

## Native Songbird Care & Conservation's Guide to Supporting Native Songbirds with Native Plants



Your garden is your outdoor sanctuary. With some careful plant choices, it can be a haven for native birds as well. Landscaped with native species, your yard, patio, or balcony becomes a vital recharge station for migratory birds passing through and a sanctuary for nesting and overwintering birds.

Each patch of restored native habitat is just that – a patch in the frayed fabric of the ecosystem in which it lies. By landscaping, or *wildscaping*, with native plants, we can turn a patchwork of green spaces into a quilt of restored habitat. More native plants mean more choices of food and shelter for native birds, native pollinators and other wildlife.

### Our favorite native plants for native songbirds include:

**Toyon** – berries in winter

**Coffee berry** – berries in fall

**Coast live oak** – insects, acorns, nesting and roosting habitat, safe cover

**Ribes** – nectar, berries

**Mallow** – nectar, insects

**Coyote bush** – insects, seeds, nesting material, nesting habitat, safe cover

**Native grape** – berries

**Ribes** – nectar, berries

**Elderberry** – nectar, berries in summer

**Ceanothus** – nectar, insects, roosting and nesting habitat, safe cover

**Saltbush/Quailbush** – tender tips of plant are gently pruned and consumed by finch and sparrow species all year, provides safe cover and nesting habitat

**Sticky Monkey Flower** – nectar

**California Fuchsia** (various) – nectar

**Buckwheat** (various) – nectar, seeds

**Goldenrod** – nectar, seeds

**Aster** (various) – nectar, seeds

### **Our favorite resources for California native plants and habitat gardening include:**

- California Native Plant Society's [www.Calscape.org](http://www.Calscape.org) web resource. It shows which plants are native to any location in the state, helps you determine which plants are best for your area, where to buy the plants and how to grow them.
- Also from CNPS, the CNPS Grow Native Gardening Program, which provides information about habitat gardening, how to plan a garden, tips for plant propagation and more: <http://www.cnps.org/cnps/grownative/>

### **Where to buy native plants locally:**

- CNPS Milo Baker annual native plant sales in October. Check their website for details. [www.milobaker.cnps.org](http://www.milobaker.cnps.org)
- California Flora Nursery. They are wonderful! 2990 Sommers St, Fulton, CA 707-528-8813, [www.calfloranursery.com](http://www.calfloranursery.com)

### **About the Native Songbird Care & Conservation Songbird Sanctuary Habitat Garden**

With the needs of native songbirds in mind, the creation of our Songbird Sanctuary habitat garden began nearly 15 years ago. It is a work in progress and a constant source of learning for me. The garden and the wildlife rehabilitation hospital, Native Songbird Care & Conservation, are located on my home property in Sebastopol.

The majority of our rustic habitat garden occupies approximately an acre of the land and is mostly California native plants. There are a few ornamentals here and there that were planted before we bought the property 18 years ago. Slowly but surely, the ornamentals will be replaced with California native plants.

The garden is drought tolerant and does not use irrigation. A small amount of supplemental water may be provided during the peak of summer from water collected in rain barrels during the winter. To help slow and sink rainwater on our land, a series of swales and basins in the center of the garden was designed and installed in the fall of 2016 by Karmendra Rossy of Nucleus Ecological Design.

Most of the plant material in the garden was selected with the needs of native songbirds in mind and provides a variety of food sources year-round and includes berries, seeds, nectar and insects. Some of the favored plants by birds include, coffee berry, toyon, native grape, coyote bush, quailbush, ribes, salt bush, elderberry, various buckwheat species, mallow and ceanothus.

The success of our efforts to provide native habitat in the Songbird Sanctuary Habitat Garden and what it provides to our local wildlife is measured by the response of our local songbirds. Up to 33 species of native songbirds have been recorded nesting on our 2-acre property during spring and summer. The Songbird Sanctuary Habitat Garden provides what they need - food, water, shelter and safe places to nest and raise their young.

The garden also provides vital habitat for migratory birds passing through as well as overwintering songbirds. In addition to the diversity and abundance of songbirds, we host a variety of other wildlife, from bobcats and brush rabbits, to Western Fence Lizards and Great Horned Owls. A large variety of native bees, butterflies and other insects also call the garden home.



Native Songbird Care & Conservation is a state and federally licensed wildlife rehabilitation facility specializing in the care of native songbirds. We are an all-volunteer non-profit organization. To learn more about or to inquire about visiting our habitat garden, please contact us at 707-484-6502 or visit [www.nativesongbirdcare.org](http://www.nativesongbirdcare.org).