

# The Schumacher Guide to a Bird Filled Backyard

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***"If you build it, they will come."***

Though this famous quote from Field of Dreams may have worked for Kevin Costner in his corn field, it will not work for you in your suburban backyard. We offer up a more accurate version of Costner's famous line:

***"If you build it well, maintain it well and pray you get lucky, they will maybe come."***

Birds are birds. They are animals. They are unpredictable. They may come or they may not. All you can do is provide them the best possible environment and hope they come. We have been testing out different strategies over the years and have found a successful backyard bird sanctuary comes down to this:

***The 3 Fs:  
Flora, Feed, Friendliness.***

Giving birds proper flora, feed and friendliness is the key to creating your neighborhood's most popular bird sanctuary.

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## ***FLORA***

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Birds are like food critics: they are picky, they are obnoxious, and they love bird seed (or, so I read in the New Yorker). For your backyard bird sanctuary to be successful, you must put out the finest of flora. You wouldn't feed a food critic a Flank steak when you have a Porterhouse sitting in the back, would you? No. Here are a few of our favorite flora for attracting birds:



## ***Serviceberry***

***(Amelanchier canadensis)***

A stunning, small ornamental tree with a light appearance and bright fall color. Fruits in early Summer. Loved by robins, waxwings, cardinals, tanagers, grosbeaks, and many others.



## ***Staghorn Sumac***

***(Rhus typhina)***

A small shrub with brilliant red foliage in fall, and spikey clusters of hairy red fruits. Fruits in the fall. Loved by robins, bluebirds, thrushes, catbirds, cardinals, chickadees, and many others.



## ***Chokeberry***

***(Prunus Virginiana)***

A small, pretty cherry tree whose tiny flowers grow to an abundance of reddish-purple berries. Fruits in late summer. Loved by robins, cardinals, mockingbirds, Bobwhites, bluebirds, cedar waxwings, thrushes and many more.



## ***Eastern White Pine***

***(Pinus Strobus)***

The famous evergreen tree, grows large, strong and sturdy (up to 75 ft.). Its cones contain many seeds, reaching its peak in late Fall and early winter. Good nesting for countless numbers of birds. Loved especially by woodpeckers, mourning doves, chickadees and many others.



## ***Coralbells***

***(Heuchera Hybrids)***

A beautiful perennial flower, and a staple for every garden, coralbells come in many varieties. They are a versatile and enduring flower. They are especially loved by hummingbirds.

# ***FEED***

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The overwhelming majority of bird experts agree that sunflower seeds are the best choice for your bird feeder. They are enjoyed by the widest array of birds of any seed.

Sunflower seeds come in two types: black oil and striped. We recommend black oil, because they have thinner shells and are easier for all seed eating birds to crack open.

Squirrels will be a problem for you, no doubt, but there are many ways to stop them from stealing all of your bird seed. Here is an article showing you ten different ways to stop squirrels

(<https://www.nwf.org/News-and-Magazines/National-Wildlife/Birds/Archives/2010/Squirrels.aspx>). We recommend the plastic bottle trick. It is the cheapest and easiest to execute.

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# ***FRIENDLINESS***

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Friendliness, we believe, is the best way to keep your backyard full of birds year round. Treat them like you would any house guest and make them feel at home.

**Keep them safe.** Always keep your feeders at least five to ten feet away from shrubs, or any other potential hiding spot for cats. If a bird does not feel safe in your backyard, it will not stay in your backyard.

**Keep them healthy.** Always fill and refill your bird seed. Do not leave any food out that could harbor any potentially deadly pathogens (corn, fruit, Porterhouse steak).

**Keep them entertained.** Arrange your flora in a creative fashion. Stagger your plants with feeders, your feeders with birdhouses. Make your backyard a playground.

**Most importantly, keep an open heart.** Always. Love every bird that finds its way into your backyard. Love them with indiscriminate passion. Love them like they are your children.

And remember, as we Schumachers always say, "Keep [the bird seed] pouring!"