Bird Gardening:
Native Plants in your Home Landscape

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Wildflower Ambassador, CNPS
Introduction: Ann Hepenstal

• Local resident – near Oak School
• Birder
• Native plant gardening since 2007

Focus: “Bird Gardening”
Prior to 2007...

• Landscaping: exotic plants
  • Boxwood hedge
  • Lavendar
  • Pittosporum
  • Backyard fence lined with privet, Italian buckthorn, feijoa

Then: Very little variety of birds seen
Crows, Robins, Black Phoebe, Anna’s Hummingbird…
2007: started Native Plants gardening

Opportunistic gardening:

• Replaced dead/dying plants; removed plants
• Large Coast Live Oak split in a storm
• But: Long-Island-raised husband
  • eye is attuned to exotic plants
  • barbered landscape that requires watering
• We still have a lawn!

Now: Large variety of birds visiting and nesting in the yard
Crows, Robins, Black Phoebe, Anna’s Hummingbird… but now also:
Spotted Towhee and California Towhee
Western Bluebird
White-Breasted Nuthatch
Chestnut-backed Chickadee
Hermit Thrush
>45 species in the yard
What do Birds Need?

- Food
- Water
- Shelter
- A Place to Raise Young
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Native Plants!
What do Birds Need?

**Food**

Food – depends on the bird

- Berries
- Nectar
- Seed
- Insects

*Backyard Birds need insects, caterpillars, etc. to feed their babies*
Native Plant favorites to feed the birds in my yard:

Berries

- Coffeeberry, Frangula californica
- Red Flowering Currant, Ribes sanguineum
- Twinberry, Lonicera involucrata
  
  Photo: Las Pilitas Nursery

- Toyon, Heteromeles arbutifolia
  
  Photo: Calscape
Native Plant favorites to feed the birds in my yard:

**Berries**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Cultivation</th>
<th>Growth</th>
<th>Flowers</th>
<th>Food for birds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coffeeberry, <em>Frangula californica</em></td>
<td>evergreen shrub</td>
<td>low water; sun to part shade</td>
<td>grows to about 8 feet tall and 5 feet wide</td>
<td>subtle small white flowers in the spring</td>
<td>berries that range in color from reddish to black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Flowering Currant, <em>Ribes sanguineum</em></td>
<td>Deciduous shrub (but it often doesn’t remember that)</td>
<td>Appreciates some water and some shade in the Valley</td>
<td>grows approximately 4 feet wide and 4 feet tall or higher, but may be pruned</td>
<td>beautiful pink clusters of flowers from January through March</td>
<td>Blue/purple berries in the summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toyon, <em>Heteromeles arbutifolia</em></td>
<td>small evergreen tree</td>
<td>low water; sun to part shade</td>
<td>grows to about 13 feet tall</td>
<td></td>
<td>red berries in the fall and winter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twinberry, <em>Lonicera involucrata</em></td>
<td>Deciduous shrub</td>
<td>Part shade to full sun. Appreciates some water.</td>
<td>Chaotic growth to 4 feet wide and tall (but it’s willing to grow taller!)</td>
<td>Orange flowers</td>
<td>Black berries in May/June</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Who eats berries?
Robin, Cedar Waxwing, California Thrasher, Western Bluebird, Northern Mockingbird
Native Plant favorites to feed the birds in my yard:

**Nectar**

- **California Fuschia, Epilobium canum**
- **Red Flowering Currant, Ribes sanguineum**
- **Island Snapdragon, Gambelia speciosa**
# Native Plant favorites to feed the birds in my yard:

## Nectar

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<tr>
<td><strong>California Fuschia, Epilobium canum</strong></td>
<td>Perennial</td>
<td>Cut back to the new growth in December. Low water.</td>
<td>Lush green growth from January through spring; brown and tired-looking October through December</td>
<td>bright red flowers late summer through fall</td>
<td>Nectar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Red Flowering Currant, Ribes sanguineum</strong></td>
<td>Deciduous shrub <em>(but it often doesn't remember that)</em></td>
<td>Appreciates some water and some shade in the Valley</td>
<td>grows approximately 4 feet wide and 4 feet tall or higher, but may be pruned</td>
<td>beautiful pink clusters of flowers from January through March</td>
<td>Nectar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Island Snapdragon, Gambelia speciosa</strong></td>
<td>Evergreen shrub</td>
<td>Shade to sun; appreciates part sun and some water</td>
<td>Chaotic growth of pretty green leaves</td>
<td>Red tubular flowers all year</td>
<td>Nectar</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Who eats nectar?
Anna’s Hummingbirds; you might get other species during spring migration
Native Plant favorites to feed the birds in my yard:

Seeds

Coast Live Oak, *Quercus agrifolia*

California Buckwheat, *Eriogonum fascicalatum*

Rosemary, *Rosmarinus officinalis*
Native Plant favorites to feed the birds in my yard: Seeds

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<tr>
<td><strong>Coast Live Oak, Quercus agrifolia</strong></td>
<td>Large, evergreen tree</td>
<td>Low water (don’t plant in the lawn!)</td>
<td>Can grow 35 feet wide and 80 feet tall</td>
<td>Male flowers are catkins; female flowers are small</td>
<td>Acorns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>California Buckwheat, Eriogonum fascicalatum</strong></td>
<td>Perennial</td>
<td>Sun to part shade, low water</td>
<td>Grows 3 feet wide and 3 to 6 feet tall</td>
<td>White flowers, summer through fall</td>
<td>Flowers form rust-colored seed heads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rosemary Rosmarinus officinalis</strong></td>
<td>Perennial</td>
<td>Sun; low water</td>
<td>Bush form 4 feet wide and tall</td>
<td>Small purple flowers</td>
<td>Finches love the seeds that form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sunflower, Helianthus annuus</strong></td>
<td>Annual</td>
<td>Sun; needs water</td>
<td>Depending on the variety, stalk can grow 6 feet tall!</td>
<td>Depending on the variety, large yellow flowers</td>
<td>Seeds</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Who eats seeds?
Western Scrub Jay, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Oak Titmouse, White-Crowned Sparrow
Native Plant favorites to feed the birds in my yard: Insects

Coast Live Oak  
*Quercus agrifolia*

Mountain Lilac  
*Ceanothus griseus*  
Ray Hartman
Native Plant favorites to feed the birds in my yard:

### Insects

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<td><strong>Coast Live Oak, Quercus agrifolia</strong></td>
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<td>Low water (don’t plant in the lawn!)</td>
<td>Can grow 35 feet wide and 80 feet tall</td>
<td>Male flowers are catkins; female flowers are small</td>
<td>Hosts caterpillars and insects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mountain Lilac, Ceanothus griseus Ray Hartman</strong></td>
<td>Evergreen tree</td>
<td>No water, sun</td>
<td>Grows to 25 feet and 8 feet wide</td>
<td>Small purple flowers cover the tree in spring</td>
<td>Hosts insects</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Who eats insects? Bushtit, Black Phoebe

Everyone feeds insects to their babies: Anna’s Hummingbird, Bewick’s Wren, Western Bluebird, Oak Titmouse
• Birds need a water source to drink and to bathe

Some people have fancy fountains, bird baths, or other water features
I have a CIRAF* over the birdbath

* Continuous Intermittent Replenishment of Avian Fluid ©

Fresh water daily
Dripping attracts birds
Shelter

Birds need a place to hide from predators like cats and Cooper’s Hawks

Coast Live Oak
*Quercus agrifolia*

Creeping snowberry
*Symphoricarpus mollis*
A Place to Raise Young

Cavity-nesters need a hole: Bewick’s Wren, Oak Titmouse, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, Western Bluebird.

Modesto Ash - Nonnative Fraxinus velutina
A Place to Raise Young

Salvia - Nonnative

Some build nests in trees and shrubs (Robin, Mockingbird)
Some build nests on or near the ground (Junco, Towhee)

Native wildflowers
Tansy-Leafed Phacelia
*Phacelia tanacetifolia*
How do I get more birds in my yard?

- Food
- Water
- Shelter
- Native Plants!
- A Place to Raise Young
Resources

• Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society www.scvas.org
  • California Native Plants Page: https://scvas.org/california-native-plants
  • Backyard birding: https://scvas.org/backyard-birding

• California Native Plant Society https://www.cnps-scv.org/
  • Native Plant lecture series
  • Plant lists and resources: https://www.cnps-scv.org/gardening/gardening-resources

• Calscape https://calscape.org/
  • Search for native plants by name
  • Search your zip code to get plants which are native

• Bloom! California https://bloomcalifornia.org/
  • Resources to get started with native plants

• Valley Water https://www.valleywater.org/saving-water/rebates-surveys
  • Landscaping rebates
  • Garden examples
If you feel so inclined…

Join or donate to:

Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society [www.scvas.org](http://www.scvas.org)
(see [Join Us](http://www.scvas.org) to Become a member or [Donate](http://www.scvas.org))

California Native Plants Society [www.cnps-scv.org](http://www.cnps-scv.org)
(see [About Us](http://www.cnps-scv.org) to Join or Donate)
Questions?