Use this list to select plants that will attract and support breeding birds in your landscape.
Breeding Birds

There are approximately 100 bird species that breed in the urban regions of the Credit River watershed. Steep declines in many bird species means that there is a need for quality habitat that provides enough food to raise their young and a safe place to nest. Increasing the number of native plants in residential landscapes, industrial parks and urban woodlots can help support nesting urban birds by providing them with food. This plant list can be used for a variety of landscape and garden projects to help breeding birds and their offspring prosper.

Urban areas are often thought of as supporting very little wildlife but a surprising number of birds spend their summers raising their young in and around cities. Common birds such as American robins and song sparrows nest in a variety of urban places such as residential yards, city parks and industrial areas. Less familiar species, such as the wood thrush and the American redstart, might need more forest than small properties can provide, but can still breed in one of the many small forest patches around the city. Birds that breed in these urban areas may face threats such as cats, collisions with buildings and poor food supplies.

Ninety-six per cent of birds feed their young spiders and insects such as caterpillars, flies, bees and midges. Without enough insects, birds will have a difficult time successfully raising offspring. Native insects evolved with native plants over hundreds or thousands of years, often growing to depend on those plants for food, shelter or other resources not provided by non-native plants. In fact, some insects can only feed on the specific plant(s) they evolved with. Non-native plants support very few insect species compared to native ones. For example, serviceberry supports 124 species of caterpillars while lilac only supports 40 species.

For additional plant information including preferred soils, flower colours and more, refer to CVC’s landscaping plant lists: Native Woodland Plants (www.creditvalleyca.ca/woodlandplants) for Landscaping and Native Prairie and Meadow Plants for Landscaping (www.creditvalleyca.ca/prairie Meadow Plants).
Choosing Your Plants

This plant list recommends plants that can help support urban breeding birds by providing food, shelter and nest sites in gardens and landscaped areas. The list has been divided into five categories:

1: Height

In natural woodlands and forests you will notice different heights or layers of plants. Selecting plants from two or more layers of vegetation can increase the number of birds that use the site:

- tall trees (greater than 23 m)
- medium trees (15 to 23 m)
- small trees (10 to 15 m)
- large shrubs (6 to 10 m)
- medium shrubs (4 to 6 m)
- small shrub (2 to 4 m)
- very small shrub (less than 2 m)
- ground cover/vines

2: Name

Within each height category, plant names are sorted alphabetically by common name, with both the common and scientific names given.

3: Rank

Plants within each height category have been ranked to show which plants provide the most benefit to breeding birds (one being the highest rank). Ranking is based on the following characteristics, which contribute to providing food, shelter and nest sites during the breeding season:

- branch density
- number of birds that show a preference for nesting in that plant species
- number of butterfly and moth species supported (during larval and adult stages)
- support for birds, small mammals, bees or other insects
- number of bird foraging guilds the plant can support

Restoration Projects and Planting in Regulated Areas

Restoration projects and those requiring a CVC permit must use common species native to the Credit River watershed. Common native plants on this list are those without an asterisk. For a complete list of approved plants for CVC planning applications and restoration projects refer to: www.creditvalleyca.ca/plantselectionguide.
5: Foraging Guild

Birds are sometimes grouped into categories or **guilds** based on their eating or **foraging** habits. This section indicates which bird foraging guilds each plant may support. Eleven different foraging guilds are listed:

- **Aerial Insectivore** – eats insects while flying through the air e.g. swallows
- **Bark Insectivore** – eats insects on or behind tree bark e.g. woodpeckers
- **Upper Canopy Insectivore** – eats insects high in the trees e.g. warblers
- **Upper Canopy Grainivore** – eats seeds high in the trees e.g. jays
- **Upper Canopy Frugivore** – eats fruit high in the trees e.g. orioles
- **Lower Canopy Insectivore** – eats insects in the lower part of trees and in shrubs e.g. chickadees
- **Lower Canopy Grainivore** – eats seeds in the lower part of trees and in shrubs e.g. cardinals
- **Lower Canopy Frugivore** – eats fruit in the lower part of trees and in shrubs e.g. robins
- **Ground Insectivore** – eats insects on the ground e.g. blackbirds
- **Ground Grainivore** – eats seeds on the ground e.g. sparrows
- **Ground Frugivore** – eats fruit on the ground e.g. finches

Choosing plants that support several guilds will increase the number and diversity of birds supported.

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4: Plant Usage and Bird Species Examples

This section shows how a plant is likely to be used (foraging or nesting), and an example of breeding birds that might use it.

To help birds successfully raise their offspring they need a good nesting spot and a place to find food to feed their young. By combining good nest plants with good foraging plants you can support more birds.

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When choosing plants:

- Make sure each plant matches your site conditions by referring to CVC’s landscaping plant lists, which contain information on sun exposure, soil type and moisture. See page 3.
- For large-scale projects, such as forest restoration, focus on creating a diverse canopy of varying heights in order to support a larger number of birds over the entire length of the breeding season.
- For small scale projects such as backyard landscaping, focus on choosing plants with a higher rank (closer to one) to maximize the benefit your planting has for birds.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Name</th>
<th>Scientific Name</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Bird Use: Nesting</th>
<th>Bird Use: Food</th>
<th>Foraging Guild</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basswood, American</td>
<td><em>Tilia americana</em></td>
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<td>White-breasted Nuthatch</td>
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<td>Hackberry, Common*</td>
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<th>Foraging Guild</th>
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<td>Willow Flycatcher, Common Yellowthroat</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Jersey Tea*</td>
<td>Ceanothus americanus</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Alder Flycatcher, Carolina Wren</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raspberry, Black</td>
<td>Rubus occidentalis</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Indigo Bunting, White-throated Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird, Northern Cardinal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raspberry, Purple-flowering</td>
<td>Rubus odoratus</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Not for restoration or projects requiring a CVC permit, see p. 5.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Name</th>
<th>Scientific Name</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Bird Use: Nesting</th>
<th>Bird Use: Food</th>
<th>Foraging Guild</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Raspberry, Wild Red</td>
<td>Rubus idaeus ssp. strigosus</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Chestnut-sided Warbler, Yellow Warbler</td>
<td>Gray Catbird, Eastern Towhee</td>
<td>![ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rose, Carolina*</td>
<td>Rosa carolina spp. carolina</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Gray Catbird, Savannah Sparrow</td>
<td>Brown Thrasher, House Wren</td>
<td>![ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rose, Smooth</td>
<td>Rosa blanda</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Savannah Sparrow, Chipping Sparrow</td>
<td></td>
<td>![ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serviceberry, Low</td>
<td>Amelanchier spicata</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>Nashville Warbler, Willow Flycatcher</td>
<td>![ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other name: Running Serviceberry</td>
<td>Former scientific name: Amelanchier stolonifera</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>![ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snowberry, Common*</td>
<td>Symphoricarpos albus var. albus</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Yellow Warbler, Alder Flycatcher</td>
<td></td>
<td>![ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiraea, Hardhack*</td>
<td>Spiraea tomentosa</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Brown-headed Cowbird, Chipping Sparrow</td>
<td></td>
<td>![ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other name: Steeplebush</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Song Sparrow</td>
<td></td>
<td>![ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. John's-wort, Kalm</td>
<td>Hypericum kalmianum*</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>White-throated Sparrow, Chestnut-sided Warbler</td>
<td></td>
<td>![ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viburnum, Maple-leaf</td>
<td>Viburnum aestivalum</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Brown-headed Cowbird, Chipping Sparrow</td>
<td></td>
<td>![ ]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bittersweet, American</td>
<td><em>Celastrus scandens</em></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Wood Thrush</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creeper, Thicket</td>
<td><em>Pantherocissus inserta</em></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Song Sparrow, Nashville Warbler</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creeper, Virginia*</td>
<td><em>Parthenocissus quinquefolia</em></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Red-winged Blackbird, Song Sparrow</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dewberry, Northern*</td>
<td><em>Rubus flagellaris</em></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Savannah Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grape, Riverbank</td>
<td><em>Vitis riparia</em></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Northern Cardinal, Tree Swallow</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partridge-berry*</td>
<td><em>Mitchella repens</em></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Song Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strawberry Bush, Running*</td>
<td><em>Euonymus obovatus</em></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Wood Thrush, Least Flycatcher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virgin’s-bower*</td>
<td><em>Clematis virginiana</em></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Mourning Dove, American Robin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wintergreen</td>
<td><em>Gaultheria procumbens</em></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Great Crested Flycatcher, Ovenbird</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Credit Valley Conservation landscaping information and programs

CVC offers programs and resources that support native plant gardening, landscaping and naturalization.

Your Green Yard offers workshops and presentations on native plant gardening and landscaping to local residents within the Credit River watershed.

www.creditvalleyca.ca/ygy

Greening Corporate Grounds offers advice, landscape concept plans and planting events to businesses and institutions within the Credit River watershed.

www.creditvalleyca.ca/gcg

Countryside Stewardship offers workshops as well as technical and financial assistance to support rural environmental stewardship.

www.creditvalleyca.ca/countrysidestewardship

For additional landscaping fact sheets and resources, visit www.creditvalleyca.ca/landscaping

Sources


Additional Resources

Birds:

• CVC’s Native Plant List for Migrating Birds (www.creditvalleyca.ca/plantsformigratingbirds)

• Cornell Lab of Ornithology bird guide (www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/search)

• Celebrate Urban Birds (celebrateurbanbirds.org/)

• Nest Watch (nestwatch.org/)

• Bird Studies Canada (bsc-eoc.org/)

• FLAP (www.flap.org/)

Gardens:

• How to Create Bird Friendly Gardens (www.creditvalleyca.ca/birdgardens)

• Native Woodland Garden for Homes (www.creditvalleyca.ca/reswoodland)

• Native Woodland and Forest Plantings for Businesses and Institutions (www.creditvalleyca.ca/corpwoodland)

• Native Prairie and Meadow Gardens and Landscapes for Homes, Businesses and Institutions (www.creditvalleyca.ca/prairiemeadow)

• Yard Map (http://content.yardmap.org/)
Breeding bird checklist

This is a list of birds that have been recorded nesting in urban areas within the Credit River watershed. Use this checklist to keep track of birds you see throughout the breeding season in your backyard, at work or around the city.

Ducks, Geese and Swans
- Canada Goose
- Mute Swan
- Wood Duck
- Gadwall
- American Wigeon
- American Black Duck
- Mallard
- Bufflehead
- Common Merganser

Grebes
- Horned Grebe
- Red-necked Grebe

Heron
- Great Blue Heron
- Great Egret
- Green Heron
- Black-crowned Night-heron

Vultures
- Turkey Vulture

Ospreys
- Osprey

Hawks
- Sharp-shinned Hawk
- Cooper’s Hawk
- Red-tailed Hawk

Rails
- Sora

Plovers
- Killdeer

Sandpipers
- Spotted Sandpiper

Gulls and Terns
- Ring-billed Gull
- Herring Gull
- Caspian Tern
- Common Tern

Cuckoos
- Black-billed Cuckoo

Owls
- Eastern Screech Owl
- Great Horned Owl

Swifts
- Chimney Swift

Hummingbirds
- Ruby-throated Hummingbird

Kingfishers
- Belted Kingfisher

Woodpeckers
- Red-bellied Woodpecker
- Downy Woodpecker
- Hairy Woodpecker
- Northern Flicker
- Pileated Woodpecker

Falcon
- American Kestrel
- Peregrine Falcon

Tyrant Flycatchers
- Eastern Wood-pewee
- Alder Flycatcher
- Willow Flycatcher
- Least Flycatcher
- Eastern Phoebe
- Great Crested Flycatcher
- Eastern Kingbird

Nuthatches
- Red-breasted Nuthatch
- White-breasted Nuthatch

Creeper
- Brown Creeper

Wrens
- House Wren
- Carolina Wren

Gnatcatchers
- Blue-gray Gnatcatcher

Thrushes
- Veery
- Wood Thrush
- American Robin

Martins and Swallows
- Purple Martin
- Tree Swallow
- Northern Rough-winged Swallow
- Bank Swallow
- Cliff Swallow
- Barn Swallow

Chickadees
- Black-capped Chickadee

Vireos
- Warbling Vireo
- Red-eyed Vireo

Cardinals
- Northern Cardinal
- Rose-breasted Grosbeak
- Indigo Bunting

American Robin

Mimics (Mockingbirds and Thrashers)
- Gray Catbird
- Brown Thrasher
- Northern Mockingbird

Starlings
- European Starling*

Wood Warblers
- Nashville Warbler
- Mourning Warbler
- Common Yellowthroat
- American Redstart
- Yellow Warbler
- Chestnut-sided Warbler
- Pine Warbler

New World Sparrows
- Eastern Towhee
- Chipping Sparrow
- Savannah Sparrow
- Song Sparrow
- Swamp Sparrow
- White-throated Sparrow

Old World Sparrows
- House Sparrow*

* Non-native species