mountain plants_Layout 1 3/30/16 3:02 PM Page 1



NATIVE PLANTS FOR BIRDS

Your yard — and the kinds of plants in it — matters to birds! As natural areas for birds continue to decrease, so do native plants and the important food sources they provide for birds.

What are native plants?

Native plants are those that occur naturally in an area. North Carolina is home to thousands of native plant species. Many are stunningly beautiful; some occur nowhere else in the world. Over many millennia, our native wildlife — including birds — have adapted to the resources provided by the native flora. Native plants are, in a real sense, "home" for our birds.

Why are native plants important for birds?

In a word: insects. Virtually all land birds — 96% — require insect food for their young. Native plants support healthy populations of insects, including caterpillars, that breeding birds feed their nestlings. However, nonnative plants contain foreign compounds that most native insects won't eat. Without insects for food, baby birds starve. By adding native plants to your yard, you can help counteract the imbalance created by non-native plantings and ensure the survival of future generations of birds.

Invasive plants – avoid these!

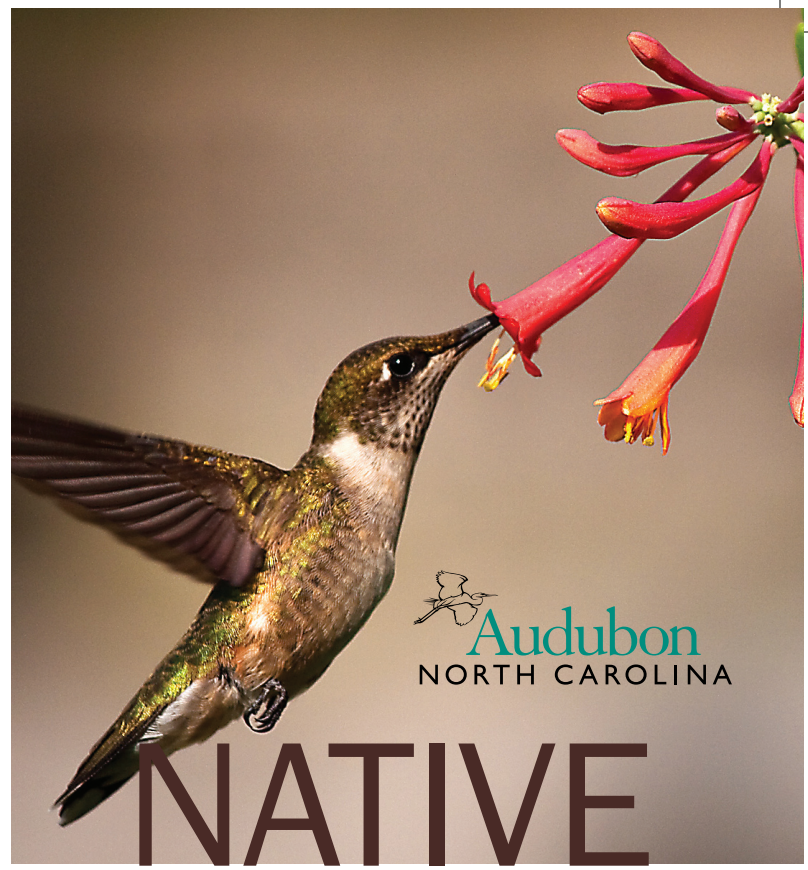
Some of the most common – or, in a few cases, "up-and-coming" – invasive species in the mountains of North Carolina are listed below.

Common name	Scientific name
English ivy	*Hedera helix*
Privets	*Ligustrum* spp.
Japanese honeysuckle	*Lonicera japonica*
Mimosa, silktree	*Albizia julibrissin*
Periwinkle, Vinca	*Vinca* spp.
Chinese silvergrass	*Miscanthus sinensis*
Sacred bamboo	*Nandina domestica*
Tree-of-Heaven	*Ailanthus altissima*
Multiflora rose	*Rosa multiflora*
Bushclover	*Lespedeza bicolor*
Princess tree	*Paulownia tomentosa*
Japanese barberry	*Berberis thunbergii*
Butterfly bush	*Buddleia davidii*
Oriental bittersweet	*Celastrus orbiculatus*
Purple crownvetch	*Coronilla varia*
Burning bush	*Euonymus alatus*
Japanese knotweed	*Fallopia japonica*
Kudzu	*Pueraria lobata*

Additional resources regarding invasive plants are available at www.ncwildflower.org/invasives/invasives.htm

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PHOTO CREDITS
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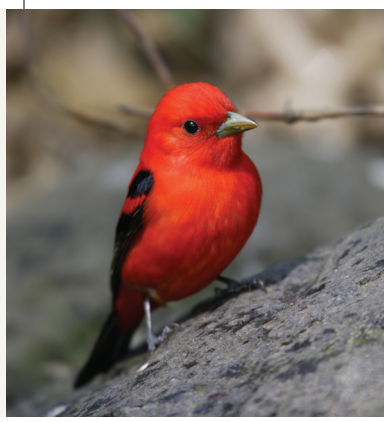
NATIVE PLANTS FOR BIRDS

MOUNTAIN

"It's simple: By gardening with native plants – no matter where you live or how small or large your space is – you can help sustain wildlife."

DOUG TALLAMY, BRINGING NATURE HOME

mountain plants_Layout 1 3/30/16 3:02 PM Page 4



Scarlet Tanager



Baltimore Oriole



Tiger Swallowtail



Sassafras berries



Great Blue Lobelia



Fire Pink

Below are lists of native plants that provide a variety of foods for birds and that also grow well in gardens and yards.

Larval host plants

Plant these – and feed baby birds

Common name	Scientific name
Oaks	*Quercus* spp.
Birches	*Betula nigra, B. lenta*
Ironwood, American hornbeam	*Carpinus caroliniana*
Washington hawthorn	*Crataegus phaenopyrum*
American beech	*Fagus grandifolia*
Elderberry	*Sambucus canadensis*
Hickories	*Carya ovata, C. tomentosa, C. glabra*

Berry-producing plants

Nature's energy-packed treats

Common name	Scientific name
Native blueberries	*Vaccinium* spp.
Serviceberry	*Amelanchier laevis, A. arborea, A. canadensis*
Fringetree	*Chionanthus virginicus*
Flowering dogwood	*Cornus florida*
Persimmon	*Diospyros virginiana*
Spicebush	*Lindera benzoin*
Sassafras	*Sassafras albidum*

Seed/nut-producing plants

Nutrient-rich and long-lasting

Common name	Scientific name
Little bluestem	*Andropogon (Schizachyrium) scoparius*
Hazelnut	*Corylus americana*
White pine	*Pinus strobus*
Purple coneflower	*Echinacea purpurea*
Oaks	*Quercus* spp.
Joe-Pye weed	*Eutrochium fistulosum*
Black-eyed Susan	*Rudbeckia* spp.

Nectar-producing plants

The sweetest things around

Common name	Scientific name
Cardinal flower	*Lobelia cardinalis*
Coral honeysuckle	*Lonicera sempervirens*
Canadian columbine	*Aquilegia canadensis*
Great blue lobelia	*Lobelia siphilitica*
Wild geranium	*Geranium maculatum*
Fire pink	*Silene virginica*
Buckeye	*Aesculus pavia, A. flava*
Flame azalea	*Rhododendron calendulaceum*
Trumpet creeper	*Campsis radicans*

Are nonnative plants bad for birds?

Though often pretty, nonnatives ultimately do not provide enough resources, particularly insects, to feed baby birds and sustain healthy bird populations.

"But birds love my Privet hedge!"

Adult birds are adaptable and will readily eat the fruits of nonnative plants. Most insects, however, are not as flexible and do not feed on nonnative plants. With fewer insects, baby birds starve – and bird populations plummet.

What are invasive plants?

Invasive plants, like kudzu and Chinese privet, are nonnative species that have escaped cultivation and now overrun native vegetation. This has dire consequences for birds: less food (especially for nestlings), fewer nesting sites, and increased predation.

Online resources for native plants

- NC Cooperative Extension Service – www.ncsu.edu/goingnative/
- NC Native Plant Society – www.ncwildflower.org
- NC Botanical Garden – www.ncbg.unc.edu
- Audubon North Carolina – www.ncaudubon.org

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