

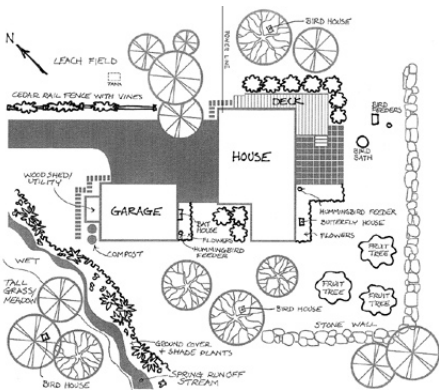
# Over the Garden Gate



<http://www.overthegardengate.org>

## Five Birds That Help Control Garden Pests

AS A GARDENER, it can be your worst nightmare: watching helplessly as hordes of destructive insects attack your plants. With a little planning and simple landscaping, however, you can help moderate garden pests naturally in your yard. Your weapon: bug-eating birds. “During the late spring and summer months, insects make up the great majority of many avian species’ diets,” says National Wildlife Federation Chief Naturalist Craig Tufts. The trick to enticing these birds to your property, he notes, is to first learn which of them range in your area, and then to plant appropriate types of native cover that provide insect- and bird-attracting natural foods--leaves, fruit, pollen and nectar--to sustain both adults and their insect-dependent nestlings. Tina Phillips, project leader of Cornell Lab of Ornithology’s Bird House Network, adds, “The most important thing to do to attract birds to your yard is to provide an enticing habitat, not just a nest box. Birds choose a nest site based on its surrounding habitat.”



Along with native vegetation, offer birds a water source and a few different nesting sites: brush piles, ledges, nest boxes, shrubs and various types of trees--including dead tree limbs and trunks. “As long as they don’t create a safety hazard for people, dead trees provide nesting areas and are a great food source for insectivores,” says Tufts.

Birds will not completely rid your yard of insects, and even if they could, you wouldn’t want them to do so. Some insects are imperative for a healthy garden, and birds do not discriminate between destructive and beneficial bugs. But they can help keep insect populations in your neighborhood at a stable, balanced level, benefiting both you and your neighbors.

Subsequently, you’ll have a nicer garden to show for it throughout the summer.

Which bug-eating birds are the best ones to attract to your yard? There’s no simple answer. Scientists cannot say for sure how many insects

## LOCALS

**JUNE 2:** Wichita County Master Gardener Association monthly meeting is at Wichita County Extension Office, 2nd floor, 6th and Scott, Wichita Falls, TX.

**Time: 5:30 p.m.**

**JUNE 4:** Red River Native Plant Society monthly meeting is at the Kemp Center for the Arts, 1300 Lamar, Wichita Falls, Texas. **Time: 6:00 p.m.**

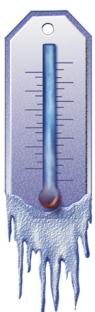
**JUNE 13:** Annual Pond Tour. Call 692-5347 for locations and time.

**JUNE 15:** Red River Orchid Society monthly meeting is at the Kemp Center for the Arts, 1300 Lamar, Wichita Falls, Texas. **Time: 7:00 p.m.**

**JUNE 16:** Burkburnett Garden Club monthly meeting is at the Community Room of the Fidelity Bank. **Time: 5:30 p.m. Contact: Rex Bristol 636-0486**

**JUNE 25:** Texoma Water Garden Society monthly meeting. **Time: 6:30 p.m. (pot luck dinner) or 7:00 p.m. for meeting.**

**JUNE 27:** BugFest at River Bend Nature Center, 2200 Third St. Call 767-0843 for start time.

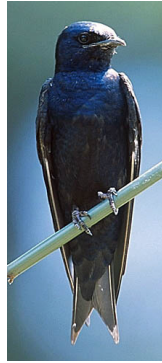


### Freeze-Dates for Wichita Falls

- ° Last Spring Freeze: 3/27
- ° First Fall Freeze: 11/10
- ° Freeze-Free Days: 228

a certain bird will eat in a summer day. The following five species can be valuable allies in your efforts to sustain a vibrant garden:

**PURPLE MARTIN:** Aerial feeders that forage over land and water, purple martins eat a variety of winged insects. Purple martins often nest in tree cavities and building crevices. Attract them by providing hotel style houses on poles 10 plus feet high or by hanging hollow gourds.



**CHIPPING SPARROW:** Well-adapted to various landscapes, chipping sparrows are common throughout backyards in most of North America. They eat insects and seeds from the ground, shrubs and trees. These common birds tend to nest in evergreens, making nests out of grasses, weeds, roots and hair. Attract them with pines, spruce, arborvitae and yew.

**EASTERN BLUEBIRD:** With their numbers increasing due to nest-box projects along “bluebird trails,” eastern bluebirds occupy semi-open areas east of the Rockies. They eat a variety of insects, other invertebrates and berries. Eastern bluebirds nest in tree cavities, old woodpecker holes and nest boxes. Plant elderberry, hackberry, dogwood, holly and red cedar to supplement their diet.



**CAROLINA CHICKADEE:** Very similar to the Black-capped Chickadee, Carolina Chickadees is a regular visitor to backyard habitats with trees and woody shrubs. They eat insects, spiders, moths and caterpillars from foliage. To attract Carolina Chickadees, provide suet and sunflower seed feeders.

**HOUSE WREN:** Regular backyard visitors, house wrens have diets that consist almost exclusively of insects and spiders. Not very fussy about sites, these birds may nest in nest boxes, mailboxes, building crevices—even in pockets of hanging laundry. Include low-lying shrubs (such as American beauty berry) or brush piles in your yard—sources for cover, nesting materials and food.



To learn more, visit NWF’s Backyard Wildlife Habitat™ Web site at [www.nwf.org/backyardwildlifehabitat](http://www.nwf.org/backyardwildlifehabitat) and [www.eNature.com](http://www.eNature.com). In addition, log onto <http://birds.cornell.edu> to see how you can help monitor backyard birds for scientists.

*Adapted from Sara Boyle’s internet article: “Ten Birds That Help Control Garden Pests”*

## ESTATE S

**JUNE 29-30: Texas Master Gardener Vegetable Specialist Training** Somervell County Expo Center, Glen Rose, Texas. Hosted by Somervell County Master Gardeners and AgriLife Extension Service Master Gardener. Registration information will be forthcoming. Please check the TMGA web site soon for more information.

**SEPT. 28-OCT. 2: Master Volunteer Entomology Specialist Training** Texas AgriLife Extension Service Montgomery County Office, Conroe, TX. Hosted by Dr. Paul R. Nester, Extension Program Specialist, Houston/Metro area, and the Montgomery County Master Gardeners.

- Registration fee of \$300.00 includes collecting kit with lots of goodies; lectures; Extension bulletins; 3 lunches, 1 dinner, snacks & drinks
- Transportation and lodging is on your own
- Course is limited to 25 applicants; deadline is July 18, 2009

Contact Paul Nester at [PNester@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:PNester@ag.tamu.edu) or 281-855-5639 with any questions.



**Work Day Dates and Times to be Announced at the June Meeting**

### Association Contacts:

Lulu Canan, *President* 691-4496; Paula Savage, *Vice President* 691-0231; Gail Elmore, *Secretary* 569-0188; Beth Turlington, *Treasurer* 692-7570

### Committees Chairperson:

Paula Savage, *Newsletter* 691-0231; Beth Turlington 692-7570 and Mary Barry 592-2075, *Web Site*; Jerry Warren, *Volunteer and Advanced Training Hours Recorder* 767-2020 or [enenjay@nts-online.net](mailto:enenjay@nts-online.net)

**State Directors:** Peg Marquardt, Mary Barry, Delores Lane and Jeff Smith

**Specialists:** Peg Marquardt, Rainwater Harvesting and Plant Propagation; Mary Barry, Jr Master Gardener **Advisor:**

Tara McKnight, CEA-Hort, Texas Cooperative Extension, Wichita County (940)716-8610