

Add a native birch

Our native silver birch *Betula pendula* is invaluable for wildlife – so plant one if you have space. It can sustain 300 species of insect, which in turn feed birds and other wildlife. Its seeds are popular with goldfinches too.

Plant a beech hedge

Hedges don't have to be planted purely as a boundary; they can also bring structure into a garden. This hedge emphasises the curve of the lawn, creates a nook for a bench and gives a safe habitat for roosting and nesting.

Screen the shed

An arch and fence system will screen garden buildings and provide space for climbers to grow. They can create intrigue as to what lies beyond... It's also the perfect place to hang roosting pouches or bird feeders.

Treat birds to water

This gravelled area has a bowl water feature with carefully-placed rocks and pebbles in and around it. This creates safe routes to the water for wildlife, and provides an area for scattering food for ground-feeding birds. Oxygenating plants would help keep the water clear.

Grow a meadow

Sow a wildflower meadow using a wild bird meadow seed mix, onto bare sandy soil for best results. Mixes often contain linseed, teasles, yarrow and wild carrot, giving seed-eating birds plenty to forage in winter.

Include a prairie mix

Create a prairie-style scheme with ornamental grasses and herbaceous perennials. Left to go brown, grasses and seedheads create a longer season of interest, look fabulous covered in frost and the seeds provide valuable food for birds during winter too.

Design Solutions

Introduce shrubs, berries, feeders and nest pouches, says Sara Edwards



SARA EDWARDS launched her garden design practice in 2019 at RHS Malvern Spring Festival with her RHS Gold medal and Best in Category Green Living Space Garden 'Defiance'. She made her RHS Chelsea Flower Show debut in 2021 with the well-received IBC Pocket Forest. She graduated from Manchester University with a First-class honours degree, and gained a distinction in Garden Design from the former Pickard School of Garden Design. Visit www.no30design.co.uk or follow her on Instagram @no30designstudio

Q How can I help my garden birds to help themselves?

HAVE YOU EVER HUNG a bird feeder in your garden only to find the birds just don't seem interested? It might be that it doesn't feel safe enough to use. The slightest noise or movement, or the arrival of a neighbour's cat or sparrowhawk, can trigger an alarm call that sends the birds scattering into nearby hedges and trees.

Making the birds feel safe is key to them feeding confidently in your garden. While you can't necessarily stop a neighbour's cat from prowling around, you can offer the birds more cover to retreat to whenever they feel threatened. Here I've brought

together a number of ideas to make a more welcoming garden for birds – largely by increasing the available habitat for them.

Although the garden is large and enclosed by surrounding trees, most of those trees belong to neighbouring gardens. Introducing a mix of native and ornamental trees, evergreen shrubs and hedging around the central interlocking lawn and wildflower meadow instantly makes the garden more wildlife friendly.

Birds are not only looking for shelter: they also want high branches where they can keep watch, as well as safe nesting

opportunities and something to eat and drink. Here I've chosen trees and shrubs that offer a variety of autumn berries or fruit that last long into winter, providing a natural food source as well as a place to perch and roost.

Not everyone is lucky enough to have a beautiful brick wall boundary, but any solid fence or garage wall lends itself to training prickly, autumn-fruiting climbers along wires. This not only offers birds food to eat but also safe places to roost and breed because the prickles



Shrubs that offer autumn berries or fruit provide a natural food source

deter any would-be predators. And while you're waiting for the climbers to grow, you can fix nesting boxes and roosting pouches securely to it.

Adding a small patch of wildflower meadow next to the lawn makes any garden more wildlife friendly. The aim is to let the grass grow long over summer, leaving the seedheads in place to create a habitat that's ideal for insects, beetles and the like. Birds such as robins, thrushes and blackbirds can forage for these critters and enjoy the wildflower seeds too.

Like many gardens, this one has a shed tucked away in the corner. The curved path takes you on a journey towards it, past a low water bowl with rocks placed inside where birds can drink or bathe. The path leads on to a climber-covered metal arch and fence, which screens the shed from view.



Problem areas

1. Wide open space provides little shelter or safe nesting opportunities.
2. Bare walls and fences offer few benefits for wildlife.
3. Large expanse of turfed lawn and small flower beds have limited value.
4. Shed is the garden's focal point.



A mix of trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants provides food and shelter for birds



Notebook

Make it wildlife-friendly



1 *Betula pendula*
Our native silver birch has delicate diamond-shaped leaves dangling gracefully from its branches, spring catkins and attractive peeling white bark. Sun/dappled shade. H15m (49ft) S4m (13ft)



2 *Pyracantha 'Soleil d'Or'* Dense thorny evergreen shrub, perfect for training on a wall. White flowers March-April; profusion of orange berries that birds love in autumn. Sun/part shade. H2.5m (8ft) S3m (10ft)



3 *Achillea 'Apfelblüte' ('Appleblossom')* Large pink plate-like umbels above ferny foliage, May-Oct. Attractive to hoverflies, bees and butterflies, plus birds eat the seeds. Full sun. H80cm (32in) S40cm (16in)



4 *Helianthus annuus 'Autumn Beauty'* Annual sunflower with 15cm (6in) bicolor blooms in bronze, lemon, mahogany, cream and gold, July-Sept. Shade tolerant. H1.8m (6ft) S45cm (18in)



5 *Foeniculum vulgare* Ornamental herb fennel with finely divided foliage. Often used in herbaceous borders. Yellow umbel flowers May-June produce seeds that birds enjoy. Full sun. H1.8m (6ft) S60cm (2ft)



6 *Anemanthele lessoniana*
Evergreen grass ideal for winter interest as its slender foliage is streaked with yellow, orange and red as it ages. Sun/part shade. H and S1m (3ft 3in)



7 *Echinacea purpurea 'Rainbow Marcella'*
Single petal apricot-orange flowers fade to a soft pink July-Sept. Attractive winter seedheads for wildlife. Full sun. H50cm (20in) S60cm (2ft)



8 *Rosa 'Kew Rambler'*
Thorny rambling rose with fragrant pink single flowers, July-Aug. Orange-red hips in autumn. Sun/part shade; happy on a north-facing wall. H and S6m (20ft)



9 *Sorbus aucuparia*
Our native mountain ash has pinnate leaves turning red and yellow in autumn. It has white flowers Apr-May and red-orange berries into winter. Sun/part shade. H6m (20ft) S4m (13ft)



10 *Lonicera periclymenum*
Native deciduous woody climber with fragrant tubular flowers July-Aug and glossy red berries in autumn. Sun/part shade. H7m (23ft) S3.5m (11ft)



11 *Viburnum opulus*
Vigorous native shrub with lacecap white flowers April-May. Leaves turn red, and it has glossy red berries in autumn. Sun/full or part shade. H8m (26ft) S4m (13ft)



12 *Ilex aquifolium 'Argentea Marginata'* This holly has silver-edged dark green leaves and masses of red berries if a male is near. Sun/part shade. H15m (49ft) S3m (10ft)



13 *Malus 'Winter Gold'* Perfect crab apple for small gardens with dark green leaves, white blossom April-May, good autumn colour and golden fruit. Sun/part shade. H and S6m (20ft)



14 *Buddleja weyeriana 'Sungold'* Butterfly bush with fragrant yellow flower clusters attracting pollinators all summer. Sun/part shade. H4m (13ft) S3m (10ft)



15 *Sesleria autumnalis*
Evergreen grass tends to put on new growth in autumn and spring; dies back in summer when it flowers. Sun/part shade. H1m (3ft 3in) S60cm (2ft)

Shopping



Roman garden arch from **£325** Harrod Horticultural 0333 400 1500; www.harrodhorticultural.com

Arch fence system from **£105** Harrod Horticultural 0333 400 1500; www.harrodhorticultural.com

Vierno diner hanging bird feeder **£9.99**
CJ Wildlife 0800 731 2820; www.birdfood.co.uk



Giant root nest pocket **£9.50**
Ark Wildlife 0800 085 4865; www.arkwildlife.co.uk



100cm corten steel water bowl **£199.99** Primrose 0118 903 5210; www.primrose.co.uk



Conservation wild bird mix **£21/10g**
John Chambers Wildflower Seed 01423 369730; www.johnchamberswildflowers.co.uk

Get the look

