

Wild Landscape

The diverse plant materials and forms of our landscape may make a statement of beauty through our eyes but to our native wildlife friends the landscaped yard can be a smorgasbord of delight. Many homeowners are meticulous in their efforts to attract the native world into their space. To begin assessing your yard for its wildlife value let's start by contemplating the needs of the creatures co-existing in your landscape.

To attract birds, butterflies, and wildlife to your yard you must invite them in. The essentials for all wildlife include food, water, habitat, and protection. To begin you need to know what plants will attract which type of wildlife. The best place to start is with native vegetation.

Many people can design their entire yard with native plants. These plants are ideal for our climate and are attractive to our native wildlife species. However, most homeowners complement our native plants with trees, shrubs, and perennials that are well suited to the high desert.

To invite hummingbirds and butterflies into your yard, try planting some of the following plants. For butterfly larvae, plant yarrow, veronica and asters; for adult butterflies plant butterfly bush, lavender and cinquefoil. Hummingbirds can be found flying around plants like coral bells, hollyhock and currant. There are many other varieties of annuals, perennials, shrubs, and trees that will attract hummingbirds and butterflies. Take a trip to your local garden center where you can obtain a plant list or purchase a gardening book which provides lists of plants that can help attract these critters to your yard.

There are also many birds that live in and pass through northern Nevada on their migration north and south. Some will stop in our yards after a long journey to relax, quench their thirst and search out food. To create a bird friendly landscape try introducing an assortment of plants that will provide a year round food source. Fruiting trees can provide four seasons of food for birds and plants with flowers, seeds and sap are resources for many avian species.

Having trees and shrubs in your yard that create a protective habitat for birds and other wildlife will keep some species around through the year. Pine trees and junipers create a dense habitat where birds can duck for cover when needed. They will also use dense leafed deciduous trees and shrubs as well as weed and debris areas in the yard. If all else fails there are a variety of decorative and simply designed birdhouses which can be placed in the yard as a new home for the birds and create a subtle statement in your landscape. Check with your local nursery for information on bird seed varieties and bird house type.

Although present in many areas, one of northern Nevada's more rare sightings are deer. Some homeowners love them and others spend hours chasing them out of their yards. Deer can be a detriment to a landscape. Like humans there are some food plants that they prefer over others. If this is a problem in your yard you may want to try planting deer resistant choices. Barberry, flowering quince, spiraea and holly are good choices for shrubs. Pine trees, spruce, oaks and hawthorns will deter browsing deer as well. If you are concerned about your perennials look at euphorbia, red hot pokers, and fountain grass. For more choices visit your local nursery where staff can provide you with a list of deer resistant plants. Beware that, like most animals if hungry enough, the deer will eat most anything. If deer are a real problem in your yard talk to a professional about other methods to protect your plants in the landscape.

Whether you love the wildlife or can do without, remember they are an integral part of our environment and play a positive role in our surroundings. If you choose to invite nature into your yard, be careful when maintaining your landscape and keep chemical controls to a minimum. Browsing animals can become ill if eating harmful elements sprayed in the yard. If a wildlife deterrent is your choice for landscape maintenance seek out professional assistance in choosing methods that can properly get the job done.