Winter Insights

Feed the Birds with Native Plants

Native plants are a great way to support the bird population all year round. Birds love coneflowers (Ligularia dentata), which provide a beautiful and bees love them! Prickly pears (Opuntia humifusa) are also native and provide food for birds. They are hardy and can survive harsh winters (they even survive into Canada)!

Seasonal Plant Identification

Winter is a great time to enjoy the beauty of plants in their winter form. Coral honeysuckle (Lonicera sempervirens) is a shrub that provides food and shelter for birds. It's also a beautiful plant with its evergreen leaves and flowers that attract bees. Swamp sunflower (Helianthus angustifolius) is another native plant that flourishes in winter. It's a classic bird feeder seed and provides food for many bird species.

Benefits of feeding birds with native plants instead of seed:

- **Food availability in mind.** Native plants provide a natural food source for birds. They can cut down that bird food bill while still enjoying watching the birds (and garden lovers)!
- **Increased biodiversity.** Native plants support a wider range of wildlife, including birds. This can attract a variety of species to your garden. For example, birds like passerines (small songbirds) and thrushes are drawn to native plants.
- **Ecosystem support.** Native plants provide food, shelter, and nesting opportunities for birds and other wildlife. This helps maintain a balanced ecosystem.

What's "Ag"? An Apus’ putdown

Aster (Aster amellus) is a late season bloomer, which means they create seed late into the year. Asters bloom around October and November, providing seeds for birds to eat throughout the winter. The seeds of asters are a great source of nutrition for birds. They can provide a steady food source for birds during the colder months.

Start planning for spring! Many native seed and plant sellers have pre-order information on their websites. Native plants are an excellent way to support local wildlife and the environment. By choosing native plants for your garden, you're supporting the health and biodiversity of your local ecosystem. Native plants are also more likely to thrive in your garden, as they are adapted to your local climate and soil conditions.

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