

4 Tips for Creature-Friendly Yards and Gardens

A ROCHA
USA



Image by Treve Johnson Photography

Why Make Our Yards Creature-Friendly?

- Across the U.S., we have lost almost 3 billion birds since 1970,* and some estimate that extinction threatens over 40% of insect species.**
- Dr. Doug Tallamy, co-founder of [Homegrown National Park](#), estimates that U.S. lawns take up 40 million acres of land.
- If enough people dedicate even a small part of their lawn to native species, we could restore millions of acres of plant, bird, and insect habitat across the country!

1 – Plant Natives, Remove Invasives

- The turf grass in our lawns is non-native and offers little sustenance for birds and insects. In contrast, native plants offer abundant food and shelter for birds, pollinators, and crop-friendly bugs.
- To find plants native to your area, refer to the [Xerces Society](#) or [Homegrown National Park](#) websites.
- If you own a larger property with many invasive plants (e.g., a church property), you can work with [Weed Wrangle](#) to remove the invasives.
- Dedicate some or all of your lawn to go without mowing, even if it's just for a month. You can also reduce the frequency or depth of your mowing, all of which helps to increase the diversity of native plants on your property.
- For more support and resources, join the "[Less Lawn, More Life](#)" challenge!

*Rosenberg et al., 2019. "Decline of the North American Avifauna."

**Sánchez-Bayo et al., 2019. "Worldwide Decline of the Entomofauna."

2 – Leave Food for Birds and Bugs

- In light of the loss of "150 million acres of habitat and farmland to urban sprawl,"* we want to make our properties as hospitable as possible for birds and insects, so that their numbers can rebound.
- For birds: feeders, baths, and [bird-friendly plants](#). Find more tips [here](#) from the Audubon Society.
- For bugs: native and pollinator-friendly plants.
- Pollinator-friendly cover crops: learn more [here](#) from the Xerces Society.

3 – Leave Shelter for Birds and Bugs

- For birds: native trees, unraked leaves, rock piles, and nesting boxes. Find more tips [here](#) from the Audubon Society.
- For bees and bugs: logs, unraked leaves, rock piles, overwintering flower stalks and seed heads, and plant- or compost-based debris instead of plastic mulch or wood chips. Learn more [here](#) from the Xerces Society.

4 – Avoid Pesticides and Herbicides

- Pesticides and herbicides can poison crop-friendly birds, bugs, and pollinators (and local waterways), while also removing their vital food sources!
- Alternative pest management strategies include maintaining year-round crop coverage (e.g., leaves, compost, and plant debris), minimizing soil disturbance, rotating and diversifying crops, and adding "[companion plants](#)."
- You can also create home-made alternatives to pesticides, such as [these recipes](#) from the Old Farmer's Almanac for sprays made from dish soap, garlic, and hot pepper.
- An eco-friendly way to kill mosquitos is the "[Mosquito Bucket of Doom](#)."
- Learn more on the [Xerces Society](#) and [Old Farmer's Almanac](#) websites.

*Audubon Society, "Why Native Plants Matter."