LANDSCAPING FOR WILDLIFE

10 TIPS FOR CREATING A WILDLIFE-FRIENDLY LANDSCAPE
INTRODUCTION

• Landscaping to attract wildlife:
  – brings nature close by welcoming it into our backyards
  – planting certain trees, shrubs, and flowers creates inviting atmosphere for wildlife
  – creates habitat for animals displaced by community growth and development
INTRODUCTION

- Wildlife need:
  - Food
  - Water
  - Cover
  - Space
10 TIPS FOR CREATING A WILDLIFE-FRIENDLY LANDSCAPE

1. Limit the Amount of Lawn You Have
2. Increase Vertical Layering
3. Provide Snags and Brush Piles
4. Provide Water
5. Plant Native Vegetation
10 Tips for Creating a Wildlife-Friendly Landscape

6. Provide Bird/Bat Houses and Birdfeeders
7. Remove Non-native Invasive Plants
8. Manage Pets
9. Reduce Pesticide Use
10. Expand the Scale of Habitat
1 Limit the Amount of Lawn You Have

- Turfgrass provides little food or cover for wildlife
- To help speed replacement of lawn:
  - remove the grass and plant seeds of native wildflowers that are adapted to the conditions in that part of your yard (sunny, shady, wet, dry, etc.)
1 Limit the Amount of Lawn You Have

- Replace some lawn grass with groundcovers: more valuable to wildlife, provide food and shelter for small animals
1 Limit the Amount of Lawn You Have

• Add islands of vegetation: native groundcovers, wildflowers, or other vegetation

– locate the islands so they are near each other to reduce the amount of open space animals have to cross
1 Limit the Amount of Lawn You Have

- Plant a butterfly garden:
  - plants for both the adult and larvae (caterpillars)
  - food plants for larvae will be munched on and may look tattered at times
  - create a small, bare area of moist sand
2 Increase Vertical Layering

- increase plant structure between the ground and tree canopy
2 Increase Vertical Layering

- variety of vegetation, different sizes and heights = more cover and food
- islands of native vegetation with plants of different heights are best
3 PROVIDE SNAGS AND BRUSH PILES

• as trees become diseased or die, consider leaving them standing as snags for wildlife such as woodpeckers to use for feeding and nesting

Downy Woodpecker foraging for insects Photo: Thomas Wright, UF/IFAS

Mark Hostetler
3 PROVIDE SNAGS AND BRUSH PILES

- a brush pile or two, especially if near other vegetation, provides excellent cover and food for small mammals, birds, and butterflies
4 PROVIDE WATER

- essential to productive wildlife habitats
- wildlife will benefit from any water source you provide, birdbath, small pond
4 PROVIDE WATER

• ponds also attract amphibians and reptiles and add amphibian breeding habitat
5 Plant Native Vegetation

• Use native plants whenever possible.
  – provide better food and cover for native wildlife

Immature wax myrtle fruits are green. Mature fruits are blue in color and are fleshy, attracting birds for dispersal. Photograph by Brent Sellers.
5 **PLANT NATIVE VEGETATION**

- Use native plants whenever possible.
  - require less care and resources to maintain than non-natives
  - better adapted to local soil conditions and are more resistant to natural pests/diseases
5 Plant Native Vegetation

- Information on purchasing native plants, Association of Florida Native Nurseries: http://www.afnn.org/
6 PROVIDE BIRD/BAT HOUSES AND BIRDFEEDERS

• Birdfeeders:
  - different designs or different seeds may increase diversity of birds you attract
  - clean all feeders thoroughly, at least weekly during warm weather- old or wet seeds can rot and make birds sick
6 PROVIDE BIRD/BAT HOUSES AND BIRDFEEDERS

• Locate near cover (bushes, trees) is helpful for songbirds if they have to escape a predator

• But...keep the feeders at least fifteen feet away from vegetation so that squirrels cannot jump onto it
6 PROVIDE BIRD/BAT HOUSES AND BIRDFEEDERS

- **Bird and Bat Houses.**—Adding birdhouses (nest boxes) and bat houses in your yard provide nesting and roosting shelter for wildlife.
- Several factors will determine which animals will use these sites including:
  - The size of the bird/bat house (overall size, as well as depth)
  - The size of the entry hole
  - The height at which the bird/bat house is mounted
  - The amount of surrounding vegetation
  - The habitat adjacent to your yard and in your neighborhood
6 PROVIDE BIRD/BAT HOUSES AND BIRDFEEDERS

• For more information on bats and bat houses: http://www.batcon.org/

• Install a bat house: http://www.batcon.org/index.php/get-involved/install-a-bat-house.html
6 Provide Bird/Bat Houses and Birdfeeders

- For more information about birds and birdhouses, visit Cornell University's Lab of Ornithology: http://www.birds.cornell.edu/Page.aspx?pid=1478

  - Construction plans with size specs for each cavity-nesting species
  - Also useful when buying a pre-built birdhouse.
7 **Remove Non-native Invasive Plants**

- Non-native invasive plants aggressively take over natural habitats.
- What we do in our individual yards can affect areas far beyond our yards.
- Once established, these non-native plants:
  - destroy wildlife habitat
  - create areas with fewer plant species, less food and shelter opportunities for wildlife
7 REMOVE NON-NATIVE INVASIVE PLANTS

• Before buying plants check for invasive status:
  – IFAS Assessment of Florida Non-native Plants: http://plants.ifas.ufl.edu/assessment/conclusions.html
8 Manage Pets

- cats and dogs can drastically impact wildlife
- cats are extremely good hunters
  - kill millions of birds and small mammals each year
  - cats and dogs hunt for fun, not necessarily for food; a problem if you are attracting wildlife to your yard
8 Manage Pets

• Keeping cats indoors will also keep them safe from strays, diseases, and traffic.
• For more information, visit the American Bird Conservancy's campaign “Keep Cats Indoors!”: http://www.abcbirds.org/abcprograms/policy/cats/index.html
• Most pesticides do not target one species or pest — affect anything that comes into contact with the pesticides

• Blanket-spraying your lawn kills beneficial insect species.
9 Reduce Pesticide Use

- Almost all wildlife species are connected to insects - even if they do not eat insects, their prey do!
- Alternatives to pesticides:
  - http://www.beyondpesticides.org/
10 EXPAND THE SCALE OF HABITAT

• The required habitat for many species is much larger than you can provide in your yard.
Combining several different yards will attract more species to the neighborhood.

Discuss with your neighbors designing wild areas at the property lines or on adjacent corners of your properties.

A Bird's-Eye View: How Birds Select Habitat: [http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/uw174](http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/uw174)
QUESTIONS?
Books

• *Landscaping for Florida’s Wildlife*, Joe Schaefer and George Tanner


• Can both be found at: [http://ifasbooks.ifas.ufl.edu/](http://ifasbooks.ifas.ufl.edu/)
Books

- The Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Guide to Plant Selection & Landscape Design
- Free copy available at: www.watermatters.org
RESOURCES

• Landscaping for Wildlife:
  – http://livinggreen.ifas.ufl.edu/landscaping/landscaping_for_wildlife.html#intro

• Landscaping Backyards for Wildlife: Top Ten Tips for Success:
  – http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdffiles/UW/UW17500.pdf

• Landscaping for Wildlife Video:
  – http://livinggreen.ifas.ufl.edu/tv_episodes/landscaping_for_wildlife.html
Thank You!