

January 2025 Newsletter

Happy New Year!

Each season seems to have a theme that anchors everything we think and do. In the winter, many come home to familiar streets, to nostalgic recipes, to loved ones near and far. But we also come home to ourselves, in a way. We look inward and behind acknowledging the good, the meaningful, and the hard from the year. We celebrate what we've learned, how we've grown, and where we've stumbled (because mistakes only help us fail smarter next time). In a season that intrinsically invites us to finish a good story before beginning a new one, reflection feels like a natural fit for January. And as the calendar turns, we'll take time to stop and remember once again ...

JANUARY MEETING:

Date: January 8, 2025

Time: 9:30 AM - Set-up

10:00 AM - Business Meeting starts

10:30 - 11:00 - Social and Snack time

11:00AM - Program

12:30 - Clean-up

Location: Our Savior Lutheran Church
745 Front Street South
Issaquah, WA

Program: Jim Olson will talk about growing orchids. Jim has been a gardener his entire life and after retirement gardening became a priority. he joined the King County Master Gardener Program. Aside from doing presentation through the Speakers Bureau he works at the Bellevue Demonstration Garden and is on the Growing Grocery series leadership team and on the faculty of the Redmond Plant Advice Clinic. At home he grows a bit of everything - berries, apples, many types of veggies, herbs and landscape plants, including natives. He has a special fondness for growing orchids.

Horticultural Corner: Lois talking about Plume Poppy

January Snack Committee:

Hostess: Lexie D.

Crew: Janet W.
Debbie D.
Jean P.
Joan H.

February Snack Committee:

Hostess: Jean P.

Crew: Karen B.
Joy J.
Maura E.
Deb M.

LETS SAVE ON KITCHEN SUPPLIES:

Please remember to bring your own plate, napkin and silverware so we don't deplete the club's supplies and reduces our garbage footprint! And, attention coffee and tea drinkers - remember to bring your own cup (THANKS)

ISSAQUAH FOOD BANK DONATION:

** The Food Bank now has a list on their website of items that are needed and they only accept donations on designated days

** Some suggested items are canned tuna, canned chicken, pasta sauce, Hamburger Helper and 2 pound bags of rice.

OTHER TASKS TO KEEP ON YOUR CALENDAR:

POST OFFICE TROUGH:

A sign-up sheet was passed around for volunteers to check on the trough and surrounding area to make sure it is tidy and to water during the summer months.

December - Thanks to Joan H. for checking on the trough

January - Georgann L.

February - Sandra R.

March - Maura E.

We recently received this nice email note regarding the work we've done at the Post Office:

“Thank you so much for the lovely plantings at the USPS. The watering trough with the hellebores is so charming for the holidays, and I know you work hard during the summer to keep the grounds fresh. Thank you so much for taking on this task and especially for the lovely winter plantings just now!”

THINGS YOU MIGHT HAVE MISSED:

DECEMBER MEETING:

For the December meeting we had our annual Christmas Potluck. Everyone contributed yummy savory and sweet treats and we enjoyed a time of visiting with each other. We also did a gift

exchange that was punctuated with the occasional gift being stolen necessitating that the one who lost the gift had to choose yet another gift. A good time was had by all!

Horticultural Corner: None

December Program: None

SAVE THE DATES:

February 24, 2025 - General Membership Meeting

May 18, 2025 - General Membership Meeting

EDUCATIONAL CORNER:

9 Way To Attract Birds To Your Yard Other Than Hanging A Birdhouse

It's easy when you know what birds need.

Having [birds](#) in the garden creates a lively space and a free show where you can observe them eating, looking for caterpillars, using a [birdbath](#), or drinking water. Setting up a birdhouse doesn't guarantee feathered beauties will flock and take up residence. Some bird species won't use a tiny-

sized home, while others may not like where it's placed or they don't know it exists. Attracting birds to your garden requires thinking about their food, water, and nesting needs. After all, they're not thinking about how beautiful the garden is but whether it's a safe place with resources available.

We spoke to two gardening experts on ways to attract birds to the garden without a birdhouse, including native plants, providing food and water sources, and resisting the urge to clean up your garden.

Meet Our Expert

Nicole Dillon is a micro-flower farmer and owner of Breemar Flower Farm based in Ashland, Virginia.

Barbara Smith is a Consumer Horticulturist with the Clemson Extension Home and Garden Information Center (HGIC).

Why You Should Attract Birds To Your Garden

Designing spaces with avian visitors and wildlife in mind is key to healthier ecosystems. "Our backyards play an important role in creating habitat for our native birds and

wildlife," says Nicole Dillon, micro-flower farmer and owner of [Breemar Flower Farm](#) based in Ashland, Virginia (zone 7b). "Our yards can play a vital role in protecting our planet's natural resources through carbon sequestration and water management if we plant the right things."

Birds play an essential role in the ecosystem as pollinators drink nectar from flower to flower and move pollen, spreading seeds, which helps new plants germinate and grow and reduce unwanted insects in the garden. "Birds help with pest control as many types of insects are an important part of a bird's diet, thus reducing the need for insect control using insecticides," says [Barbara Smith](#), Consumer Horticulturist with the [Clemson Extension Home and Garden Information Center \(HGIC\)](#).

Here are 9 ways to attract more birds to your yard without a birdhouse

How To Attract Birds

Grow Flowers Bloom Different Times of Year

Many flowers bloom in the spring or summer. Grow flowers that also bloom in fall and winter so food, seeds and nectar sources are available to birds year-round. "Some birds are attracted to color so having something each season to catch their eye can keep them sticking around," says Dillon.

Planting a diverse garden with [flowers that bloom](#) for short or longer periods and in different months means more variety and options for different bird species. "Biodiversity is important as different species of birds require different types of food sources," says Smith. Plus, your garden will be vibrant and colorful, especially in the fall and winter when there's less happening outside.

Grow Natives

Native plants are indigenous species that grow in a specific region or ecosystem. They are well-adapted to the climate and rainfall (or lack of) and wildlife depends on them, too. "Native plants provide seeds, fruits, and nectar as natives have evolved with birds and insects to provide them with both shelter and food sources," says Smith. Native plants are easier to maintain and take care of because they're well-suited to the area. "After establishment, native plants require less maintenance—less water, fertilizer, and pesticide use," she says.

Grow Butterfly Host Plants

Butterflies need specific plants, called host plants, where they can lay their eggs and caterpillars hatch. Not all [caterpillars](#) will become butterflies, of course, because some are eaten by birds. "If you want to attract birds, especially baby birds, provide their main food source, which is caterpillars and insects, not seeds," says Dillon. Some of the top flowering host plants are lance leaf

coreopsis, swamp sunflower, evening primrose, rudbeckia hirta, Wreath goldenrod, old field goldenrod, wrinkle leaf goldenrod, and calico aster, she says.

Let Plants Go to Seed

After flowering, the plant's next stage is to go to seed as a way of ensuring its survival year after year. Collect the seeds for the following season, if you wish, and leave the rest for the birds to feast on. "Always leave seed heads throughout the fall and winter months, such as purple coneflower, black-eyed Susans, sunflowers, asters, rattlesnake master, goldenrod and the list goes on—as many birds feed on the seeds during the colder months," says Smith. Some plant seeds provide material for nests, too. "Lamb's ear and milkweed that has gone to seed provides good fluff for a nest," says Dillon.

Plus, it's entertaining to watch these winged beauties put on a show while they snack. "There's nothing more enjoyable than watching goldfinches hanging on purple coneflower seed stalks and devouring the seeds," says Smith.

Avoid Tidying Up the Yard

When one season ends and the new one begins, there's a tendency to clean up the garden. "I know how tempting it can be to want to clean up the garden or yard in the fall and put everything to bed for winter," says Dillon. Spring

cleaning exists for a reason and it's not only for inside our homes, she says.

The idea of a messy garden is seen as not-so-beautiful but the well-manicured garden aesthetic is nice for photos. But it's not natural in nature and wildlife needs and thrives in an unkempt space— it's part of the life cycle and provides important food, nesting materials and shelter. "Leave the leaves, brush, and stems in place over the winter because birds eat the seed heads, pull the stems and twigs for shelter, and many of our beneficial pollinators, like solitary bees, live inside hollowed-out stems," adds Dillon. Twigs and small sticks are common nesting material. "Birds also like grass clippings, dead leaves, straw, and pine needles," she says.

Provide Water Sources

Birds need access to clean, fresh water for bathing and for drinking. Implementing a moving water source avoids stagnant water and entices birds. "With a floating solar-powered fountain, it's easy to DIY a water feature using any water-tight vessel you like," says Dillon. "The moving water attracts birds and also prevents mosquitoes from taking up residence in your [birdbath](#)." She points out that a water source is especially important in the south for birds to stay hydrated and cool.

Put Up Hanging Baskets

Whether you have a large yard or a small patio, using [hanging baskets](#) is a wonderful way to utilize vertical space to grow flowers or vegetables. Hanging baskets may not be the first thing you think of for providing a safe place for birds but they are a protected area for birds to create a nest. "As a child, one of my favorite memories was giving my grandmother a geranium hanging basket and waiting for the birds to nest," says Dillon. "I can't tell you how many broods of baby birds fledged from those hanging baskets year after year." She enjoys seeing birds nesting in hanging baskets on her porch. Place them in an area that gets some respite from the sun.

Leave a Bare Spot

Have an empty area in your garden where nothing will grow? Don't fret, the birds will be happy. "If you have a bare spot in your yard that refuses to grow anything at all, you can now look at it as habitat for birds," says Dillon, "because believe it or not, mud is great for swallows, swifts, and robins." She says to keep the bare spot wet.

Hang Up Feeders

Putting up a [bird feeder](#) is another option to provide food sources for our feathered friends. Access to a feeder with fresh seeds or food is [critical during the colder months](#) when less food is available and birds have a pitstop to fuel up. "Providing food sources in the winter will help aid in survival due to cold weather or providing

food and water sources when the migrating birds are passing through," says Smith.

Research what birds are in your geographical region so you know the best types of food to provide because different species require different food. "Black-oil sunflower is an excellent food source for many different species of birds," says Smith. "The seed shells are thin and easy to crack."

Suet is a good source of energy and fat for birds during the colder season. "Suet cakes will attract a wide variety of woodpeckers, nuthatches, finches, titmice, and other small birds," says Smith. If there are a lot of finches in your area, they're a fan of thistle seed. "Nyger (thistle seed) is a favorite of finches, especially purple, house, and goldfinches," she says. You may want to put out fresh fruit if Orioles frequent your yard. "If you live in areas where you have orioles visiting your garden, placing fresh oranges sliced in half will draw them to the feeders as fruit is a preferred food source," says Smith. Want to attract more doves and blue jays to the garden? Put out cracked corn, she adds.

Clean Feeders

Putting up a feeder requires buying food, filling it up, hanging it in a safe place (away from predators, such as cats and squirrels), and cleaning it on a regular basis. Unclean bird feeders can harm or even kill birds. "Dirty

feeders with moldy seed will cause diseases, which can be fatal to birdlife," says Smith. "Bacterial diseases can cause birds to go blind and fungal diseases can cause respiratory issues."

So how often do you need to clean a bird feeder? "Feeders should be cleaned once or twice a month," says Smith. Expect to clean them more frequently in humid or rainy regions. Cleaning them is easy. "Use 3 parts of water to one part of white vinegar solution to clean the feeder," she says. "Soak the feeder in the solution and use a stiff brush to clean out any old seed or bird droppings." Rinse and dry it before putting in fresh seeds.