Landscaping for Birds

Birds require four essentials for happiness: **food**, **water**, **cover**, and places to **raise their young**. Your yard can provide them all.

Native plants offer seeds, berries, nuts, and nectar as **food** for birds. They also support native insects which are eaten by birds and other wildlife. These insects are important pollinators in our gardens and forests, repaying our habitat-creation efforts.

A large portion of a hummingbird’s daily nutrients come from **eating spiders**, **fruit flies**, and **other insects**. When zooming around the yard, they may be hunting on the wing. Hummingbirds are always welcome, here in the land of many spiders!
**Water** can be provided simply with a shallow pot or tray resting on the ground, with a bird bath or hanging water tray,

or with an elaborate water feature.

All forms of wildlife need shelter from bad weather and places to hide. **Cover** is provided by close plantings using many different kinds of plants.

A wild bird couple searching for a safe home has more options in the yard on the right, despite its smaller size.
To provide habitat for a variety of birds, vary your landscaping

Different species of wildlife, especially birds, live at different heights in the vegetation. Having many layers of vegetation in your landscape allows wildlife to select the layer to which they are best adapted for survival. Missing plant layers equals missing wildlife species.

(wdfw.wa.gov/living/landscaping/)

Properly designed nest boxes can attract specific species, but just adding levels of different plantings creates space for birds to build their own. Leave a dead tree snag if you can, to provide habitat for owls and attract woodpeckers.

If you have an unused corner, build a small brush pile to give ground birds cozy nesting sites. Dried leaves and stalks in the flower beds over the winter create warm cover for non-migrating PNW species.
We all love our domesticated pets, but cats are natural predators of birds. Keep cats indoors or supervised outside, especially when fledgling birds are leaving the nests you have invited them to build in your redesigned yard. Cats kept indoors also live much longer and healthier lives than outdoor cats.

Some people build “catios” or cat porches to give their cats outdoor access and protect birds at the same time.

By providing the basic bird requirements of **food, water, cover, and nesting sites**, you can create beautiful and nurturing habitat for native birds. You will be amply rewarded when a variety of bird species settle in to stay.