

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 tens of millions of 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."