

LANDSCAPING FOR BIRDS IN SOUTHWEST MONTANA

NESTING
SITES

COVER

FOOD

WATER

Sacajawea Audubon Society

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SacajaweaAudubon.org



Garden photo by David Schmetterling. Bird photos from left: Roger Williams; Alejandra Lewandowski; Carmenelia; Will Stuart/ Audubon Photography Awards

INVITE BIRDS TO YOUR BACKYARD!

Think beyond a typical ornamental landscape; imagine your yard as potential wildlife habitat. Get creative and design your yard as a naturescape to provide birds and other wildlife with their four requirements: food, water, cover, and nesting sites. You can start from scratch with a brand new yard, or add to one that has an existing landscape. No matter what the size of your yard, if you choose a variety of plants from the list below and plant them densely you will be on your way to attracting birds. The best way to start is to make a sketch of your yard and then remember these principles as you plan your design:

Native plants are best: Birds are attracted to native plants that they are familiar with. These plants are best adapted to the area, requiring less water and less maintenance. (Montana native plants are marked with **N** in the list below.)

Create “habitat layers”:

- Plant tall canopy trees for nesting and roosting sites.
- Shrubs and small trees provide fruit, berries, seeds, nesting sites, and cover for security
- Perennial and annual flowers, grasses and ground covers provide seeds for birds, nectar for hummingbirds, and flowers for pollinators

Provide variety: Different plants attract different species of birds.

Cluster plants in masses: Group 3 or more of the same plant species together to create an attractive look and attract more birds.

Plant for density: Birds like dense groupings of plants with branches touching and intertwining, creating corridors of security. Large densely planted patches are more desirable than scattered plants.

Lose some lawn: Mowed grass provides no shelter and limited food. Make wide planting beds under trees filled with shrubs and flowers. Leave paths of mowed lawn between plantings.

Provide water: Treat your birds to a bird bath unless you are lucky enough to live by a stream or pond.

Be a little messy: Leave some leaf litter and woody debris for mulch, don't over prune, & leave flower seedheads for winter food.

PERENNIALS

- ❑ **Bee Balm** *Monarda fistulosa*: 2-3'. Hummingbird magnet! Lilac-colored blooms mid season. Cultivars in shades of red and pink. **N**
- ❑ **Blanket Flower** *Gallardia aristata*: 2'. Prolific orange and yellow flowers mid and late season. Juncos and other sparrows eat the seeds. **N**
- ❑ **Columbine** *Aquilegia spp.*: 1-2'. Spectacular nodding flowers in many colors. Early season blooms. Favored by hummingbirds. **N**
- ❑ **Coneflower** *Echinacea angustifolia*: 2-3'. Light purple flowers. Blooms mid season. Seed heads are a food source for birds in winter. **N**
- ❑ **Dotted Gayfeather** *Liatris punctata*: 1'. Vibrant purple flowers late season. Attracts hummingbirds in summer. Provides seeds for finches and sparrows in fall. **N**
- ❑ **Firecracker Penstemon** *Penstemon eatonii*: 2'. Bright red flowers in early-mid season. A favorite of hummingbirds.
- ❑ **Goldenrod** *Solidago missouriensis* or *canadensis*: 2-3'. Yellow flowers in late season. Seeds in fall are a favorite of sparrows and finches. **N**
- ❑ **Prairie Coneflower** *Ratibida columnifera*: 2'. Yellow blooms mid and late season. Prolific bloomer bears seeds enjoyed by many songbirds. **N**
- ❑ **Salvia** *Salvia spp.*: 1-2'. Vibrant shades of blue, purple, and rose spires bloom mid season. Attracts hummingbirds.
- ❑ **Showy Fleabane** *Erigeron speciosus*: 2'. Showy purple flowers in mid-late season. Seedheads provide a winter food source for birds. **N**
- ❑ **Sunflower** *Helianthus maximiliani*: 3-4'. Yellow flowers in late season. Seeds are very popular with chickadees, goldfinches, siskins, sparrows. **Common Sunflower** *Helianthus annuus* is easily planted by seed each year. **N**

DECIDUOUS TREES

- ❑ **American Plum** *Prunus americana*: 10-15', zone 2. Has showy white flowers and red fruit. The fruit is consumed by many types of birds. **N**
- ❑ **Canada Red Chokecherry** *Prunus virginiana*: 20-30', zone 2. Reddish purple leaf color. Very hardy and reliable. Fruit is excellent bird food.
- ❑ **Flowering Crabapple** *Malus spp.*: 15-25', zones 2-4. Many varieties with bright pink or white showy flowers. Red fruits are eaten by robins, chickadees, woodpeckers, grouse and more.
- ❑ **Mountain Ash** *Sorbus spp.*: 5-35', zone 2. Showy white flowers attract honeybees. Vibrant red-orange fruits eaten by robins, waxwings and more. *S. sitchensis* and *scopulina* are native. **N**
- ❑ **Paper Birch** *Betula papyrifera*: 40', zone 2. Beautiful white bark. Very hardy. Finches feed on catkins. Warblers, chickadees, and kinglets glean insects. **N**
- ❑ **Rocky Mountain Maple** *Acer glabrum*: 10-25', zone 4. Foliage turns yellow to red in fall. Tolerant of extreme conditions. Vireos, warblers. **N**
- ❑ **Quaking Aspen** *Populus tremuloides*: 40-60', zone 2. Fast growing. Beautiful foliage. Warblers, vireos, chickadees, siskins, ruffed grouse. **N**
- ❑ **Weeping Birch** *Betula pendula*: 30 to 40', zone 3. Graceful form with pendulous branches. Warblers, vireos, kinglets and many other birds.

EVERGREENS

- ❑ **Austrian Pine** *Pinus nigra*: 50', zone 4. Long needled pine attractive in landscapes. Attracts woodpeckers, nutcrackers, and many others.
- ❑ **Colorado Spruce** *Picea pungens*: 60', zone 2. Deep cover and nesting habitat. Chickadees, nuthatches, jays, juncos, and all finches.
- ❑ **Douglas Fir** *Pseudotsuga menziesii*: 50', zone 4. Dense cover and nesting habitat. Kinglets, tanagers and a wide variety of other birds. **N**
- ❑ **Ponderosa Pine** *Pinus ponderosa*: 80', zone 3. Montana state tree. Drought resistant. Attracts woodpeckers and nutcrackers. **N**
- ❑ **Rocky Mountain Juniper** *Juniperus scopulorum*: 10-20', zone 3. Drought tolerant. Great dense cover. Berries eaten by robins and Townsend's solitaires. **N**
- ❑ **Scotch Pine** *Pinus sylvestris*: 60', zone 2. Hardy, picturesque. Provides cover and attracts woodpeckers, chickadees, and nuthatches.

SHRUBS

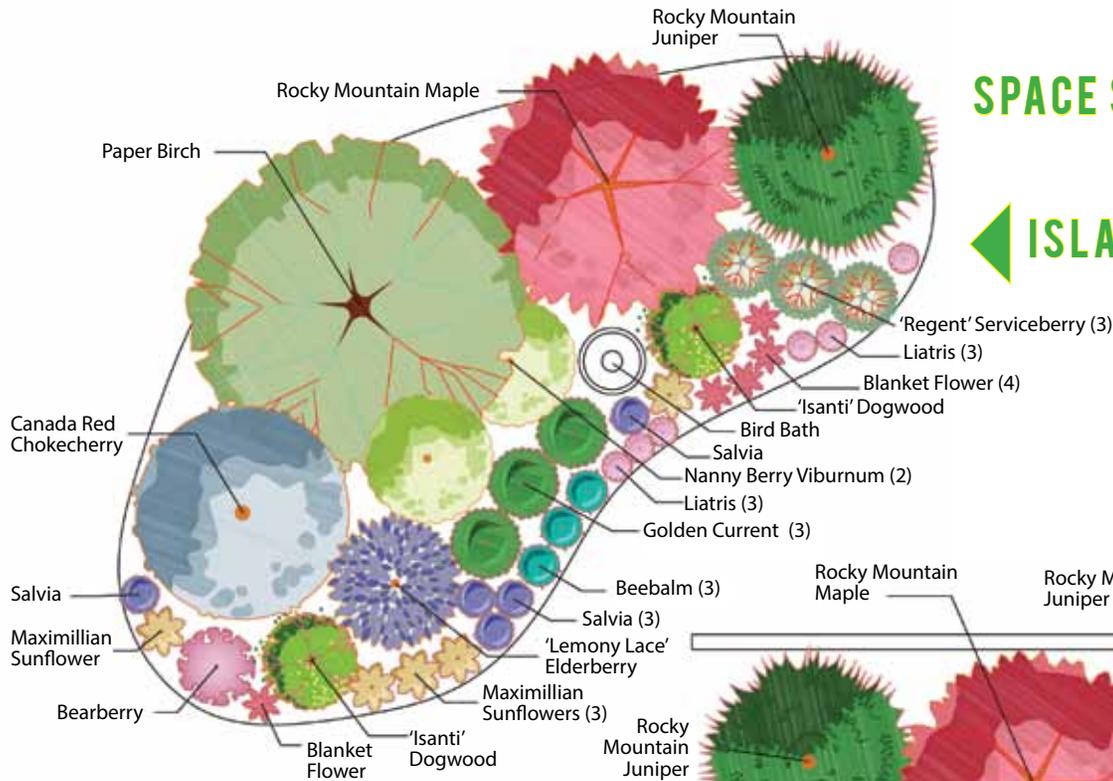
- ❑ **Chokecherry** *Prunus virginiana*: 25', zone 2. Widely adaptable native shrub with high wildlife value. Many birds and mammals eat these. **N**
- ❑ **Common Lilac** *Syringa vulgaris*: 8-15', zone 3. Gorgeous blooms. Provides dense cover. Many songbirds glean insects from plants.
- ❑ **Cotoneaster** *Cotoneaster lucidus*: 7-10', zone 3. Flowers eagerly eaten by tanagers and waxwings. Berries attract a variety of birds in fall. Vibrant orange-red fall color.
- ❑ **Dwarf Korean Lilac** *Syringa meyeri 'Palabin'*: 4-5', zone 3. Attractive compact shrub with profuse highly fragrant blossoms. Provides dense cover for birds.
- ❑ **Elderberry** *Sambucus racemosa*: 10', zone 3. Masses of cream colored flowers in spring. Birds love deep red-purple berries in fall. **N**
- ❑ **Golden Currant** *Ribes aureum*: 3-5', zone 2. One of the first to bloom; provides early food for hummingbirds and bees. Edible fruits. **N**
- ❑ **Red Osier Dogwood** *Cornus sericea*: 10', zone 2. Attractive bright red stem. Many birds love the fruit including vireos and thrushes. **N**
- ❑ **Serviceberry** *Amelanchier alnifolia*: 8-20', zone 4. Saskatoon and Regent are good cultivars. Everything eats these berries! Tanagers, grosbeaks, waxwings. **N**
- ❑ **Viburnums: Nannyberry** *Viburnum lentago* and **American Cranberrybush** *V. opulus var. americanum*: 10-20', zone 2. Beautiful flowers and foliage. Excellent wildlife value. **N**
- ❑ **Woods Rose** *Rosa woodsii*: 5', zone 2. Very fragrant long-blooming pink flowers. Many birds relish the rose hip fruits into the winter. **N**

VINES

- ❑ **Dropmore Honeysuckle** *Lonicera x brownie 'Dropmore Scarlet'*: zone 4. Wonderful orange-red trumpet shaped flowers. The ultimate hummingbird attractant.
- ❑ **Valiant Grape** *Vitis 'Valiant'*: zone 3. A hardy vine for Montana with heavy yields of grapes. Birds love them.

BIRD-FRIENDLY LANDSCAPE PLANS

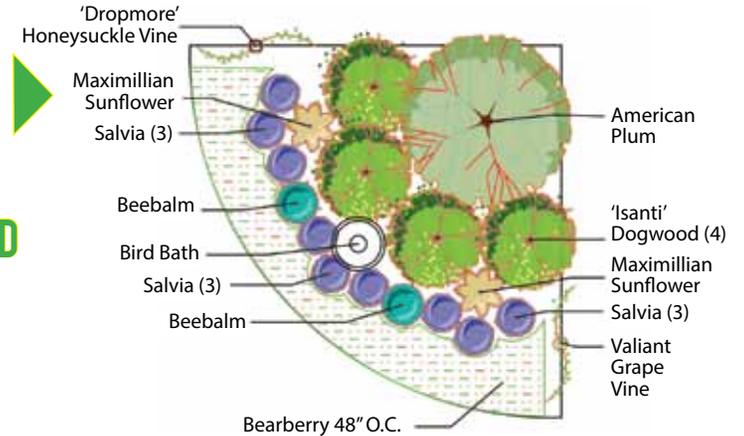
55' across



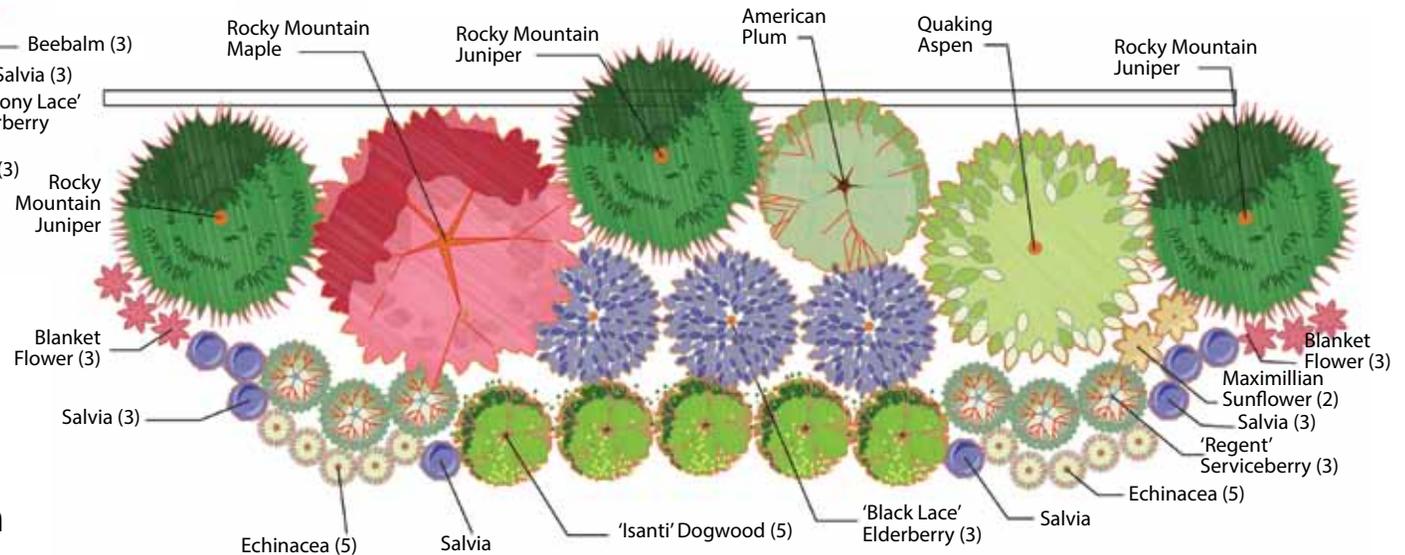
SPACE SAVER

ISLAND BED

25' across



BIOHEDGE



75' across

Use these plans as they are or adjust them to fit your property. You can substitute other similar sized plants from our recommended list.

Designs by Dylan McDowell, compliments of Cashman Nursery

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT: sacajaweaudubon.org/bird-friendly-landscaping/ and audubon.org/plantsforbirds