



Eastern Kingbird in lignum vitae  
Photo: Kirsten Hines

**Gardening for birds** in subtropical South Florida is different than anywhere else in North America; our climate, seasons, plants and birds distinguish our region even within Florida. Because we are warmer and wetter, plants grow fast here and flowers can bloom year-round.

The plants in your yard should provide the food, shelter and nesting habitat that birds need to thrive. Planting species native to our region ensures a steady supply of the fruit, nectar, berries and insects that our resident and migrant birds know and eat. By planting a wide variety of natives — each with its own life cycle — birds can find life-sustaining resources outside your door in every season.

Recreating elements of nature within your available space is the goal. If it's just a balcony, then simply pot a few well-chosen natives. If it's a large yard, you can create your own ecosystem with forested clusters of mixed plant species, a meadow-like diverse lawn and even a pond-style water feature. Let nature be your guide.

A diversity of naturalistically arranged native plants and habitat-emulating features will attract and nurture countless birds year-round!

**THIS GUIDE** will get you started.  
*These resources can help you dig in:*

Learn more DIY tips and how to replicate our Bird-Friendly Demonstration Garden:  
[tropicalaudubon.org/plantsforbirds](http://tropicalaudubon.org/plantsforbirds)

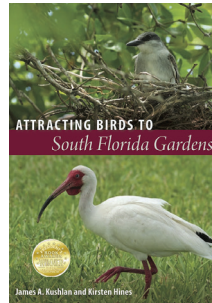
Explore National Audubon Society's Plants for Birds Program to gain a conceptual overview of gardening for birds:  
[audubon.org/news/why-native-plants-are-better-birds-and-people](http://audubon.org/news/why-native-plants-are-better-birds-and-people)

Get Florida-friendly Landscaping advice:  
[floridayards.org](http://floridayards.org)

Match native plants to your zip code at the Institute for Regional Conservation's Natives for Your Neighborhood database:

[regionalconservation.org/beta/nfyn/](http://regionalconservation.org/beta/nfyn/)

Find native plant vendors located near you:  
[floridanativenurseries.org](http://floridanativenurseries.org)



Discover what makes wildlife gardening in our region so unique in *Attracting Birds to South Florida Gardens*, a comprehensive guide by James A. Kushlan and Kirsten Hines.

[kirstenhines.com/product/attracting-birds-to-south-florida-gardens](http://kirstenhines.com/product/attracting-birds-to-south-florida-gardens)

To receive e-vites and e-news write to  
[communications@tropicalaudubon.org](mailto:communications@tropicalaudubon.org)

Thanks to Miami-Dade County & National Audubon Society for underwriting our Bird-Friendly Demonstration Garden project!

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#TASBirdFriendlyGarden  
#TASDemoGarden  
#TASPlantsforBirds

@TropicalAudubon



Shop Tropical Audubon Society's annual Native Plant Sale at our Steinberg Nature Center!

# Bird-friendly Gardening Guide

## South Florida-style



Love birds? Like to reduce costs?  
Want to recreate native habitat?

**There are many reasons to garden for birds.**

**Dig in with us!**



*"Planting a Better Place for Birds & People, too!"*

# GARDENING *with Bird-friendly Native Plants*

## Ensure diversity *with six plant types*

Different types of plants play differing roles in attracting and supporting a variety of birds year-round. Diversity is key! Six major plant types are described here, along with suggestions for the best bird-friendly native plants within each type. All are easy to grow. Ensure diversity in your yard by planting a healthy mix of species.



### Diverse Lawns

Birds don't like typical monoculture grass lawns; they prefer small patches of diverse lawn, which emulate meadows. Populated by a range of small plants, a diverse lawn provides nectar, fruit, seeds and insects for ground-feeding birds year-round.

*Suggested plants:*  
bastard copperleaf,  
powderpuff mimosa,  
turkey tangle fogfruit

### Short-statured Plants

Native wildflowers are prime examples of short-statured plants. They supply birds with nectar and seeds, attract insect pollinators that birds also eat, serve as colorful borders between other plant types and double as protective cover for birds.

*Suggested plants:*  
blue porterweed,  
dune sunflower,  
Florida yellowtop



### Vines

Vines fill spaces where other plants can't grow, and they provide structural complexity where birds roost and nest. Some also provide food — nectar for hummingbirds and butterflies, caterpillars for insect-eating birds and diminutive fruit for frugivorous birds.

*Suggested plants:*  
corkystem passionflower,  
skyblue clustervine,  
Virginia creeper

1. Palm Warbler in diverse lawn;  
2. Painted Bunting in blanket flower;  
3. Red-eyed Vireo in Virginia creeper;  
4. Blue-gray Gnatcatcher in Florida privet;  
5. Red-bellied Woodpecker on sabal palm;  
6. Black-throated Blue Warbler in Spanish moss.

*Photo credits:*  
#s 1, 3, 4, 5 & 6 by Kirsten Hines  
#2 by Simon Tan

*Title page photo & credit:*  
Ruby-throated Hummingbird in Firebush by Gary Robinette



### Shrubs

Shrubs are essential in a bird-friendly garden. They provide much of a yard's fruit, nectar and insects, as well as roosting/nesting sites for small to medium-sized birds. Shrubs are most effective when various species are planted in clusters and overlap as they grow, mimicking a natural forest edge. Adding thorny species offers protection from urban predators.

*Suggested plants:*  
button sage, firebush,  
Simpson's stopper,  
white stopper



### Trees

The difference between trees and shrubs in South Florida is often determined by trimming. Trees are generally shorter here than elsewhere, and shrubs can become quite large. When yard space allows, include large native trees as nesting and roosting habitat for owls, hawks and other large birds; large palms provide habitat for cavity-nesting birds.

*Suggested plants:*  
buttonwood, live oak,  
shortleaf fig, slash pine



### Epiphytes

Epiphytes, which grow on other plants, rocks, walls and surfaces other than soil, derive their moisture and nutrients from our region's humid air. They are a bountiful source of insects eaten by birds, and a delightful addition to the native landscape. Bromeliads, orchids, some ferns and a few cacti are types of indigenous epiphytes.

*Suggested plants:*  
Florida butterfly orchid,  
mistletoe cactus,  
resurrection fern,  
Spanish moss

Get involved,  
learn *and*  
dig-in!

Interested in gaining hands-on experience? Join Tropical Audubon Society's Plants for Birds Eco-Restoration gardening days! Discover more about native plants while helping steward the Bird-Friendly Demonstration Garden at our Steinberg Nature Center campus every third Saturday of the month from 9 until noon.

Contact us at [volunteer@tropicalaudubon.org](mailto:volunteer@tropicalaudubon.org)

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