



HOME & GARDEN

Home and Garden information center • 12005 Homewood Road • Ellicott City, MD 21042 • 1-800-342-2507

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Wildlife Tips

Occurrences

- Squirrels are busy gathering nuts of oaks, hickories, and beech for the winter. They eat what they need and store the rest. Gray squirrels bury nuts at many locations. They find their nuts by sense of smell and memory and may end up eating nuts buried by other squirrels. Often squirrels store nuts in attics, so prevent their entry by securing hardware cloth over openings..
- October is a peak month for fall migration. This is a good time to observe hawk migration. Several hawk species may be seen on their flights to their wintering homes. The white-throated sparrow migrates from the north and frequents our area until spring.
- Hummingbirds migrate in response to changes in day length and other environmental cues. Leave your hummingbird feeders up to make food available for late migrants.
- Black rat snakes are hatching now. These harmless baby snakes are not black at hatching but are a light gray with dark brown rectangular markings down the back. Their length at hatching is around 10 inches.

Attracting

- When planning your wildlife friendly backyard don't forget to include native trees and shrubs that produce fall and winter persistent fruits. The fruits are an important food source for migratory birds, winter residents, and other wildlife. The plants also offer nest sites and cover. Some fall fruiting trees and shrubs include: dogwood, persimmon, black gum, oaks (acorns), and eastern white pine (seed bearing cones).
- Some fall fruiting native trees and shrubs with winter persistent fruits include: Eastern red cedar, sumac, American cranberry bush viburnum, Northern bayberry, American holly, and winterberry holly (include male and female plants for cross-pollination). Fruits of these trees and shrubs may remain long after ripening and may not be eaten by birds until frozen and thawed many times. These are important food sources for overwintering birds and early spring arrivals.
- Introduce native plants into your landscape by replacing dead or dying non-native plants with native species. You can also create new beds for plants in areas that are existing lawns.
- Rake some leaves into your ornamental beds. The leaves serve as mulch which breaks down into organic matter. The mulch slowly releases nutrients and offers weed control. A layer of leaf litter also provides a valuable hibernating habitat for important predatory insects and other beneficial small animals such as toads and snakes.
- Leave the large seedheads of black-eyed Susans, coneflowers, and native grasses for birds to feed on over the winter. Plants also offer shelter and provide winter interest in the garden.
- Clean all nest boxes and feeders. Scrape and remove debris and scrub with hot, soapy water. Rinse and let dry. Some birds that are cavity nesters such as (chickadees and titmice) may use the nest boxes for roosting during the winter.
- Don't put your bird bath away. Birds need fresh water for drinking and bathing throughout the fall season. Clean frequently and keep filled with fresh water.
- Use your fall trimmings and leaves to build a brush pile in the corner of your yard or near the edge of a wooded area. Brush piles offer winter protection for ground dwelling birds, small mammals and a hibernaculum for reptiles.

Educating People To Help Themselves

Local Governments - U.S. Department of Agriculture Cooperating

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- You can supplement birds' natural diet with purchased seed, suet, etc. Winter through early spring are popular times to feed when natural food sources are less available. Birds can be fed year round. It is okay to stop feeding for short periods or permanently. Birds have evolved to adapt to different types of food sources. Black oil sunflower seeds and suet cakes are a good choice for a wide variety of birds. To attract your favorite species you have to provide the right combination of food and feeders. For information on feeding birds see <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/AllAboutBirds/attracting/feeding/>

Nuisance

- Where voles are a problem try using mouse snap traps baited with apples. Fall is a good time to trap. Voles accept the bait readily after the first hard frost when desirable foods are less plentiful. Reduce populations before the winter when woody plant damage is greatest.
- Where deer are feeding on garden and landscape plants, you may need to use several approaches for control. Apply repellents such as "Liquid Fence", "Deer-Away", "Deer-Off", "Hinder" or "Ro-Pel" to vulnerable plants. If deer pressure is heavy, try rotating repellents. Small deodorant soap bars have been used with some success. Grow plants seldom damaged by deer and consider fencing options.
- House mice may be more noticeable around and in homes due to the onset of cool weather. Keep turf and weeds mowed closely around your house. Seal all cracks.