

## Learn To Be Lazy! Fall Landscaping for the Birds

Spring and summer are the busy times in my garden. Planting, weeding and maintaining the garden pools for both beauty and the well being of my bird residents is a tiring and time-consuming job. Fall is my time to slow down, relax more, and be that lazy person that lurks inside of me the rest of the year.

There are several chores you can ignore that will be a help to the birds and other wildlife that choose to spend the fall and winter months in your yard.

1. Don't cut back!

Unless you have a problem with disease, leave the foliage of flowers and grasses which provides a home for insects that attract birds. At the end of the season a perennial garden that's not cut to the ground is inviting to birds because they will feel protected among the plants. The birds will also find seeds along with insects, insect eggs, and larvae that are over-wintering on the dried foliage.

2. Don't deadhead!

As fall approaches, allow the seeds to mature on the flowers that you have carefully deadheaded all season. This will provide a much needed natural food for birds that remain in the area and may attract migrants as well. Goldfinches love the seeds of coneflowers and the deep red heads of sedum attract grosbeaks, siskins and sparrows.

3. Don't eliminate dead wood!

Most home owners run for the saw as soon as they spot a dead branch or tree on their property. Unless it is a hazard to residents or guests, don't be too quick to remove dead trees and limbs. These make homes for the birds that prefer natural hollows for nesting. The insect population on a dead tree as it decays will attract birds and woodpeckers will use the tree for drumming during mating season. Leave some dead branches to serve as natural perches - many birds like a spot where they can easily see approaching predators or danger. The decaying tree may also serve as a host for fungi or lichens, which provide food and nesting materials.

4. Don't clean up the leaves!

Mulch some of your yard leaves with the mower and leave piles - they attract insects and therefore birds. You will be amazed at how quickly you have birds scratching around in a newly found pile of leaf litter. You may have the added bonus of a colony of ladybugs taking winter refuge on your property, and when spring arrives they will be ready to clear your garden of aphids.

5. Don't trim your shrubs!

Many homeowners do all their shrub trimming and shaping in the fall, thinking that they will be all set for the spring season when it comes. Spring flowering and most berry producing shrubs are properly trimmed right after flowering. If you need to trim or shape, research and know the proper time for each plant. Be careful not to do this chore when you are eliminating the berries and fruit that can be a much needed food source for birds.

Meticulous fall cleanup of garden debris only lessens the attractiveness of your property to the wildlife you are trying to lure. If you just can't leave it all till spring, then compromise and clean some areas and leave others. The birds and other wildlife will appreciate your efforts and you will enjoy learning to be lazy!



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