

grow berries RIGHT OUTSIDE YOUR DOOR

More Beauty in Your Own Backyard

# Birds & Blooms<sup>®</sup> *extra!*

## MEET THE MIMICS!

Tune in to the copycat  
songs of mockingbirds,  
catbirds and thrashers



GRAY  
CATBIRD

*Create  
the most  
bird-friendly  
backyard  
(It's easy!)*

**10 ANNUALS  
TO BRING IN THE  
BUTTERFLIES**

**THE #1  
BIRD & GARDEN  
MAGAZINE  
IN AMERICA**

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*Spring  
forward!*



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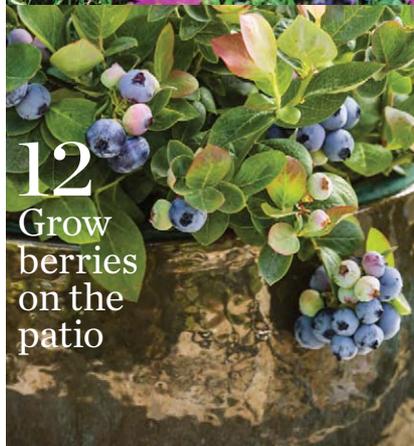


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## ON THE COVER

A gray catbird sits in a spring-blooming tree, ready to sing a copycat tune. Photo by John Gill.

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# I love wandering the trails

at my favorite local nature center during the height of spring migration. The trees are alive with the cheerful sounds of birds singing all around me. Although I don't always know exactly which birds are serenading me with their melodies, on a good day I can pick out the buzzy callnote of a blue-gray gnatcatcher or



recognize the sweet *fee-bee* song of an eastern phoebe (that's kind of a gimme, though, because it says its own name). But all bets are off when the mimics are around. Catbirds, thrashers and mockingbirds imitate other birds and sounds, such as cellphones or even car alarms, and make birding by ear even more of a challenge than it already is. Find out how these birds trick you with hundreds of copycat songs on page 26.

Also in this issue, learn the benefits of adding ground covers to your backyard on page 32. Here's a hint: It has to do with weeds!

We hope you'll love the newly redesigned *Birds & Blooms Extra* that features an expanded Bird Tales section. Starting on page 15, there are seven uninterrupted pages of the most stunning reader-taken spring bird photos I've ever seen. Plus, there are fewer pages of advertising! It's all part of our plan to make *Birds & Blooms Extra* the magazine you look forward to most.

Remember, you can easily share your favorite backyard shots, heartwarming stories, or garden tips and tricks with me at any time. Just drop me a note at [birdsandblooms.com/submit](http://birdsandblooms.com/submit).

And be sure to spend some time outside with migrating birds right now. Try to translate a sweet song or two!

Kristen

KIRSTEN SWEET, EDITOR

## THE HOT LIST

Kirsten's roundup of the season's must-sees and do's.



1 Revel in spring's most beautiful sights, like this bee on a peach tree, taken by Kristen Cline of Weston, Missouri.

2 See garden expert Melinda Myers in action. She's speaking at home and garden shows in Milwaukee, St. Louis and Chicago this month. Visit [melindamyers.com](http://melindamyers.com) for more information.



3 Join our Instagram community! Follow @birdsblooms, and use #birdsandblooms to share your favorite backyard photos with everyone.

4 Get the whole family involved in an outdoorsy project with the simple DIY kits featured on page 22.

## WIN solar lights!

Four lucky winners will each receive three of **Desert Steel's brand-new daisy solar garden lights**. Desert Steel artists create lifelike and beautiful products that are built to last in all weather conditions. Enter to win at [birdsandblooms.com/contests](http://birdsandblooms.com/contests) by Feb. 28, 2017.



GARDEN WITH A PURPOSE

# Spring Showstopper

*Birds, butterflies and bees flock to your backyard when you grow eastern redbud, a prized early-blooming tree.*



#### FOUR-SEASON APPEAL

For bare, arching limbs in winter and golden yellow leaves in fall, grow eastern redbud in Zones 4 to 9. Bonus: Birds, like this tufted titmouse, love the small tree.

#### TO-DO LIST

### March

- **Be on the lookout for your first hummingbird** of the season! Remember that those little gems love nectar-filled blooms, like the pink blossoms on this pretty eastern redbud tree.
- Grab your shears and get ready to cut. Inspect trees and shrubs, and **snip off any branches with winter damage.**
- Hit the ground running on your backyard cleanup. **Remove any debris, rake leaves and twigs**, and map out a garden plan for the new growing season.



**DADDY DUTY**

A male purple martin with his lighter-colored offspring. Both males and females choose a home and build the nest.

# Return of the Martins

*Purple-hued swallows arrive just in time to select a new home.* **BY SHERYL DEVORE**

**A**n estimated 1 million purple martin landlords listen each spring for the chortling call of their summer tenants reappearing from the south. Soon, birdhouses across the country will be filled with adults ready to raise their young.

Historically, purple martins nested in natural tree hollows, old woodpecker holes, and cliff crevices near water throughout most of the U.S. The birds continue to do so in the West, especially in saguaro cacti, but in the eastern half, martins nest almost exclusively in man-made boxes. Native Americans began the tradition thousands of years ago when they found that a hollow gourd placed in a tree was attractive to breeding bird pairs. Man-made houses are now essential to martins' survival.

Males are black all over with bluish-purple reflections; the females are blackish from above and have sooty gray underparts; and young birds look like females but have whiter bellies. All martins have pointed wings and forked tails.

That distinctive tail helps them catch flying insects, like dragonflies, as they fly about 100 to 200 feet in the air. Martins can often be heard calling as they glide above forested areas in an attempt to attract younger adults to the colony. These birds rarely land on the ground and

even drink water while in flight.

The first to arrive in spring are often called scouts, but that's a misnomer. As with many species that breed in North America but migrate to and from the tropics, the first to return are the older males on their way to claim last year's nesting sites. Females and younger birds arrive later. In the Midwest, the northern part of the range, martins start to arrive as early as March. Then the search for the perfect home begins.

Nests typically consist of grasses and twigs, with fresh green leaves added throughout the season. The female incubates three to six white eggs for 15 to 16 days. Both adults raise and feed the young, which fledge in about 30 days and then beg their parents for food for several more weeks.

Being a purple martin landlord takes time and commitment. In summer, boxes must be kept free of non-native house sparrows; in late fall, boxes must be cleaned and closed. But it's all worth the effort: Hosting purple martins means you'll get to enjoy these feathered good neighbors during spring and summer before they fly the coop in fall.

## BUY IT!

Host several pairs with a 12-room convertible martin house, \$120, [plowhearth.com](http://plowhearth.com)

## THE FEED



### REAL TALK

"Martin houses are a hub of activity. It's fascinating to watch purple martins come and go. I love to watch for the youngsters poking their heads out of the boxes."

**Ken Keffer**, naturalist



### BE THE BEST LANDLORD

Purple martins like to nest in colonies. Whether you choose gourd houses or an apartment-style setup, offer six to 12 cavities. Place the birdhouse in an open area that is 40 to 60 feet from trees and 12 to 18 feet high. Learn more at [purplemartin.org](http://purplemartin.org).



TOP 10

# Spice Up Your Butterfly Garden

*Grow gorgeous annuals from easy-to-find seeds.* BY SALLY ROTH

1

**FOR THE BIRDS**

Butterflies and pollinators can't get enough of fennel blooms, but warblers and other songbirds love the seeds, too!



## 1 Fennel

FOENICULUM VULGARE

A culinary old-timer that's been around since Spaniards brought seeds to California 200 years ago, fennel is a fast-growing herb that adds delicacy and height to flowerbeds. It reaches up to 3 feet tall and has abundant clusters of tiny, buttery yellow flowers.

**The allure:** Many butterfly species, including black and anise swallowtails, flock to fennel both for its nectar and to use it as a host plant for their very hungry caterpillars.

## 2 Caraway

CARUM CARVI

Eat a rye bread sandwich and you'll see (and taste!) savory caraway seeds. The crescent-shaped seeds are produced by a plant that looks a lot like Queen Anne's lace, thanks to its clusters of tiny white and pinkish flowers. This biennial reaches 2 feet tall and may not flower until its second year.

**The allure:** As a host plant, it's fantastic for black swallowtail eggs, while yellow-green sulphurs and metalmark butterflies stop by to snack on its nectar.



## 3 Nigella

NIGELLA SATIVA

Blue blossoms backed by a ruff of fine leaves make this flower look extraterrestrial, and butterflies can't get enough of it. Shake the oversize pods to harvest abundant black seeds for use in Indian or South Asian dishes.

**The allure:** Butterflies of all shapes and sizes, including sulphurs, whites, fritillaries and coppers, are attracted to nigella.

**TIPS FOR SOWING SEED** Scatter the seeds in a sunny spot in early spring, cover lightly with soil and keep moist until they sprout. If you decide to try planting seeds from the kitchen, sow thickly to make up for any potential duds and increase the odds of success.



## 4 Cumin

CUMINUM CYMINUM

With delicate white bloom bursts, cumin looks like a smaller, daintier cousin of Queen Anne's lace. The ridged seeds grow into branching annuals that stand 18 inches tall. Soak seeds overnight before planting for faster germination.

**The allure:** Blues, hairstreaks, sulphurs and many other small to medium-size butterflies love to land on the flowers.



## 5 Sesame

*SESAMUM INDICUM*

Humans have been using sesame seeds for more than 4,000 years, making it the oldest known oil crop. This robust and drought-tolerant plant has tubular flowers that resemble foxglove blossoms and dangle from leafy stems that can reach up to 3 feet. It thrives best in areas with long, hot summers.

**The allure:** Sesame flowers can self-pollinate, but they still produce sweet nectar to tempt wandering pollinators such as butterflies and bees. Monarchs and fritillaries visit, as do sphinx moths and hummingbirds. Honeybees also love sesame's tempting blooms.



## 6 Anise

*PIMPINELLA ANISUM*

Blanketed in snowy white clusters, anise is a tall annual that reaches 3 feet high. The feathery plants are an airy presence in the garden, and their star-shaped seeds have a licorice-like taste and aroma.

**The allure:** Swallowtails of every sort, such as two-tailed and pipevine, can't get enough of its light and delicate flower clusters. It's also a host plant for black swallowtail and anise swallowtail.



## 7 Chia

*SALVIA HISPANICA*

If you loved your chia pet, grow one in the garden. Chia seeds come from salvia, a plant native to Mexico. Enjoy sky blue flowers as well as the nutritional benefits of these ancient seeds, which are great in smoothies. Plant seeds outside in fall in Zones 9 to 11. In colder regions, start them in pots indoors in late winter.

**The appeal:** Monarchs, painted ladies and red admirals adore this oh-so lovely flower.

**SEEDKEEPER SECRETS** *As an experiment, try growing these plants straight from your spice rack! Use organic whole seed, rather than ground or powdered spices.*

*Their ability to sprout will also depend on how they've been stored and processed.*



## 8 Dill

*ANETHUM GRAVEOLENS*

This annual adds appealing contrasts of color and texture to flowerbeds thanks to feathery fronds and bright yellow flowers. And dill seeds give the popular pickles their tasty zing.

**The allure:** Not only is dill irresistible to anglewings, tortoiseshells and sulphurs, but it's also a favorite host plant of black swallowtails.



## 9 Mustard Seed

*SINAPSIS ALBA*

Mustard seeds are quick to grow into vigorous, long-blooming plants that stand 2 feet tall. Prolific stems topped with saffron-yellow flowers hold a passing butterfly's attention for many minutes—long enough for you to grab your camera and snap a photo.

**The allure:** Every nectar-sipping butterfly in the area, from the tiniest of blues to big swallowtails and monarchs, enjoys this buttery yellow annual. It's also a host plant for cabbage white and checkered white species.

### CATERPILLAR CARE

The foliage of dill, anise, fennel and other members of the carrot family is a popular place for swallowtails to lay eggs because the leaves are nourishing for ravenous caterpillars.

9



## 10 Coriander

*CORIANDRUM SATIVUM*

This beloved favorite has a split personality. Its round seeds are common in Indian cuisine, but its fresh leaves are what we know as cilantro. Clusters of delicate white, pinkish or pale lavender flowers top these 2-foot annuals. From New England to Montana, naturalized coriander grows across the United States.

**The allure:** Small to medium-sized butterflies, like hairstreaks, sulphurs, metalmarks and blues, flutter to it.

*Sally Roth loves knowing what sort of plants her culinary seasonings come from, so she plants any seed she happens to come across in the kitchen. She hasn't given up on starting orchids from the seeds in vanilla bean pods.*



Raspberries

**B**erries just got better thanks to new dwarf varieties suited for smaller spaces. A tinier plant means these delightful gems live right at home inside your favorite patio pot. The next time you crave a handful of fresh berries for your bowl of cereal or a smoothie, all you'll have to do is step outside.

**BLACKBERRIES**

Choose a thornless variety and plant it in a wide, shallow container. The long canes need to be tied, so insert a few strong stakes or place the pot next to a trellis to keep the plant growing straight and upright. If you're not sure where to start, try Baby Cakes. It's 3 to 4 feet tall and thornless, with bright, white flowers in spring and large, zingy blackberries in summer. In some regions, it offers another crop of sweetness in midautumn.

# Sweeten Up Your Pots

*Add pops of color to your patio with berry plants that fit neatly inside containers.* **BY CRYSTAL RENNICKE**



Blackberries



Strawberries

## POWER UP YOUR POTS

*Become a potting pro and give your berries the TLC they need.*

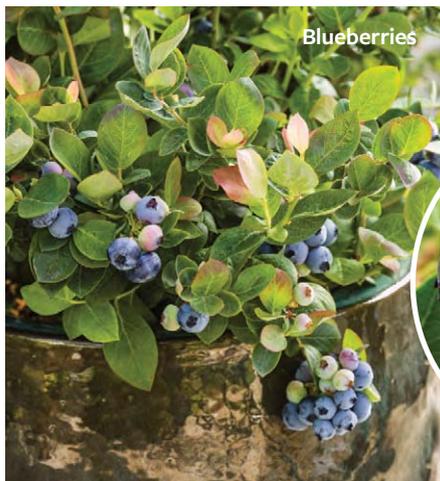
**PLANT:** For most berries, choose 5-gallon pots that are 24 inches wide and offer plenty of drainage. Berries need 6 to 8 hours of full sun.

**PICK:** Harvest your yummy blueberries and strawberries when they break off the stems, and raspberries when they slip off the receptacle.

**PRUNE:** After harvesting, remove any fruited stems by cutting them at the base. Pruning varies between plants, so research first!



Blackberries



Blueberries



Blueberries

### BLUEBERRIES

Use a potting mix with acidic soil and fertilize in early and late spring to promote growth and fruit production. Peach Sorbet is a self-pollinating plant with a rainbow of leaves ranging from peachy pink to emerald green. Another tantalizing blueberry option is Jelly Bean. It produces a crop of super-sweet berries in midsummer.

### RASPBERRIES

Look for fall-bearing dwarf raspberry varieties. Apply a generous amount of compost and balanced fertilizer in early and late spring. For a thorn-free raspberry plant with a compact growth habit, look no further than Raspberry Shortcake. It grows best in full sun and in soil with good drainage.

### STRAWBERRIES

Everbearing varieties work best for containers. Pick a pot or hanging basket at least 18 inches wide and 8 inches deep. Give Quinault a go when you're ready to plant. It's everbearing and produces heavy fruits. Try other varieties like Tribute or Seascape. Delizz, a 2016 All-America Selections winner, is a good choice, too, because it grows fast from seed to harvest.

## STUFF WE LOVE

Get your berry fix at [bushlandberry.com](http://bushlandberry.com). It's a one-stop shop for all your miniberry plant needs, including most of the varieties mentioned on these pages.

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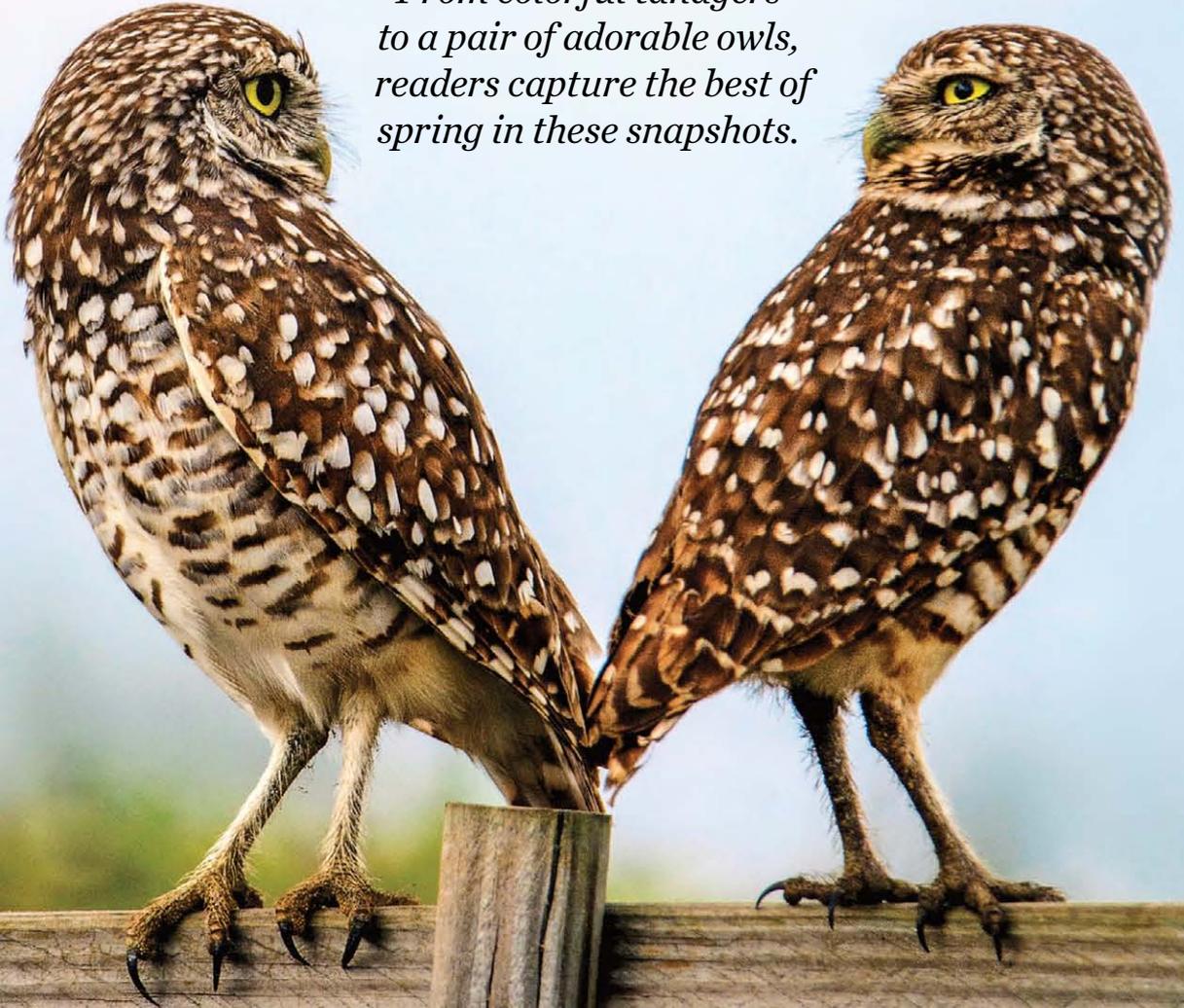
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# Stars of the Season

*From colorful tanagers to a pair of adorable owls, readers capture the best of spring in these snapshots.*



The sandy soil of Cape Coral, Florida, makes it a favorite nesting spot for burrowing owls. Two years ago, I found an active burrow near my winter home and photographed a female guarding her nest. When I returned last year, both a male and female were “home.” I waited patiently until the lovebirds hopped to their perch, and I captured this shot—a photograph two years in the making! **Barbara Morris** UTICA, NEW YORK

**Two tree swallows** were having an argument over housework when I found them in the Caratunk Audubon Refuge in Seekonk, Massachusetts. The house was one of several close to the trail, and these birds didn't seem to mind when I set up my Nikon D7200 on a tripod. I spent quite a while on that beautiful April morning photographing all the activity.

**Bernard Creswick** RAYNHAM, MASSACHUSETTS



**We waited for many years,**

but bluebirds finally took up residence in the house my husband built for them. I enjoyed watching the birds build their nest inside and eventually carry food to their hatchlings. The flowering crab apple tree in this photo was a favorite stopping-off point before they hopped to the birdhouse.

**Kristen Klein**  
WATERLOO, WISCONSIN



## Green Cay Wetlands

in Boynton Beach, Florida, is a public nature center where visitors can see and photograph a variety of waterfowl and wading birds year-round. When I visit my mother in South Florida, we spend a couple of days at Green Cay. On this particular trip, several roseate spoonbills were perched at the top of a dead tree—not where I expected to see them. The contrast of their red plumage against the bright sky was superb.

**David Kassel**

NAPA, CALIFORNIA



### A BEAK THAT FITS THE BILL

A wide, flat bill allows roseate spoonbills to strain small fish from the water.



## For the past 10 years,

I've attempted to capture a clear photo of a western tanager, but they are always too fast.

While vacationing in New Mexico last year, I had lunch at the Abiquiu Inn. As I sat outside, a beautiful male western tanager foraged under the trees. When he picked up this seed, I finally got my photo.

**Julie Gothrup**  
DARBY, MONTANA





### It's tough to get a decent shot

of a pileated woodpecker because they're usually busy hunting for bugs. I was thrilled when this one looked up and posed for a picture while I was at Brooker Creek Preserve in Tarpon Springs, Florida.

**Susan Goebel** DUNEDIN, FLORIDA



**My wife and I** vacationed on South Padre Island, Texas, during the time when migratory birds from Central and South America cross the Gulf of Mexico and "fall out" onto the vegetation of the island. The birds stop to rest before they continue their flight north to the central and eastern United States. This gorgeous prothonotary warbler caught my eye, not only because of its bright yellow color but also because of the red blush on its head and throat, which is not characteristic of the species. As I photographed this bird, I determined that the red blush was from the pollen of the bottlebrush tree flowers where it had been searching for insects.

**John Thornton** STILLWATER, OKLAHOMA



**I took this photo** on my family's farm in late afternoon. For the past few years, cedar waxwings have arrived en masse to eat the new apple blossoms that pop out. Last year, spring came late—but when it did, these birds happily munched away. Sadly, after about a week, the birds moved on. The tops of our trees ended up thoroughly plucked, but it was worth it to see these masked blossom bandits.

**Danielle Moeller**  
FAIRMONT, MINNESOTA

## This beautiful scarlet tanager

ate the grape jelly I put out for the orioles. He visited for only a few short days before moving on, but I was fortunate enough to capture this picture before he went on his way.

**David Nehls** IONIA, IOWA



### SPRING GLAM

Male scarlet tanagers display their namesake color only in early seasons. In fall, they're a dull yellow.





**My alarm went off at 4:30 a.m. Clearing my head, I remembered why I was in a motel room in northwest Minnesota—to witness the dance of the prairie chicken.**

It's an exciting and comical spring ritual that takes place on the prairies of North America.

Each year, prairie chickens establish what is called a lek, or an area for courtship and mating. Males select a small patch of real estate within the lek and wait for females to come in search of the biggest and strongest mate; he is usually in the middle. As females wander through the space, males typically respect one another's individual boundaries, but when they don't, fights give a whole new meaning to ferocity. Sometimes the battles last all morning, and feathers are left on the prairie.

When a female enters a particular male's territory, his dances are quite a show. Feet rapidly pound the earth, his booming escalates, and he displays feathers as best he can. He also inflates the orange air sacs on his neck that create the booming sounds that resonate across the prairie. Long feathers covering the sacs are extended vertically up over his head to enhance the

show. Basically, the male tries to keep a female in his territory for as long as possible. The more he impresses her, the better chance he has to mate.

Less dominant and younger males populate the lek's outer perimeter. Those birds have to earn their way to the middle. I have seen an outsider male fly to the middle, presumably thinking he can take on the others, only to be dispatched to the outskirts.

The displays begin early in the morning, long before the sun rises—hence my 4:30 a.m. alarm. Each spring, I reserve my place in the bird blinds on the prairie, wait for the morning light and watch the show begin. I guess, in a way, this has become my spring ritual, too.

**Tom Samuelson**  
MOUND, MINNESOTA



## HIDDEN GEM

For prime bird-watching on the coast of Michigan, head to the Tawas Point Birding Festival, May 18-20. It's known as "the biggest little birding festival in the Midwest."



**My mother,** my aunt and I have attended the Tawas Point Birding Festival for the past 15 years. Mom was unable to make it to the festival last spring, but I took pictures of everything of interest, and I shared them with her. This picture of an American redstart was one of her favorites.

**Bonnie Walraven**  
BAY CITY, MICHIGAN

**Spring brings** the beautiful color not only of flowers, but also of birds. Last year, we enjoyed a visit from a male house finch. It reminded us to spend time outdoors and enjoy all that the season has to offer.

**Houston Pittman** PICAYUNE, MISSISSIPPI



# DIY Made Easy

Gather up the family and try these starter kits.



**1 Just add veggies!** Kit has everything else you need to make three jars of pickles, \$30, [gardeners.com](http://gardeners.com)



**2 Avocado tree starter set** with three floating planters, \$20, [uncommongoods.com](http://uncommongoods.com)

**3 Calling all cooks!** Grow a pizza, chili and salsa garden with the Chef's Garden Gift Set, \$32, [harrisseed.com](http://harrisseed.com)

**4 Kids Garden Kit** comes with three seed mixes, a starter greenhouse and peat soil pellets, \$23, [growandmake.com](http://growandmake.com)



**5 Suet starter kit** includes a mold, seed and recipes, \$25, [youdoitsuet.com](http://youdoitsuet.com)

**6 Birdhouse kit** with predrilled wood panels, hardware, sandpaper and instructions, \$8, [sawdustwoodcraft.etsy.com](http://sawdustwoodcraft.etsy.com)

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# Spot This Species

*Listen for the potato-chip call, and use these hints to ID American goldfinches when they stop for sunflowers.* **BY KIRSTEN SWEET**

Solid black forehead

Yellow feathers on back, breast and belly

Black wings with white wing marks

Pinkish cone-shaped bill to crack open seeds (goldfinches love sunflower and thistle!)

Size: much smaller than a robin (one bird weighs about half an ounce)

Foot with three toes in front and one in back for perching on small branches and stems

Females build a nest in about six days. It's so well-constructed that it is watertight.

## WARDROBE CHANGE

Male American goldfinches lose their drab winter feathers and bright yellow ones appear (shown here). In fall, their vibrancy fades as plain brown feathers grow in, and they transform to look more like females. The full molting process may take six to eight weeks, and during that time goldfinches appear patchy.

# Do You Suffer From:

- Plantar Fasciitis
- Joint Pain
- Heel Pain
- Back/Knee Pain
- Bunions
- Heel Spurs
- Arthritis
- Neuropathy



Nicole S.

I have terrible plantar fasciitis—really painful stabbing pain. I got a pair of Gravity Defyers to try and to my amazement my foot either doesn't hurt or barely hurts when wearing them (major improvement from limping around all day long). *These are just what I needed when I was feeling very desperate and like nothing was working!*



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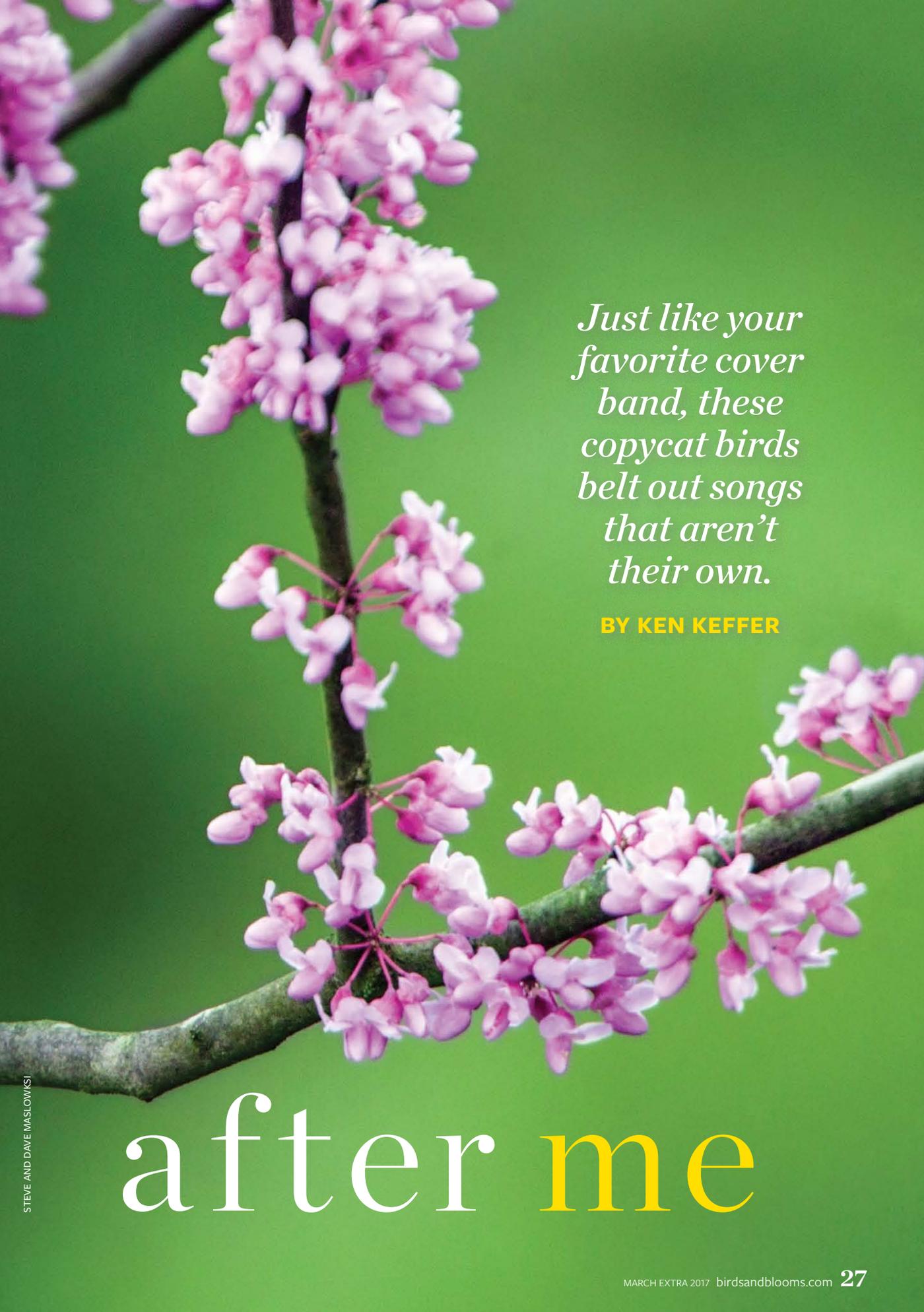
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**Brown thrashers**  
have a huge repertoire  
of songs copied from  
other bird species.

repeat



*Just like your  
favorite cover  
band, these  
copycat birds  
belt out songs  
that aren't  
their own.*

**BY KEN KEFFER**

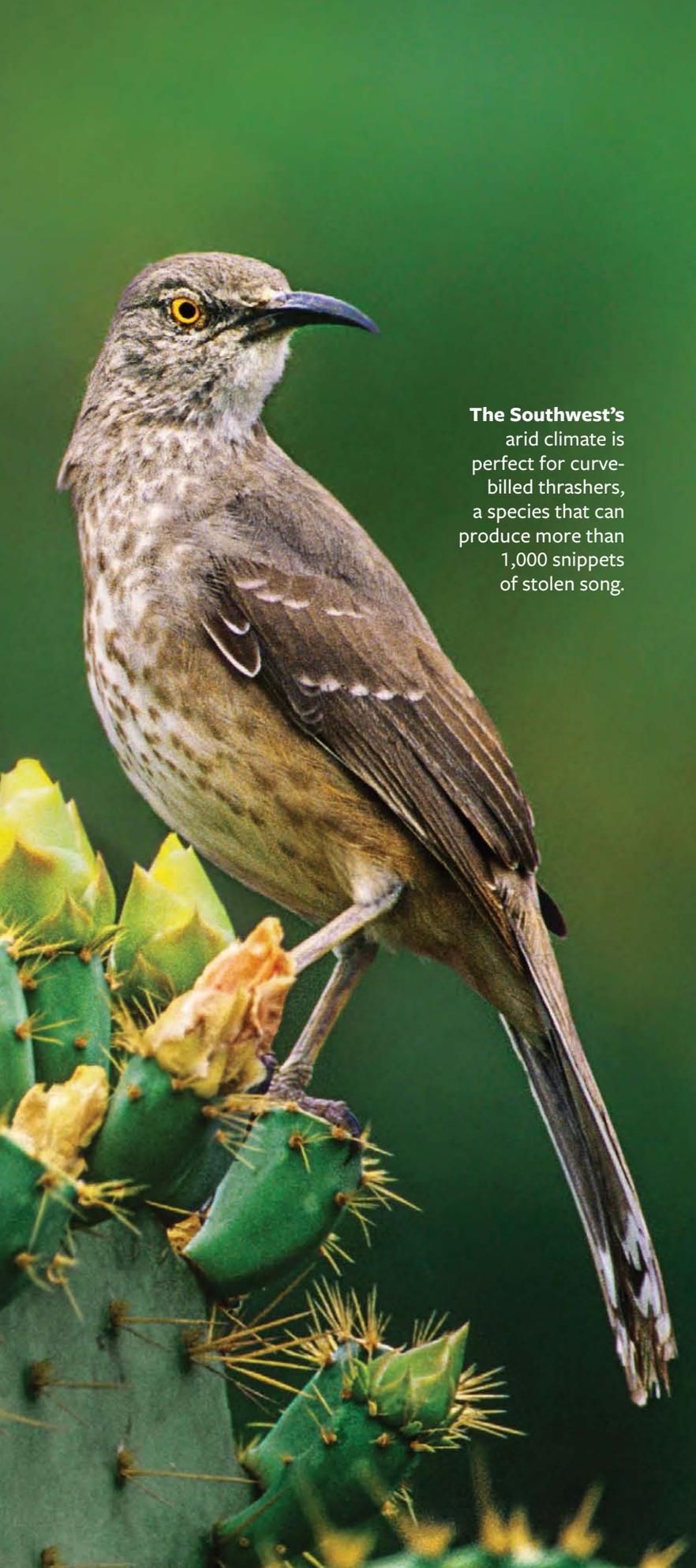
after **me**

**b**irds are known for their homemade music, but not all of their tunes are original. Mimics are the cover artists of the bird world, borrowing tunes from other birds to use as their own. Some species—mockingbirds, thrashers and catbirds—may sing more than a hundred different phrases. These slim birds all have distinctive long tails and usually have plumage in earthy tones, like gray and brown. Here's everything you need to know about locating and luring these sweet pretenders.



### **HOT SPOT**

On your next Texas adventure, try Big Bend National Park. Paddle down the Rio Grande and see if you can spot mimic species like curve-billed thrashers and plenty of other species, like crissals and green kingfishers.



**The Southwest's** arid climate is perfect for curve-billed thrashers, a species that can produce more than 1,000 snippets of stolen song.

## *Thrashers*

### ■ ON TOUR

The U.S. Southwest, Mexico and the Caribbean islands are thrasher hot spots. The curve-billed is the most common in the Southwestern states, while a look-alike species, Bendire's thrasher, has a more restricted range centered on Arizona and western Mexico. The California thrasher prefers the brushy chaparral hills of its namesake state, while the sage thrasher is found in the western flats from southern Canada to northern Mexico. Most have long down-curved bills, although the two most widespread, the brown and the sage thrashers, have straighter bills.

### ■ BEHIND THE MUSIC

The brown thrasher stands out because it usually repeats each phrase twice. Other mimics will repeat things, but consistently doing them twice is a brown thrasher specialty.

### ■ HOST A BACKYARD CONCERT

Entice thrashers into your backyard with thick cover. To do this, build a brush pile and sprinkle some seeds nearby. Thrashers usually scamper across the ground, flinging leaf litter in search of invertebrate snacks. Grow a thick hedgerow of native shrubs to provide good shelter for numerous critters. Thrashes love fruits and berries, too. Juniper, sage, mesquite and chaparral shrub are favorite haunts for thrashers in the West, and curve-billed thrashers particularly love cholla cactus, which is their preferred nesting site.

# Mockingbirds

## ■ ON TOUR

Northern mockingbirds are found in parks and backyards throughout the southern and central United States, but they've been known to wander northward, even as far north as the Bering Sea region of Alaska. They're the only mockingbird regularly found in the United States, but 13 species live throughout Central and South America. A handful of species are on the Galapagos Islands, observations of which helped shape Charles Darwin's thoughts on evolution.

## ■ BEHIND THE MUSIC

Thanks to their incessant singing, northern mockingbirds are quite conspicuous. Their song is a series of short phrases repeated over and over, usually in sets of three or more. New phrases, as many as 200, are added to their repertoire throughout their lifetimes. Their scientific name, *Mimus polyglottos*, translates to "mimic with many tongues." This species mimics not only other birds but also noises like cellphones, car alarms and the whistles of passing trains.

## ■ HOST A BACKYARD CONCERT

Encourage mockingbirds with perches and suet feeders. Sometimes mockingbirds flash their white wing patches, either as a display or as a way to startle up one of their favorite summer treats: insects. During fall and winter, mockingbirds camp out in fruit trees gorging on the ripe harvests, but any fruits and berries can be offered in feeders year-round.

The incessant **mimicking** of other birds and manmade sounds makes northern mockingbirds difficult to ignore.



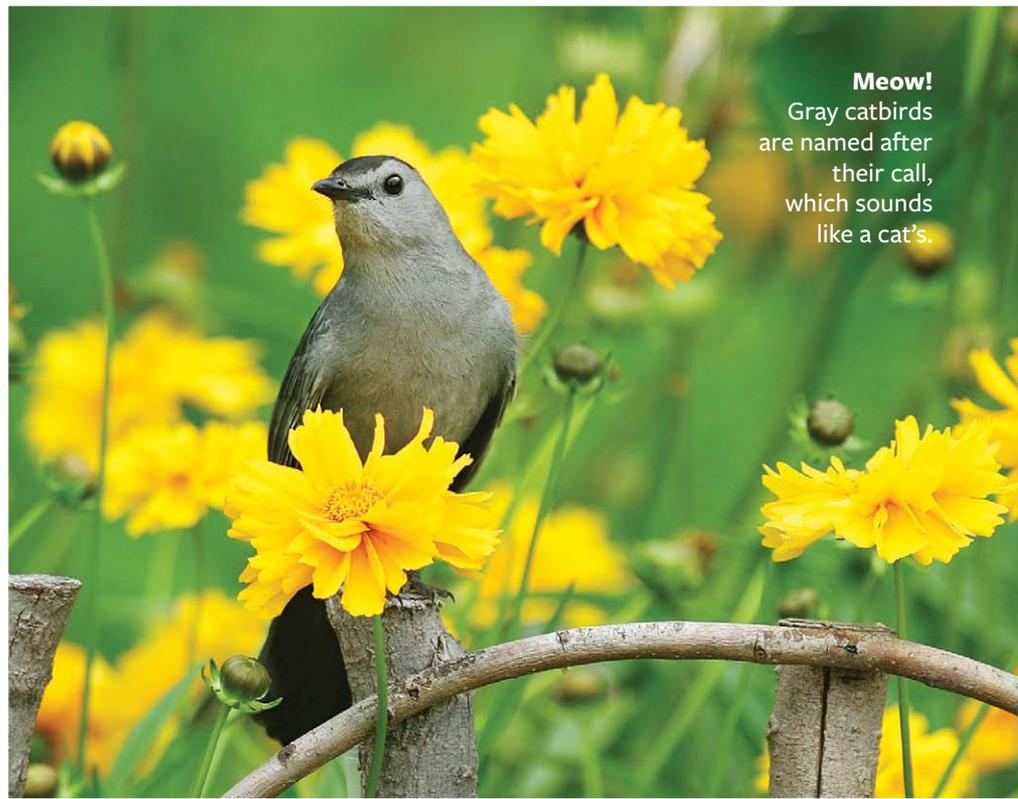
RON ERWIN/ALCANADAPHOTOS;  
RIGHT: RICHARD DAY/DAYBREAK IMAGERY



### COVER SONGS

Mockingbirds imitate what they hear around them. Here are a few surprising sounds they've been known to copy:

- SQUIRRELS
- WASHING MACHINES
- ALARM CLOCKS
- FROGS
- SIRENS
- RUSTY GATES



**Meow!**  
Gray catbirds are named after their call, which sounds like a cat's.

## Catbirds

### ■ ON TOUR

While the gray catbird is absent from the Southwest and much of the West Coast, it's widespread throughout the rest of the country. Several unrelated species of catbirds are found in the world, like the green catbird of Australia and the white-eared catbird of New Guinea, but none of the others is a mimic like the gray catbird.

### ■ BEHIND THE MUSIC

Although they have well-defined rictal bristles (the bird version of whiskers), gray catbirds are actually named after their meowing callnotes. Catbirds often meow from thick cover, but they venture out into open areas, especially to feed. The least accomplished of mimics, they typically sing a series of disjointed notes, squeaks and whines. Catbirds don't often repeat phrases, either. However, individuals do add phrases

they've picked up from birds, other animals or manmade sound sources, inserting them around the catbird gibberish.

### ■ HOST A BACKYARD CONCERT

Gray catbirds are suckers for sweets, and they love backyard fruit feeders that include orange slices and grape jelly. Like thrashers, catbirds use brush piles, but another favorite is thickets of dogwood. These shrubs provide good cover, and the berries are an excellent meal. ●

*Ken Keffer is especially fond of the rufous undertail covert feathers on both the gray catbird and crissal thrasher.*



## START SMALL

Ground covers are often planted in drifts, or large masses of a single variety, but tiny yards benefit from these low-growers, too. Begin with small drifts of a few species in an empty part of your yard. All of the ground covers shown here, cushion spurge (top), Bugleweed (right) or rock cress (bottom), grow well next to barberry (top right).



*GAINING*

*GROUND*

FOR A QUICK FIX IN HARD-TO-GROW SPACES, CHOOSE  
GROUND COVERS. BEAUTIFUL AND LOW-MAINTENANCE,  
THEY ALSO COMBAT WEEDS. **BY CRYSTAL RENNICKE**



Creeping thyme tolerates light foot traffic—perfect along a stony path.

The average homeowner spends 40 hours a year mowing the lawn. Add time spent trimming, fertilizing and watering, and that glorious green carpet takes a lot of time and effort.

Ground covers are unsung garden heroes that reduce mowing and control weeds. Another perk is an eco-friendly yard that is super attractive to wildlife.

Start small with these resilient growers. They take a few years to establish and reduce weeds, but rethinking even one unused area equals less maintenance and work for you.

### Boost Trouble Spots

Ground covers are low-growers that create a living carpet, protect the soil and connect adjacent plants. This group includes everything from horizontally spreading shrubs to vines and perennials.

One tricky area in many gardens is the shady spot underneath shrubs, trees and hedges. Shallow-rooted types, such as spotted deadnettle and variegated common periwinkle (invasive in the eastern U.S.), coexist with the roots of trees and shrubs and crowd out weeds. These plants hold your landscape together, connecting trees and shrubs to other areas.

Ground covers can also be used to hide the foliage of spring bulbs and perennials once they've passed their peak. Plant hostas around daylilies and periwinkles around spring bulbs for attractive vegetation for most of the season. Many varieties produce beautiful colors as the seasons

**FILL IN TIGHT SPACES** *The area between rocks and along pathways is a tricky spot to grow anything (other than weeds!), but ground covers such as thyme, moss and hens-and-chicks thrive in cramped areas.*



Bugleweed grows best  
in areas with dry shade  
in Zones 3 to 10.

## **SOLVE HOMEOWNER HEADACHES**

*For a low-maintenance  
and resilient garden,  
try these beauties.*

### **SLOPES**

Dwarf forsythia  
Gro-Low fragrant sumac  
Daylily

### **SHADE**

Epimedium  
Foam flower  
Sedge  
Japanese painted fern  
Chinese astilbe  
Coral bells  
Crested iris  
Spotted deadnettle  
Hosta  
Pachysandra

### **WET AREAS**

Southern blue flag  
Umbrella papyrus  
Japanese sweet flag  
Marsh marigold  
Skunk cabbage  
Chinese astilbe  
Japanese primrose

### **BETWEEN STEPPERS**

Low-growing thyme  
Creeping bugleweed  
Sweet alyssum  
Corsican pearlwort

### **SUNNY SLOPES**

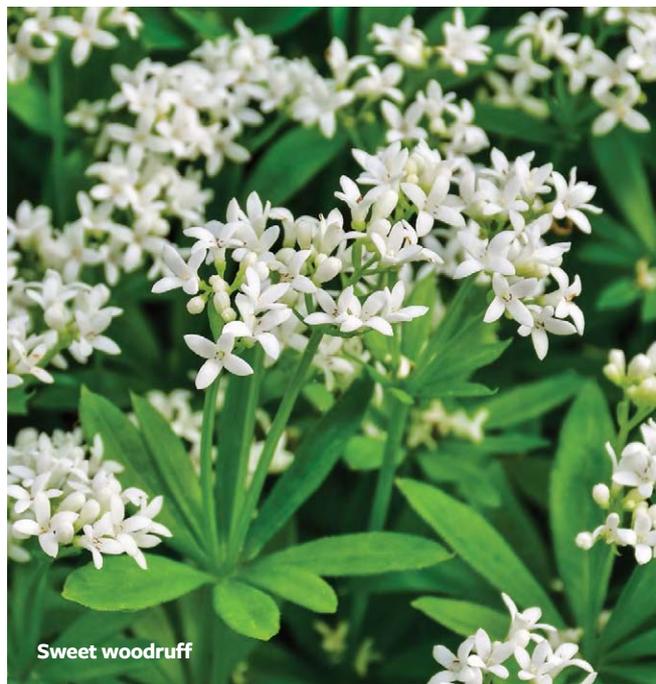
Snow in summer  
Sedum  
Lambs' ears  
Big-leaf geranium  
Euphorbia  
Coreopsis  
Dianthus  
Candytuft  
Lilyturf  
Artemisia  
Hardy ice plant

### **SMALL SPACES**

Hens-and-chicks  
Moss phlox  
Corydalis  
Common thrift  
Allegheny foam flower  
Chamomile



Bugleweed



Sweet woodruff

## 5 NO-FUSS FILLERS *Perfect for the bare spots in your yard.*



Barrenwort

### BUGLEWEED

*Ajuga reptans* cultivars  
Zones 3 to 10

**Height:** 3 to 4 inches

**Spread:** Indefinite

**Light needs:** Full sun to part shade

**Landscape uses:** Stone paths or walkways, as it can tolerate light foot traffic.

**Features:** Evergreens with spoon-shaped leaves and variety of colors.

### BARRENWORT

*Epimedium* cultivars  
Zones 4 to 8, depending on cultivar

**Height:** 6 to 16 inches

**Spread:** 1 to 3 feet or more

**Light needs:** Part to full shade

**Landscape uses:** Slow spreader that covers large barren areas. Perfect for shady spots under large trees.

**Features:** Small flowers from mid- to late-spring emerge from red-tinged, heart-shaped leaves on wiry stems.

### SWEET WOODRUFF

*Galium odoratum*  
Zones 4 to 8

**Height:** 6 to 10 inches

**Spread:** Indefinite

**Light needs:** Part to full shade

**Landscape uses:** Spreads under large perennials as well as trees and shrubs.

**Features:** Delicate foliage topped with clusters of fragrant white flowers.

### FOAM FLOWER

*Tiarella* cultivars  
Zones 3 to 8

**Height:** 4 to 12 inches

**Spread:** 1 to 1½ feet

**Light needs:** Part shade

**Landscape uses:** Line

BUGLEWEED: EQROY/SHUTTERSTOCK; BARRENWORT: RBFLORA/LAMY STOCK; SWEET WOODRUFF: FOTOWAREKKA;



Foam flower



Lambs' ears

pathways or arrange in drifts in woodland gardens.

**Features:** Clusters of deeply lobed leaves with wands of tiny white flowers in late spring through summer season.

### LAMBS' EARS

*Stachys byzantina*

Zones 4 to 9

**Height:** 4 to 18 inches

**Spread:** 2 to 3 feet

**Light needs:** Grows best in full sun

**Landscape uses:** Informal beds and borders. Makes a great companion plant.

**Features:** Thick woolly leaves topped by spikes of small pinkish-purple flowers.

change, and some, like lilyturf and bearberry, produce colorful fruit.

Instead of mulch, try low-growing varieties such as thyme or bugleweed in flower beds and borders. Once established, these garden helpers protect the soil, so you can skip the mulch each year.

Hard-to-grow, hard-to-mow slopes also benefit from ground covers, which prevent eroding, stop rain from running off and fill in boggy areas.

Finally, for those of you ready to sell the lawn mower, it's possible to have a very low-maintenance lawn. Low-growing thyme, snow in summer or moss are pretty lawn substitutes. As an added bonus, your water bill may decrease—lawn grass requires two to four times more water than ground covers.

## Choose Your Plants

Before you head to the garden center, familiarize yourself with your growing conditions. Have your soil tested to identify which plants thrive in your yard, and observe how much sunlight the area receives. While many ground covers are adaptable, matching the plant to the sun conditions right off the bat helps assure success.

You may be tempted to choose the most colorful and florific plants, but first select varieties with leaves that are attractive all season or year-round. Consider other features like flowers or berries to be bonuses. Leaves are available in a variety of textures and colors, and variegated kinds range from all shades of green to pinks and yellows.

Also beware of size. Ground covers grow anywhere from 1 inch to 4 feet, so height is key in plant selection. Steer clear of a tall fern that blocks your perennials, and consider lambs' ears to use between your lawn grass and flower beds.

Next, select plants that spread

with similar speeds. Really vigorous growers are not ideal near less vigorous ones—they claim the entire bed and require more work. Choose plants that cover at the same rate.

Spreading type affects growth, too. Some, like bugleweed, spread indefinitely, but because of its shallow roots, it's easy to control. Bishop's weed, on the other hand, spreads by rhizomes that are almost impossible to keep in bounds.

If you do end up with one plant that seems to be spreading too fast, dig it up or take out nearby plants to give it more space.

As with most plant categories, some grow beyond their bounds. Beware of and take care not to plant invasives, such as English ivy, kudzu, Japanese honeysuckle, wintercreeper, crown vetch and creeping Jenny.

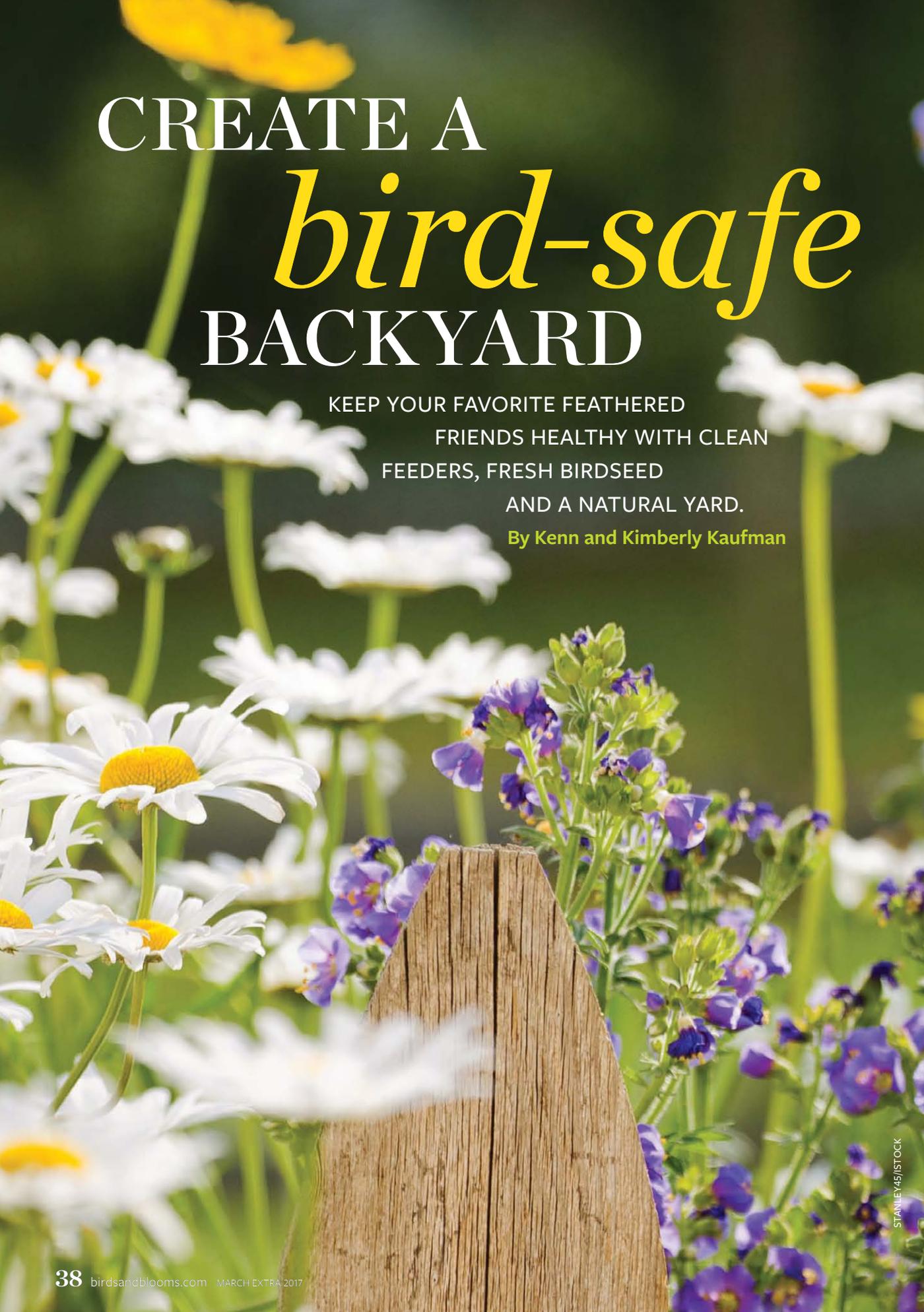
## Ready, Set, Enjoy

After you've chosen a space, prepare it by removing vegetation. Loosen the soil 6 to 8 inches down, and add 2 to 3 inches of compost or organic material. When working near trees, there's no need to add soil or deeply cultivate; it may injure the plants.

Check spacing requirements. You may be tempted to plant closely to fill in gaps, but this could crowd them and lead to disease. Instead of making tidy rows, stagger plants to make them appear natural. Dig a hole deep enough for the roots, pat down and water thoroughly. (Watering is key in the first few years.) Spread a layer of mulch between plants to keep weeds out.

Once plants are established in good soil, an occasional cultivation of weeds and pruning keeps ground covers healthy and in check. ●

*Crystal Rennie is a writer in Wisconsin. She loves adding new hosta varieties to her backyard.*



# CREATE A *bird-safe* BACKYARD

KEEP YOUR FAVORITE FEATHERED  
FRIENDS HEALTHY WITH CLEAN  
FEEDERS, FRESH BIRDSEED  
AND A NATURAL YARD.

By Kenn and Kimberly Kaufman

Bring on the eastern bluebirds with a garden free of pesticides.



# A lot of planning, time and money

go into attracting and feeding your backyard birds. But making your space appealing to them with food and plants they love is only one part of the equation. You also need to ensure that birds stay safe while in your yard. With these tips, you are on your way to a bustling backyard full of feathered guests.

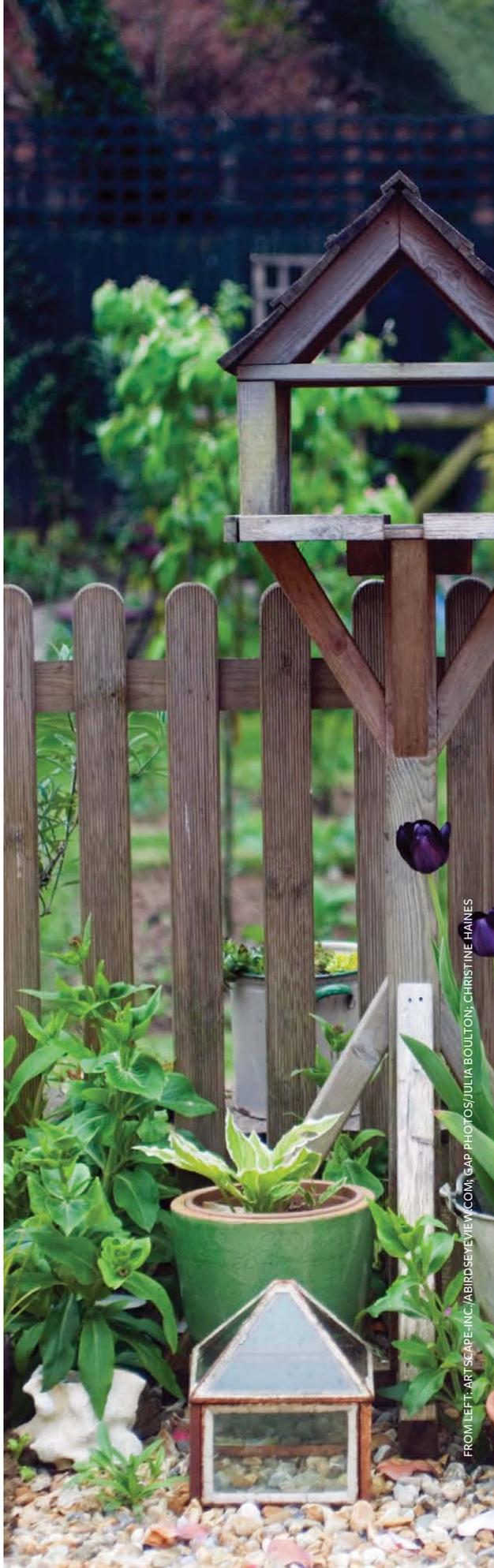


A decal keeps birds from hitting windows.

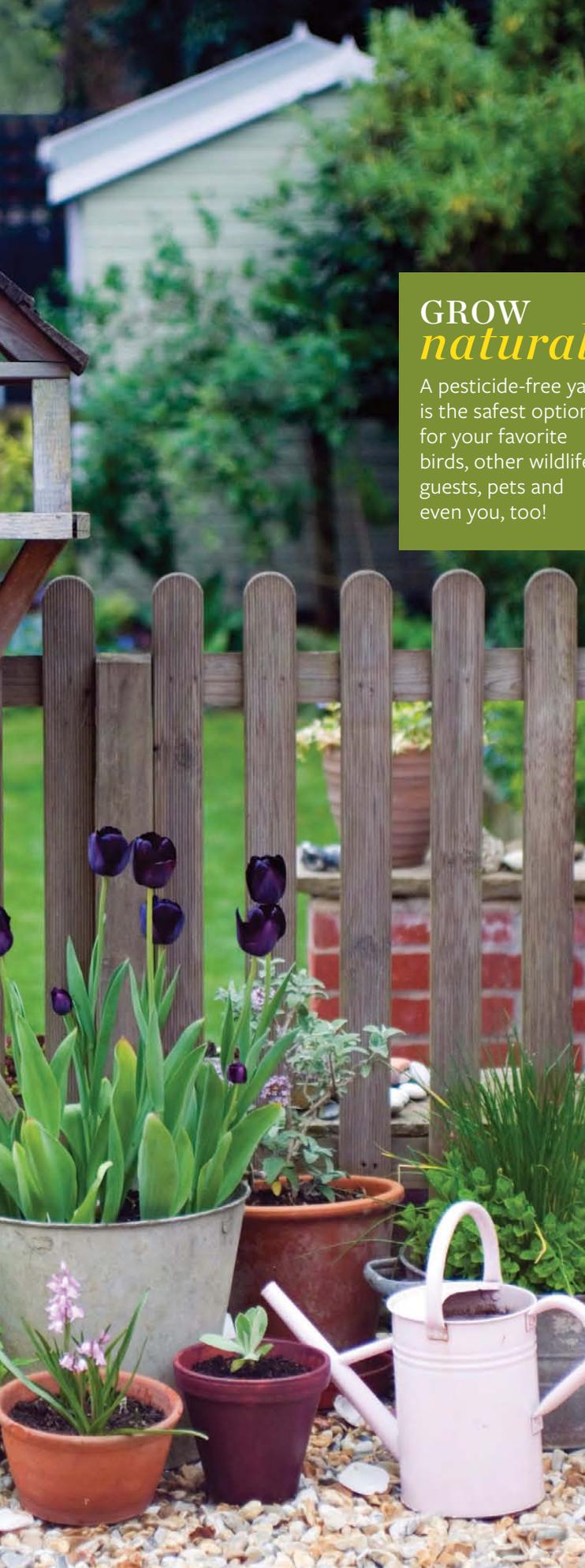
## Prevent Painful Panes

*Thud!* When you hear a bird crash into a window, a feeling of dread comes over you. Stand out in your backyard and look at the windows of your house from a bird's perspective, and it's easy to see why strikes are a major issue. Windows reflect the sky and fool birds into thinking they can fly right through.

Special tape, decals shaped like hawks, and many other products designed to reduce window strikes are effective and worth trying. If you're experiencing bird strikes at windows near your feeders and decals aren't doing the trick, move the feeders to within 2 or 3 feet of the window. In such a short distance, birds can't build up any speed between the feeder and the window. Birds may still bump into the window occasionally, but they're far less likely to be injured.



FROM LEFT: ARTSCAPE-INC./BIRDSERVEVIEW.COM; GAP PHOTOS/JULIA BOULTON; CHRISTINE HAINES



## GROW *natural!*

A pesticide-free yard is the safest option for your favorite birds, other wildlife guests, pets and even you, too!

Change out birdbath water every other day to keep song sparrows coming back for more.



### Say No to Pesticides

Birding and gardening go hand-in-hand, and understanding how birds, bugs and plants benefit one another greatly enhances the rewards. As an active gardener, you probably have found bugs eating your plants and felt the urge to take action. But it's important to know that most pesticides are nondiscriminate killers that don't just eliminate specific bugs. Pesticides kill important pollinators, like honeybees and butterflies, as well as helpful insects like lady beetles.

Although many kinds of lawn fertilizers with weed killers are harmful to wildlife, you still should consider organic fertilizers. Building your soil with a strong combination of compost and organic fertilizers is critical. If you forgo all fertilizers, you can end up with poor plant growth, fewer bugs for birds to eat, and soil erosion as plants decline.

And reducing the overall use of harsh pesticides in yards is healthier for humans, too.

**GARDEN WISELY** Compost and mulch reduce the need for pesticide use because they help healthy plants both outcompete the weeds and better tolerate pests.



Keep thistle feeders tidy to attract American and lesser goldfinches.

### Clean Feeders Regularly

Cleaning bird feeders is certainly not the most glamorous part of attracting birds, but it's necessary to keep them healthy and avoid spreading diseases. Moldy seeds and accumulated bird droppings create a very unhealthy environment. It's best to clean your feeders once a month using a stiff brush and hot, soapy water. Consider cleaning them more often during times of peak feeding activity, such as the migration season. Allow each feeder to dry completely before filling and putting it back up.

When you're ready to choose and buy a new feeder, it's important to consider how easy it will be for you to take apart and clean. Because many birds feed on the ground, remember to keep the area under the feeders clean as well.

**SERVE FRESH SEEDS** Heavy spring rains may wreak havoc on birdseed. Check feeders regularly to make sure the seeds aren't moldy or stale.

## A SAFE SPACE FOR *cats*

Create an outdoor enclosure or cat patio for your feline friend. They allow your kitty to be outdoors without being a threat to birds.





Replace feeder nectar regularly to keep visiting ruby-throated hummingbirds healthy.

## Keep Cats Happy Indoors

Cats are lovely and make wonderful companions. But if you love birds and feeding them, it's best to keep your cats indoors. Studies prove the devastating impact that roaming house cats and feral cats have on birds and small mammals.

House cats are not native and also are not part of the natural ecosystem. Many people believe that a well-fed kitty wouldn't have any reason to hunt birds, but even cared-for cats have the instinct to go after birds. Feeders and roaming cats are a lethal combination. If you have an outdoor cat, or if many strays visit your yard, it may be best if you refrain from feeding the birds, for the birds' own safety. Remember that, according to veterinarians, indoor cats live longer, healthier lives. So keeping them inside not only protects the birds, it's also better for the cats.

Creating and maintaining a bird-safe yard requires a bit more work and dedication beyond simply putting up a feeder. But the peace of mind that comes with doing your part to keep birds safe is extremely rewarding. ●

## A CLEAR WAY TO FEED MORE HUMMINGBIRDS

Beware: Some retailers offer hummingbird food colored with red dye. Most leading experts agree that the dye can be harmful to birds, and at the very least it's unnecessary. The top recommendation for hummingbird food is to make it at home. Mix one part granulated white sugar to four parts water. Any other kind of sweetener besides white granulated table sugar may be unsafe.

*Kenn and Kimberly Kaufman enjoy the extra work it takes to make their own yard a safe and happy place for birds, bugs and humans.*

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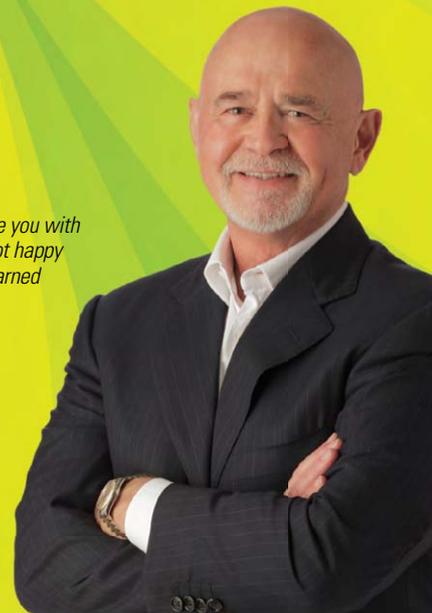
Curamin has been recognized throughout the natural foods industry for pain relief with 28 awards and counting.\*<sup>†</sup> When pain is the problem, Curamin is the answer.\*<sup>†</sup> The combination of ingredients that form the core of Curamin were carefully selected for a level of relief that you may have never thought possible—until now. **Hello Curamin. Goodbye Pain.\*<sup>†</sup>**

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—Terry Lemerond,  
Founder and President



<sup>†</sup>Occasional muscle pain due to exercise or overuse.

<sup>†</sup>SPINScan Other Herbal Formula Subcategory Brand Rank, data ending 11/27/16.

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# Ask the Experts

*Our pros reveal why mourning doves nest so early, how a clematis popped up unexpectedly, and identify mystery birds and plants.*

**Q** Bluebirds don't visit my yard, but I'd like to serve mealworms to other birds that eat them. Do you have any tips? **Reta Walker** CONVERSE, INDIANA

**Kenn and Kimberly:** Many species, including bluebirds, enjoy a mealworm treat. These are available in two forms: alive and squirmy or dead and dried. We've had very little success with the dried kind, so we recommend you try live ones. Because they can (and do) escape, it's best to offer them in a glass or plastic container with a slick surface and sides at least 1 to 2 inches high. Cover the feeder in some manner to avoid drowning the mealworms when it rains. Many bird feeding stores offer special mealworm feeders as well.



**Q** Why do mourning dove pairs build their nests so early in spring?

**John Rossino (Age 12)**

MANAHAWKIN, NEW JERSEY

**Kenn and Kimberly:** That's a good observation—they do start nesting early in the season. Even in the north they may start their first nest as early as March. In southern states, doves may begin in February or even January. And a pair of mourning doves makes repeated nesting attempts during the year, sometimes raising as many as five broods between March and October. Normally they just lay two eggs per brood. Their nests are made of pine needles, twigs and grass, and are so flimsy that the eggs or young sometimes fall out. So the doves may have an instinct to try over and over to make sure they raise enough young to keep the species going.

**Q** We have lived in our house for eight years and enjoyed the perennials the previous owner had planted. Last spring, we found this clematis growing among the roses although we didn't plant it. Do you think a bird or another animal deposited the seeds? **Becky Thompson** WARREN, MAINE

**Melinda:** The fuzzy seeds of clematis are designed to float in the air and find their way to a suitable growing spot. It's uncommon, but not impossible, for cultivars to find their way into gardens and maintain their flower's characteristics. Birds may have grabbed seeds and dropped them in your garden, but clematis is most easily propagated from cuttings or layering. Perhaps the previous owner planted this clematis, or maybe a piece of the stem arrived with other plants that were added to the garden. The cutting may have grown slowly and gone unnoticed until it burst into bloom.



**TIPS FOR SUCCESS** *Plant clematis (Zones 4 to 9) in a spot that receives at least six hours of sunlight. Provide the cooling shade the roots require with mulch or surround with sun-tolerant ground covers. Grow on a trellis or structure to support its twining tendrils.*



**Q** I love peonies and have bought several types in the past years, but they have no smell. The best part of peonies is their fragrance. How can I get them to smell as good as they're supposed to?

Linda Caldwell NEWPORT, VIRGINIA

**Melinda:** Fragrance varies from one variety of peony to the next. When selecting peonies, look for varieties that are advertised as fragrant. The red-flecked white flowers of the Festiva Maxima are considered one of the most aromatic. Flying Swallow in a Red Dress (an early bloomer) and Red Magic both have spicy fragrances. Snow Lotus' single flowers and the double-pink blossoms of Eden's Perfume also have an intense scent.



## ASK THE EXPERTS



**Q** This bird appeared here in the Sierra foothills in February. I think it was passing through, but no one can put a name to it. What is it? **Clyde Farnsworth** COARSEGOLD, CALIFORNIA

**Kenn and Kimberly:** You're right; this bird probably was just passing through. It's a northern mockingbird, known by its slim beak, pale gray color and the white marks in the wings and tail. The odd black mark on its head looks like the result of disarranged feathers. Mockingbirds are fairly common in the central valleys and along the coast of California, especially toward the south. But they don't typically go up to high elevations in the Sierras, and in the foothills they are only occasional wanderers.

---

### MEET THE EXPERTS



*Kimberly and Kenn Kaufman are the duo behind the Kaufman Field Guide series. They speak and lead bird trips all over the world.*



*Melinda Myers is a nationally known, award-winning garden expert, TV/radio host and the author of more than 20 books.*

**Q** A cardinal and his mate continually fly into my windows. I've tried covering the windows, putting stickers on them and setting out a plastic owl—and nothing seems to work. What can I do?

**Laurien Jeffers** BUMPASS, VIRGINIA



**Kenn and Kimberly:** During the breeding season, birds become more territorial and aggressive, especially males. When they see their reflection in a window or mirror, they think it's a rival and may fixate on trying to force the "other bird" out of their territory. They'll keep going as long as they can see the reflection, even between stickers or behind a screen. Rubbing soap on the outside of the window may eliminate the reflection, but if you've exhausted all options, you might have to just be patient until the birds' hormones simmer down.



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# Color Your World

*Create pretty pastels and Easter hues with these glass mason jars you can dye by hand at home.*

## SUPPLIES

Plastic squeeze bottle  
 Glazing medium (we used Liquitex)\*  
 Liquid food color (mix primary colors for variety)  
 Mason jars in desired quantity  
 Waxed paper  
 Straight pin

## DIRECTIONS (FOR EACH)

**Step 1:** In a squeeze bottle, mix about 4 tablespoons of glazing medium with a few drops of food color. Gently swirl to blend to desired hue.

**Step 2:** Hold jar horizontally; pour the mix over the outer sides of the jar, avoiding the screw threads and rotating until the jar is covered.

**Step 3:** Break any bubbles with a straight pin.

**Step 4:** Set the jar upright on waxed paper to dry. Periodically wipe off excess glazing medium from the jar bottom with a paper towel.

**Note:** The color is permanent, but the jars are not dishwasher-safe.

*\*You can substitute decoupage glue, but you may need to add a coat of clear varnish to avoid a sticky finish.*

### BRIGHT IDEA

Fill mason jars with your favorite Easter treats to give as gifts.

# Trek to Lethbridge

*Tucked between mountains and prairie is one of the sunniest cities in Canada.* **BY KEN ORICH** LETHBRIDGE, ALBERTA



## WHY I LOVE IT

Lethbridge may be small, but it's also very green. Roughly 90 miles of paved trails link more than 130 parks and natural areas, and the Oldman River runs right through the heart of the city. Plus, with an average of 333 days of sunshine per year, rain rarely gets in the way of a great hike or bird walk.

## BIRD-WATCHING GALORE

Bring your field guide when you visit, especially during spring migration. Birders easily spot up to 70 species in a day, from white-faced ibis and ferruginous hawks to McCown's longspur and mountain bluebirds. The variety of species can be attributed to lots



of nearby reservoirs and reserves, like the Elizabeth Hall Wetlands, which has recorded roughly 100 species.

## SOAK UP THE SUN

Relax with a packed lunch at the Helen Schuler Nature Centre, which has a living roof of native plants and plays host to a permanent exhibit about the river valley, along with other seasonal exhibits. The center lies beneath the High Level Bridge, the longest and tallest railway bridge in the world and

a sight to see. The nearby Nikka Yuko Japanese Garden is another favorite among gardeners and non-gardeners alike.

## ESSENTIALS

**EAT** Luigi's Pizza and Steakhouse

**STAY** The Norland Historic Estate [thenorland.com](http://thenorland.com)

**PLAY** Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump is a UNESCO world heritage site that is dedicated to a traditional Native American hunting practice.

From top: After a tour of the Nikka Yuko Japanese Garden, go bird-watching at local reservoirs to see mountain bluebirds and other migrants. Then, rest up at The Norland Historic Estate's Atlanta room.

## SNAKE ROUND-UP



Prairie rattlesnakes hibernate in Lethbridge and are protected by law, so the city uses "snake wranglers" to move the reptiles back to a safe, quiet habitat.



JAPANESE GARDEN: MICHAEL WHEATLEY/ALL CANADA PHOTOS; BIRD: CAREY MANOUS; SNAKE: TAVIPHOTO/ISTOCK

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34124510

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69111/62522/62573

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34176826

## luminaR OUTDOOR SUPER COUPON

**3 PIECE SOLAR MOSAIC LED PATH LIGHTS**

ITEM 60757

**NEW**

**Super Coupon** ~~\$9.99~~ **\$7.99** SAVE NOW

**Customer Rating** ★★★★★

34238255

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## PREDATOR GENERATORS SUPER COUPON

**8750 PEAK/7000 RUNNING WATTS 13 HP (420 CC) GAS GENERATORS**

ITEM 68530/63086/69671/63085 shown  
ITEM 68525/69677/63087/63088 CALIFORNIA ONLY

**Customer Rating** ★★★★★

**Super Quiet**

**Super Coupon** ~~\$599.99~~ **\$529.99** SAVE \$69

Wheel kit and battery sold separately.

• 76 dB Noise Level

34249988

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**RAPID PUMP® 3 TON HEAVY DUTY STEEL FLOOR JACK**

ITEM 69227/62116/62584/68048 shown

**Customer Rating** ★★★★★

**Super Coupon** ~~\$84.99~~ **\$74.99** SAVE \$66

Weights 74 lbs.

34200503

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## CENTRAL PNEUMATIC SUPER COUPON

**2.5 HP, 21 GALLON, 125 PSI VERTICAL AIR COMPRESSOR**

ITEM 69091  
61454/61693  
62803  
67847 shown

**Super Coupon** ~~\$179.99~~ **\$149.99** SAVE \$296

**Customer Rating** ★★★★★

34155115

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## HaulMaster SUPER COUPON

**17 FT. TYPE I A MULTI-TASK LADDER**

ITEM 62514/62656  
67646 shown

**Customer Rating** ★★★★★

**Super Coupon** ~~\$139.99~~ **\$119.99** SAVE \$161

• 300 lb. capacity  
• 23 configurations

34185495

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## PREDATOR GENERATORS SUPER COUPON

**7 FT. 4" x 9 FT. 6" ALL PURPOSE WEATHER RESISTANT TARP**

ITEM 69249/69115/69137  
69129/69121/877 shown

**Customer Rating** ★★★★★

**Super Coupon** ~~\$499~~ **\$299** SAVE 64%

comp at \$8.48

34240570

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## US GENERAL SUPER COUPON

**26" 4 DRAWER TOOL CART**

ITEM 95659 shown  
61634/61952

**Customer Rating** ★★★★★

**Super Coupon** ~~\$369.32~~ **\$149.99** SAVE \$269

• 580 lb. capacity

34210138

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## CENTECH SUPER COUPON

**12 VOLT, 10/2/50 AMP BATTERY CHARGER/ENGINE STARTER**

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**Customer Rating** ★★★★★

**Super Coupon** ~~\$49.99~~ **\$29.99** SAVE 57%

comp at \$69.99

34158059

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## drillmaster SUPER COUPON

**80 PIECE ROTARY TOOL KIT**

ITEM 97626 shown  
63235/68986/69451

**Customer Rating** ★★★★★

**Super Coupon** ~~\$99.99~~ **\$6.99** SAVE 71%

comp at \$24.15

34150004

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## HaulMaster SUPER COUPON

**STEP STOOL/WORKING PLATFORM**

ITEM 62515/66911 shown

**Customer Rating** ★★★★★

**Super Coupon** ~~\$209.99~~ **\$199.99** SAVE 65%

• 350 lb. capacity

34171433

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## HARDY SUPER COUPON

**LATEX COATED WORK GLOVES**

SIZE	ITEM
MED	90909/61436
LG	90912/61435
X-LG	90913/61437

**Customer Rating** ★★★★★

**Super Coupon** ~~\$199~~ **\$179** SAVE 62%

comp at \$3.98

34246251

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## CENTRAL MACHINERY SUPER COUPON

**10 TON HYDRAULIC LOG SPLITTER**

ITEM 62291/67090 shown

**Customer Rating** ★★★★★

**Super Coupon** ~~\$1149.99~~ **\$899.99** SAVE \$30

comp at \$119.99

34198258

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## WINDSOR DESIGN SUPER COUPON

**60" 4 DRAWER HARDWOOD WORKBENCH**

ITEM 63395/93454/69054/62603 shown

**Customer Rating** ★★★★★

**Super Coupon** ~~\$395~~ **\$129.99** SAVE \$265

Tools sold separately.

34203054

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• 350 lb. capacity

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# How do you know when it's spring?

*From crocuses to blackbirds, Birds & Blooms Field Editors cherish the first signs of the season.*

---

The *juncos* leave and the *goldfinches* come back!

**Donna Sleight**  
GALLOWAY, NEW JERSEY

Regardless of the calendar date, spring has arrived when my koi become more active after torpor, the hummingbirds and butterflies return, and the deer start to eat the spring blossoms. When you walk into my yard, you smell the fresh scent of hyacinth, and you see the crocuses emerge and the birds creating new nests. Spring is also when I bring out all my decorations, and visitors (animals and people) know it's the start of a new season.

**Joan Heid** CHESTER, SOUTH CAROLINA

---

The first sign of spring is when the bees find the dandelions. Next is the blooming crocuses that cover a little hill near my house. The plants have multiplied down the entire hill. I could sit there all day and watch as the honeybees visit each bloom.

**Connie Mason Etter** MARTINSVILLE, INDIANA

---

It is truly spring here in northwest Illinois when the male red-winged blackbirds and brown-headed cowbirds appear at our feeders.

**Keith Golden**  
LAKE CARROLL, ILLINOIS

For me, it is the *weeping cherry buds!* They are always the first to pop out and summon pollinators.

**Kathy Lorigan**  
EASTON, PENNSYLVANIA

**YOUR TURN!**

**Q.** What do you love most about hummingbirds?

Share your answer at [birdsandblooms.com/submit](https://birdsandblooms.com/submit).





1

Mar Sension  
ALTOONA, PENNSYLVANIA



2

Heidi Jones  
CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA

**True or False?**

**A. INDIGO BUNTINGS** use the stars in the night sky to navigate during migration.

**B. ARCTIC TERNS** have one of the longest migrations in the world, flying nearly 50,000 miles per year.

**C. BARRED OWLS** migrate to the warm temperatures of Florida instead of hibernating.

# Signs of the Season

*How many of these spring birds can you identify?*

*answers  
on the  
bottom!*



3

Ozzie Vannucci  
BRIARCLIFF MANOR,  
NEW YORK



4

Karen Fahrlander  
SUNDRE, ALBERTA



5

Tammi Frick  
ALTO, MICHIGAN

**ANSWERS** 1. EASTERN BLUEBIRD 2. ROSE-BREASTED GROUSEBEAK 3. AMERICAN ROBIN 4. MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD 5. BALTIMORE ORIOLE A. TRUE B. TRUE C. FALSE



## FOR THE READER

### Find the Hummingbird

In each issue, we hide a hummingbird like the one above left. In the January issue, we hid it on page 9. If you find it, enter at [birdsandblooms.com/contests](http://birdsandblooms.com/contests). We'll draw winners to receive *Birds & Blooms* seeds.

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*-Marie, Newtown Square, PA*

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YOU DON'T SAY



# Caption This!

*Tweet meets sweet in this hilarious photo.*

**S**teven Lepak of De Pere, Wisconsin, wanted to see what would happen if a real bird met a marshmallow one, so he set up this backyard scene. What do you imagine this black-capped chickadee is thinking about the sugary stranger next to it? Go to [birdsandblooms.com/youdontsay](http://birdsandblooms.com/youdontsay) to caption this photo. We'll publish our favorite in the next issue.

LAST ISSUE'S  
**WINNING  
CAPTION**

“When you're  
already eating  
and the grace  
prayer begins.”

SUBMITTED BY  
JOEL BELFORD



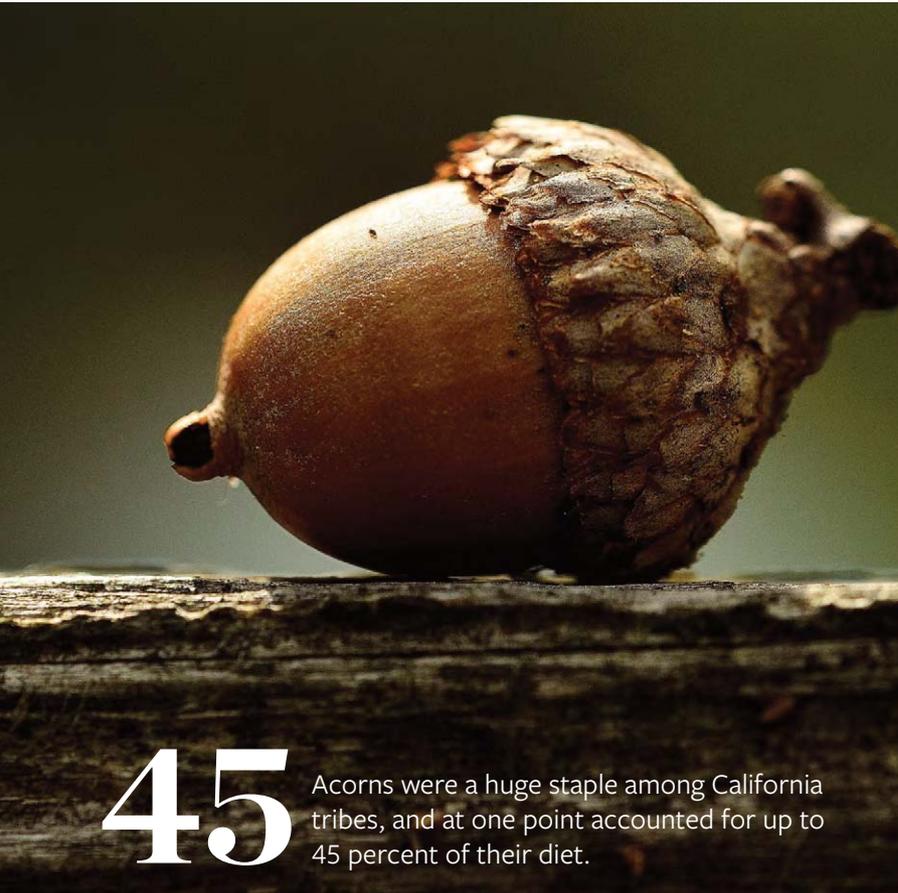
CHIPMUNK: CRISTINA MARTINEZ

**SHARE YOUR BEST FUNNY NATURE PHOTOS!** Follow the Submission Guidelines on page 56.

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# Plants with a Past

Travel back in time to discover extraordinary uses for ordinary plants. **BY KAITLIN STAINBROOK**



**1** Cacao beans were used as currency among the Aztecs and Mayans. For example, one cacao bean was worth a tomato or avocado, and 100 of them would get you a turkey hen.

**10** A golden spike was driven into the final tie of the transcontinental railroad on May 10, 1869. The tie was made from a California bay laurel tree, which has a rare color and grain.

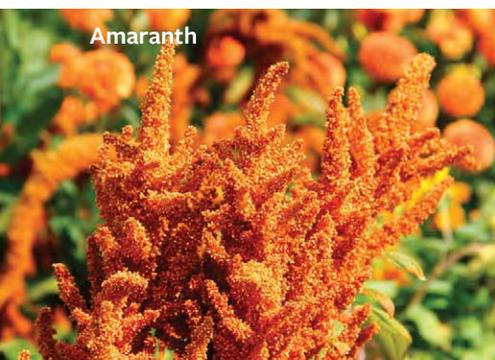
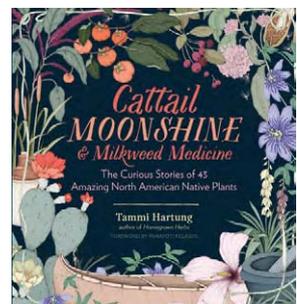
**45** Acorns were a huge staple among California tribes, and at one point accounted for up to 45 percent of their diet.

**40** It takes 40 years for hickory trees to produce nuts, and Cherokees use those nuts to make ku-nu-che soup and celebrate holidays.

**12,000** Indigenous North Americans have woven cattails into everything from roofs to baskets for more than 12,000 years.

## STUFF WE LOVE

For more historical tidbits about some of your favorite plants, check out *Cattail Moonshine & Milkweed Medicine* by Tammi Hartung, \$14, [barnesandnoble.com](http://barnesandnoble.com)



Amaranth

**2** Amaranth was an important food among the Mayans, and it's eaten in Mexico on Nov. 2 to celebrate Day of the Dead.

CLOCKWISE FROM LOWER LEFT: FOTOLINCHEN/ISTOCK; PHOTOSBYMSA/ISTOCK; SVERA/ISTOCK



“Nothing in the world is quite as adorably lovely as a robin when he shows off—and they are nearly always doing it.”

—Frances Hodgson Burnett