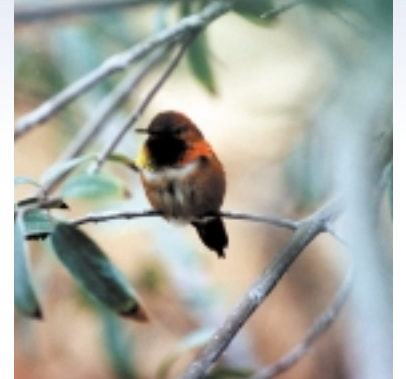


BIRDS OF A FEATHER

FLOCK TO NATIVE HABITATS



Helping your customers create a bird-friendly backyard habitat will produce a new flock of loyal bird-supply-buying customers.

By Elizabeth Pensgard



Consumers can either leave your garden center with a single bird feeder or bird-bath or the makings for an entire bird habitat — the decision is largely up to you. However, if you are among the many retailers still treating their birding section as an afterthought, take heed. You are missing out, not only on an ever-growing trend, but also on a substantial profit center. For instance, instead of placing emphasis on stand-alone birding items such as food or houses, emphasize the components of a bird habitat. Additionally, you can display your birding section prominently instead of in the nether regions of your store. Or display

bird feeders, birdhouses and seed next to a bench full of bird-attracting green goods, as well as inside the main retail area.

Green goods in particular are highly effective cross-merchandisers if they are marketed as attracting certain species of birds. Not only do annuals and perennials provide food sources for birds, but they also provide nesting possibilities. Your customers will expect you to know which plants will attract which birds. If you simply direct your customer to your birding section, you may have lost a sale and a customer. However, if your customers find you knowledgeable, you may not only have won the sale but a lifetime customer as well.

BIRD-ATTRACTING GREEN GOODS

Many common ornamental grasses, annuals and perennials are great for bird nesting and sustenance. But as with any plant, one of your first considerations should be selecting plants that are suitable to your geographic area. The success rate of these plants will not only be determined by their longevity and health, but also by their ability to attract the desired birds. Birds will not be attracted to sickly plants, so it is vital

that you consider climate, soil conditions (pH), disease susceptibility/resistance, moisture level, sunlight requirements and the height or expanse of the plant as it matures in order to recommend the best plant for each customer's desired habitat.

Ornamental prairie and native grasses are optimal for hardiness and survivability with natives also having the additional benefit of being low maintenance. Grasses provide excellent cover for ground-nesting birds such as geese and ducks. Stalks of large prairie grasses can likewise provide bunting for the nests of birds in places other than on the ground, and such grasses are particularly desirable since it is an acceptable practice to leave them unkempt.

Perennials can also provide excellent nesting material, as well as some seed. Some perennials grow thick stems and offer enough shrubbery to provide good nesting sites. Good nesters include lupine, echinacea, California poppy, coreopsis and cornflowers. It is notable, however, that not all perennials produce seed enough to sustain an entire bird population and will therefore necessarily have to be mixed with annuals.

Clockwise from left: Perennial border with goldenrod, yarrow, ornamental grasses, daylilies, hostas, gladiolas, lobelias, sedum and lily of the valley (photo courtesy of Perennial Plant Association); Echinacea purpurea 'Primadonna Rose' (photo courtesy of Benary); Rufous hummingbird (Photo courtesy of the National Bird-Feeding Society); Ornamental



FOCUS ON BIRDING

Purple martin house

This gourd rack system supports both aluminum purple martin houses and gourds all on one pole. The Add-A-Rack is easily mounted underneath any of the aluminum houses. The pole will hold up to eight gourds and affords great perching. Lone Star Purple Martin Houses. (888) 673-4442.

Write in 1174



Helmet

Midwest Helmet offers sun/rain helmets made from either a polyethylene hard plastic for durability or a triple-lacquered straw for lightness and coolness. These hats offer protection from harmful sunrays as the wide brim shades the eyes and face. Available in white, khaki, blue and olive green with a black elastic chinstrap and a terry cloth-covered adjustable headband. Midwest Helmets Inc. (800) 873-5005.



Write in 1175

Bird bath de-icer

The new KozyBird Oasis is a state-of-the-art birdbath heater. The patented technology is available in two sizes, 11-inch round for standard birdbaths and 14-inch crescent for island birdbaths. With its built-in thermostat, it heats only when the temperatures drop and works great in below-zero temps. NuWarmth. (866) 892-7684.

Write in 1177



Garden stake

Welcoming "Old Crows and Duffers," this humorous bird feeder garden stake is adorned with an old crow and the 19th hole marker. It is made of wood and measures 14 3/4 inches high. A metal stake is included. Ohio Wholesale Inc. (877) 745-5050.

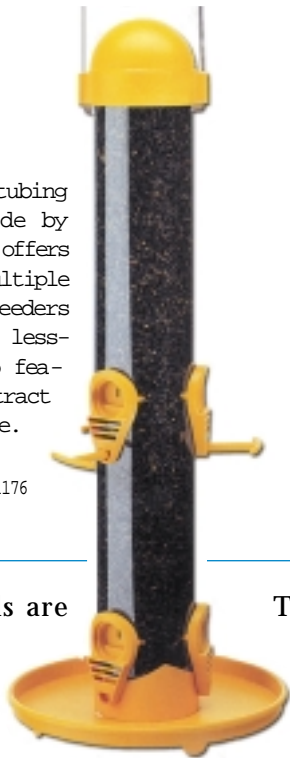
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Bird feeder

Made of durable polycarbonate tubing that measures 2 1/2 inches wide by 16 inches long, this bird feeder offers six feeding stations to allow multiple birds to feed simultaneously. Feeders have a 2-pound seed capacity for less-frequent refills. The feeder also features removable perches that attract clinging and perching birds alike. Opus Inc. (800) 221-6787.

Write in 1176



Seed bells

Birdola seed bells provide a quick and easy way to feed wild birds and animals. Seed bells contain premium seeds, corn, peanuts, berries and other energy foods that birds and animals love. Seed bells can be hung or used with the Birdola Bell Feeder. Birdola Products. (616) 365-0194. ▶

Write in 1179



Unlike perennials, annuals are abundant seed-producers. Cosmos, impatiens, marigolds and zinnias are low-maintenance and provide hearty sustenance for birds. Other good, seed-producing annuals are sunflowers, floss flowers, larkspurs, spider flowers, bachelor's buttons, snapdragons and cockscombs. Annuals are the favorites of many songbirds, including sparrows and finches.

Wildflowers are also good seed producers and, after the summer season when they have dried to stalks, continue to provide dried seeds. Aster, goldenrod and yarrow in particular produce many seeds from one flower head and attract such birds as sparrows and juncos.

Though nectar-rich plants require more maintenance than wildflowers, they are often more brightly colored and therefore attractive to hummingbirds and orioles, who will not only feed from the plant, but pollinate it as well. Hummingbirds are especially attracted to nectar-rich perennials, annuals and vines. Favorite hummingbird perennials are bee balm, butterflyweed, cardinalflower, columbine, coral bells, cosmos, dahlias, delphiniums, flame acanthus, foxgloves, fuschias, geraniums, hollyhocks, lupines, monkeyflowers, penstemon, red hot poker, sages, scarletsages, speedwells and verbenas. Hummingbirds' favorite annuals

include mountain garlands, four-o'clocks, touch-me-nots, flowering tobacco, nasturtiums, petunias, spider flowers and zinnias. Hummingbird-attractive vines include bougainvilleas, cardinal climbers, flame vines, honeysuckle, rosary vines, trumpet creepers and trumpet vines.

KNOWLEDGE AND CROSS-MERCHANDISING

Knowing which nursery stock to purchase and how to integrate it with your birding department is just the first step, although a huge one. The next step is to create a complete, integrated birding department or perhaps simply dust off ▶



Finch feeder

The Dee-Lite finch feeder features an internal line system that provides easy filling and cleaning through either the top or bottom. Tough, 48-inch tall polycarbonate tubes are available in clear, green, blue and amber. Acrylic perches insert into 20 feed stations to accommodate American Goldfinches. Weighs only two pounds when filled with seed. Dee-Lite Finch Feeders. (877) 639-0841.

Write in 1180



Wooden birdhouse

The new White Garden collection from Country Nests offers a beautiful, handmade, wooden birdhouse with a natural shingled roof and scalloped trim. It comes with a bay window and stone chimney, log pile, rocking chair and window box as well as breathing and drainage. Country Nests. (450) 226-2252.

Write in 1189



Suet seed

Heath Manufacturing offers suet seed blocks for ease of feeding. Packed 12 per case, the blocks have a longer shelf life and the most suet and least filler of any brand. Blocks will not leak or turn rancid and are made with the highest-quality ingredients. Heath Manufacturing Company. (616) 997-9491.

Patriotic t-shirt

The new "Bird Flag" t-shirt features a design of 50 Mountain bluebirds (blue), doves (white) and cardinals (red) in the shape of an American flag. Excellent for garden centers and wild birding stores or for anyone who is looking for a more unique and individual way to express their patriotic pride. Earth Sun Moon Trading Company. (888) 458-1687.

Write in 1195



Bird feeder

Conant Custom Brass now offers its Heirloom birdfeeders with an antique finish. Durable solid copper construction, large unbreakable food chambers and easy lift-the-roof styling allow for years of enjoyment. Available in 6-, 12- and 18-inch models as well as a 6-inch thistle feeder. All Conant Custom Brass products come with an unconditional lifetime guarantee. Conant Custom Brass. (800) 832-4482. ▶

Write in 1196

the one you already have. Select a wide variety of high-quality products — bird feeders, birdbaths, birdseed, bird houses, green goods and anything else necessary to create a backyard bird habitat. Be knowledgeable about these products, particularly the green goods you stock. It does little good to you or your customer if you offer a wide variety of bird-attracting plants but know little about them. Finally, cross-merchandise your green goods with your birding products. Not every plant or flower that attracts birds should necessarily be displayed together. A smattering of popular bird-attracting plants or ▶



Hummingbird clock
Richly sculpted and cast in hand-painted bonded marble, this large clock makes a great addition to any hummingbird or clock collection. Clock measures 9 x 12 inches. Ibis & Orchid Design Inc. (888) 969-4247.

Write in 1197



Feeder

The Windy Willows Trading Company has introduced The Copper Roofed Gazebo Feeder, a part of The Victorian Collection of bird houses and feeders. This originally designed feeder stands 56 inches tall and is available in a white finish. The Windy Willows Trading Company. (203) 698-7800.

Write in 1199

Squirrel-proof bird feeder

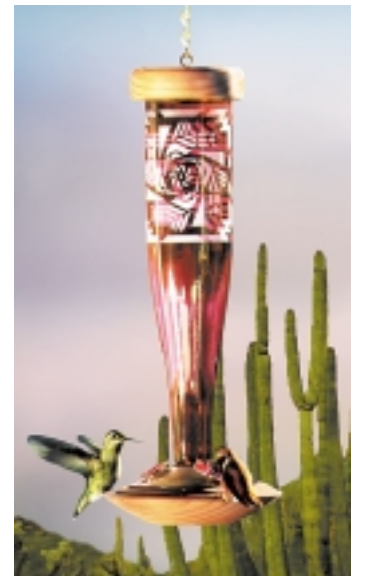
The "bouncer" bird feeder has an innovative design of four counter-weighted perches that will only support smaller songbirds and most cardinals. The weight of either gray or red squirrels will cause the perches to collapse to an inaccessible position underneath the feeder. Vari-Crafts. (973) 398-8880.

Write in 1198



Brass feeders and baths

Winged Aquatics has developed a heavy-duty line of high-quality brass bird feeders that are fully functional, easy to set up and easy to fill. Available in 12- and 16-inch diameters, finishes include a natural brass, which will patina, or colored brass, which has been designed to resemble natural aging. Winged Aquatics. (805) 389-8131.



Hummingbird lantern

The newest addition to Schrodts' popular hummingbird feeders, the Southwest Ruby, features a spiral etching by Gary Schrodts in the tradition of Native American artistic style. Schrodts Designs Inc. (800) 460-3852.

flowers will suffice if it is accompanied by signage that directs customers to additional bird-attracting green goods.

And creating a cross-merchandised bird department might not involve as many steps. Take a walk through your annual and perennial sections. You'll probably find many of the varieties mentioned above. When you do, you'll also find that increasing your bird-related sales will be as simple as moving some plants inside, some bird food outside and creating a couple of signs. 🐦

Beth Pensgard is editorial assistant for Lawn & Garden Retailer. All information concerning bird species and bird-attracting plants was provided by The National Bird-Feeding Society (www.birdfeeding.org), the Baltimore Bird Club (www.bcpl.net/~tross/by/attract.html#4), The Garden Helper (www.thegardenhelper.com/birdplants.html) and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's pamphlet, "Homes for Birds."