

Observing the activity of wildlife in my garden has become a favorite pastime, which provides constant pleasure and entertainment, regardless of the season. Writing about it inspires special memories.

On Mother's Day last year, I got up early and sat outside in my pajamas, cup of coffee in hand, and reflected on my little garden paradise. It was alive with birds, with spring-flowering trees and shrubs in full bloom—particularly the native dogwoods that my mother gave me forty years ago—and with perennials pushing through the soil among the lingering daffodils. My four hand-painted GCI birdhouses were awaiting the arrival of a family of Carolina Wren or Chickadees. I always love watching them flit in and out of the houses with nesting materials and then food for the babies. (The scene inspires me to contemplate and write about the role that GCA has played in the creation of my garden, but that is a topic for another time.)

All last summer, I sat on the terrace, binoculars and birding books at hand, watching birds in the yard at the feeders and birdbaths or in the trees

and shrubs. Having purposely planted more and more natives and annual salvia—and added a nectar feeding station—I wasn't surprised when ruby-throated hummingbirds regularly swooped by, often hovering inches from me, making stops

to sample the nectar before racing off to find shelter or another meal. A few glorious goldfinches would periodically alight on the Russian sage to eat seeds or catch

insects. Bees abounded on the flowers, even though I was unable to install a bee house this summer as I'd hoped. Toward the end of the summer, monarch butterflies appeared and lingered on the butterfly weed and milkweed.

This winter has been no less entertaining. Birds abound—chickadees, finches, sparrows, woodpeckers, nuthatches, titmice, cardinals, robins, occasional blue jays and other thugs—except when a stray hawk appears; then there is not a bird to be found. However, they eventually reemerge to feed from my four “squirrel-busters” filled with no-waste food or with high-energy suet. Even in freezing weather, the birds bathe and drink and splash in my one birdbath that has a heating element. It is always quite a sight to watch them splashing.



Fall and winter in the garden are no less entertaining than spring and summer. Birds abound—except when a stray hawk appears; then there is not one to be found. However, they eventually reemerge to feed from my four “squirrel-busters” filled with no-waste food or high-energy suet.

My Wildlife Garden
 BY ANNE MYERS

T

he wildlife garden is a work in progress. The structure of the garden has developed over many years to meet the needs of plants and animals. Layers of plantings with a tree canopy, shrubs, understory, and ground-cover offer places for shelter, nesting, hiding, and feeding. The plantings include some berried trees and shrubs (both summer and fall-fruiting), conifers and broadleaf evergreens for storm shelter, and small trees and shrubs (including hollies) in clumps of the same specie to boost cross-pollination and food production.

As I learn more, I add natural and artificial elements, such as selected native perennials, trees and shrubs (Freeman Horticulture Medal winners) and water sources for every season. I sometimes regret that it took me so long to discover this year-round pleasure. A good friend gave me a Brooklyn Botanic Garden All-Region Guide, *The Wildlife Gardener's Guide*. I highly recommend it!

So you can enjoy the same pleasures, here is the source:

Duncraft.com from which I order my birdbaths and feeders.



ANNE MYERS, left, has been an active member of the Garden Club of Irvington since 1980. She served as club president for two consecutive terms from 2006 to 2010 and was subsequently co-president. A former member of the Irvington Tree Commission, she founded the Irvington Beautification Committee in the early 1990s and is its current co-chair. On the national stage, she served as GCA Historian beginning in 2009, reporting at National, Zone, and Club meetings.

