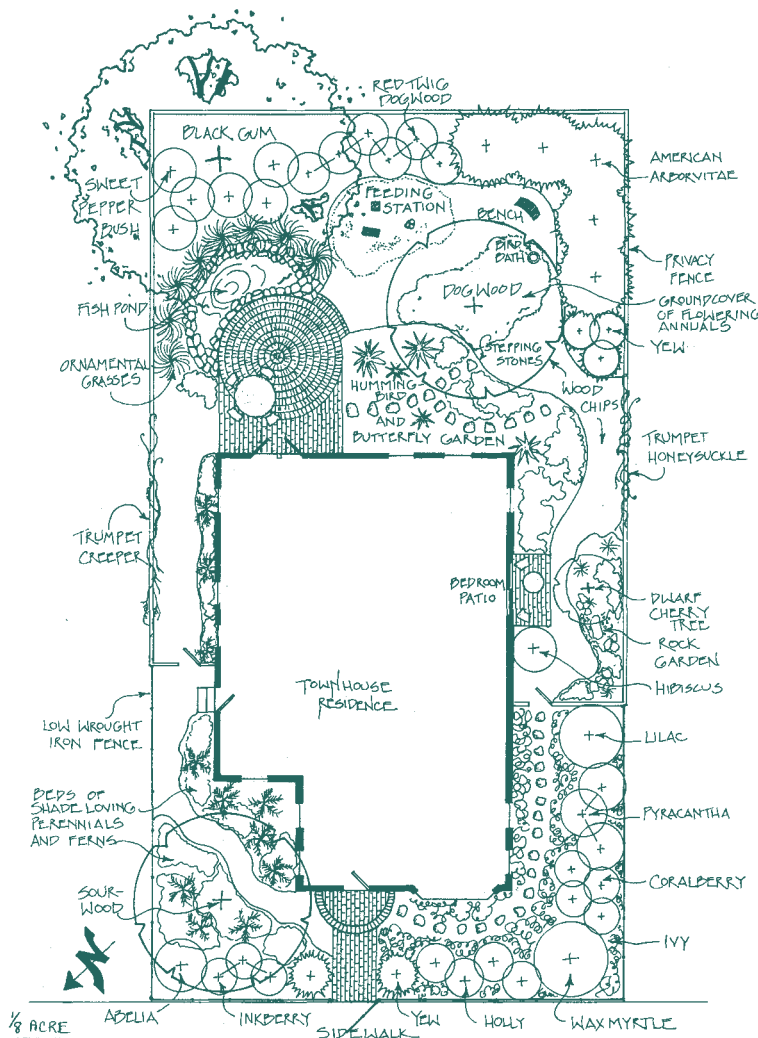
Vines are important sources of food and cover for wildlife. The trumpet honeysuckle (*Lonicera semervirens*) in our habitat plan will attract hummingbirds to its lovely scarlet flowers, as will the cross vine (*Bignonia capreolata*). Vines can help to disguise an unattractive fence, or you may want to add some decorative fencing or trellises for support.

Attractive Grasses

Ornamental and native grasses are a versatile addition to the garden. They are low maintenance plants and come in a variety of heights, the plumed seedheads add interest throughout autumn and winter, and they offer food and cover for wildlife.

In our plan, ornamental grasses are shown surrounding a fish pond. Water is necessary for all wildlife, and a small pond is a beautiful way to provide it. There are kits available in all shapes and sizes, or you can make your own with a plastic liner or garbage can lid sunk in the soil. Water plants can be added if the pond is deep enough. A bird bath or fountain is a decorative alternative.

1/8 Acre Habitat Design



Use Imagination

Additions to your garden are limited only by your imagination and your budget. Paths allow access to all parts of the yard without compacting the soil or disturbing plants. They can be made from many materials, including brick, stepping stones, crushed rock, or mulch. Benches offer a chance to rest and watch your wildlife visitors.

Bird nesting boxes and feeders will attract many feathered guests. Be sure that the nesting boxes are built for specific species, and several feeders placed at different heights will be the most successful. Black oil sunflower seed is the best overall food to offer. There should be a tree or shrub within 5' to 15' of a nesting box or feeder to allow escape from predators.

Portables Work

If you are renting an apartment your space may be even more limited than the 1/8 acre of our design, but you can still attract wildlife by using "portable" landscaping.

Window boxes can overflow with annual flowers that supply nectar to butterflies and hummingbirds. If you have a balcony or patio, a half barrel can be converted to a miniature pond or fountain. There are

many plants, including dwarf trees, that will happily grow in containers. Some city dwellers have even created beautiful rooftop gardens.

Weight is a consideration on balconies, but on the ground floor you can make use of vertical space. Long planters stacked up behind one another can create a wall of color. There are flat-backed pots that can be attached directly to existing walls, and others designed to fit

over railings. Vines can climb trellises, while seed and nectar feeders can be hung from almost anything.

Team With Neighbors

One of the best ways to landscape for wildlife when your space is limited is to team up with neighbors. One person might have a spot for a container pond, another a sunny deck for flowers, while someone else could grow a couple of dwarf trees in a small patio yard. With cooperation, the essentials for wildlife can be provided by adjacent properties.

Recommended Plants

The following suggested plants are a very small sampling of possibilities. For additional suggestions, consult guidebooks, a nature center or extension service, local nurseries, or the Internet.

SMALL TREES

Serviceberry	<i>Amelanchier arborea</i>
Fringetree	<i>Chionanthus virginiana</i>
Sweetbay magnolia	<i>Magnolia virginiana</i>
Witchazel.....	<i>Hamamelis virginiana</i>
Junipers.....	<i>Juniperus</i>

SHRUBS

Virginia sweetspire	<i>Itea virginica</i>
Mountain laurel	<i>Kalmia latifolia</i>
Spicebush	<i>Lindera bensoin</i>
Bayberry	<i>Myrica pensylvanica</i>
Azaleas and rhododendrons	

FAVORITE FLOWERS FOR HUMMINGBIRDS AND BUTTERFLIES

Lantana	<i>Lantana camara</i>
Pentas	<i>Pentas lanceolata</i>
Cosmos	<i>Cosmos sulphureus</i>
Joe-Pye weed	<i>Eupatorium spp</i>
Purple coneflower	<i>Echinacea purpurea</i>
Black-eyed Susan	<i>Rudbeckia</i>
Butterfly weed	<i>Asclepias tuberosa</i>
Butterfly bush	<i>Buddleia</i>
Cardinal flower	<i>Lobelia cardinalis</i>
Bee balm	<i>Monarda didyma</i>
Scarlet sage	<i>Salvia coccinea</i>

Adopt Common Areas

For larger gardening projects, perhaps you could get permission to landscape a "common area," or a nearby public space. Even a few feet along a sidewalk can be filled with life and color that will bring pleasure to everyone.

This article was written by Maryland Master Wildlife Habitat Naturalist Cathy Gilleland.

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WindStar Wildlife Institute is a national, non-profit, conservation organization whose mission is to help individuals and families establish or improve the wildlife habitat on their properties.