

## Birds and Bird Feeders – February 2, 2012

On Thursday, February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2012, **Jim Tutton** from Ritchie Feed and Seed shared his passion for attracting birds to our garden with his presentation – *'Birds and Bird Feeders'*.

Jim's talk touched on the important points that we need to keep in mind if we are attempting to attract birds to our gardens all year round.

Although bird feeders and an assortment of food (seeds, suet, etc.) are essential, Jim reminded us that we need to remember plants for the birds as another source of food, water (year-round), and shelter from predators and for nesting, noting the importance of birdhouses in our backyard gardens.

See below for a copy of Jim's handout.



# Bird Gardening

**Bird gardening** - creating an oasis for birds in your landscape - allows you to enjoy birds' color, song and grace throughout the year. Winter is the perfect time to start planning a bird garden.

You've already taken an important first step: putting up birdfeeders. Providing tasty morsels for your winged friends helps them to survive winter's challenges and gets them used to thinking of your yard as home. Find out what your favorite birds prefer and provide it in the appropriate feeders. A variety of feeders - hoppers, tubes, platforms and cages - match food types and feeding habits. Offer black oil sunflower seeds, Niger seed and suet in three different feeders.

**Next, think plants.** Add some plants to your landscape that provide natural food for the birds. Two favorites in the perennial garden are purple coneflower and liatris. Goldfinches and other birds eagerly feed on the seeds, plus the seed heads provide winter interest. Want hummingbirds? Plant bee balm, columbine, honeysuckle and other nectar-rich plants. Attract a multitude of birds with berry-producing shrubs such as viburnum and winterberry or fruiting trees such as crab apple or flowering dogwood. Don't forget evergreens. Holly berries are prized by many species and nuthatches and others feed on the seeds of pine, spruce and fir. Among native evergreens, the bird-attracting champion is the Eastern red cedar, which draws many species of birds to its tasty fruit. The National Audubon Society book, *The Backyard birdwatcher*, offers excellent recommendations for bird-friendly trees, shrubs, perennials, annuals and groundcovers.

**Water** is essential to all animals' survival. Plan to add a birdbath or two to your landscape to provide a place for birds to sip and bathe. Place your birdbath where you can easily see it from a window, then get ready to laugh. Nothing is more comical than our house wrens' exuberant splashing. Extend your enjoyment - and the birds' - by adding a birdbath heater in the winter. Think of it as a hot tub for your feathered friends.

**Shelter** is another crucial element to a bird garden. Take a winter walk and look for good bird habitats in your yard. Do you have sturdy evergreens for nesting and shelter? Are there any hollow trees or snags that could provide habitat? Do you notice any old nests in your deciduous trees? Is there a brush pile that could provide shelter? Birds need both nesting sites and places to hide from predators. Add trees and shrubs to your landscape that provide good habitat for the birds.

**Birdhouses** are a traditional, and necessary, step to creating a complete bird garden. Place different birdhouses on trees, fences, poles and buildings to attract a wide array of birds. Bluebirds prefer tall, narrow homes with a 1 3/8-inch entrance. Wrens and Chickadees will very happy if you include a house for them in your yard. The House Swallow will also move into that same home. Some birds aren't picky, but most are discriminating.

You probably have favorite birds that you want to attract to your yard. Use the library or Internet to research the types of food, shelter, and nesting sites these desired birds prefer. The results will help to guide your choices in landscaping, feeders, birdhouses and more to make your yard not just a winter resort, but also a year-round sanctuary for birds.



**RITCHIE'S**  
Bird's Eye View