

## **Attracting Birds and Butterflies**

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Inviting birds and butterflies to your yard is an effective way of bringing another element to your landscape and helping out the ecosystem. So why not take a more organic approach and start working with nature in your garden? A more harmonious approach is the best solution to creating a healthy environment.

Birds are some of my favorite friends. They are great insectivores, sometimes eating their weight in insects every week. They are constantly on the lookout for that pesky cricket or moth who wants to invade your garden. To attract birds, put together a combination of food, water and shelter. The more you are able to emulate their natural environment, the more species you will attract.

One of the easiest ways to attract birds is with food, but remember, different types of birds like different types of food.

You probably already know that hummingbirds like nectar and a rich sugar water. (Don't forget to clean out the feeder at least every three days.) But did you know that 60 percent of their diet is insects? So, if you're using insecticides you're destroying their environment and possibly killing the hummingbirds you hope to attract.

To attract these winged beauties, try planting desert willow, wolfberry, chuparosa, ocotillo, fairy duster, blue palo verde or yellow palo verde.

Quail, doves and sparrows love to eat seeds. Mockingbirds and thrashers love to eat berries. To attract these types of birds, try planting lupines, sunflowers, desert marigolds, globe mallow, brittlebush palo verde, ironwood, desert hackberry, barberry, wolfberry, Mexican elderberry or pyracantha.

Birds also like to find shelter in their gardens. Dense shrubs, cholla cactus and mesquite trees with a lot of thorns will not only offer plenty of cover, the thorns will give birds protection from predators.

All birds love moving water and bird drippers do an outstanding job of delivering fresh water without spreading disease to your feathered friends.

To attract butterflies, try planting desert broom, butterfly bush, verbena, desert milkweed, fairy duster, desert senna, privet, lavender, citrus, butterfly weed and chocolate flower.

Note: Make sure not to spray any pesticides, especially synthetic, around your yard.

Shopping tip: Wild Birds Unlimited sells specialty seed and berry mixes that will suit the needs of many birds that may come by for a holiday.