

# Bird-friendly berry bushes



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*Ask a Master Gardener*

**Q**uestion: The birds that used to come to my garden every year and bring me such joy to watch don't seem to be visiting as often. What berry bushes can I plant to attract them that are easy to manage and bird-friendly?

**A**nswer: Birds enrich our lives with their presence – their grace, songs and antics – and they are wonderful for the garden when they eat insects and help to control pests.

A bird-friendly yard includes a mix of plantings to provide food, shelter, nesting sites and nesting material. Shrubs are the best berry producers and these hardworking plants help shelter birds from predators, support the insects that birds eat, and offer nesting sites.

Consider planting native shrubs like Snowberry, Serviceberry or the Oregon grape. If your yard contains Cone flower or Black-eyed Susans from the summer, don't deadhead them but let the seeds remain on the plant through the fall and winter to keep the goldfinches and other seed-eaters around.

Snowberry (*Symphoricarpos albus*) is an enchanting medium sized shrub in the Honeysuckle family with unique egg white berries that form in late summer and persist on bare stems through early spring. Its usefulness in landscaping it because of its versatility – tolerating sun, shade, heat, cold and drought.

Serviceberry is the common name for *Amelanchier alnifolia* and is called the Saskatoon berry in Canada. It is an extremely hardy deciduous shrub that prefers



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full sun. It produces outstanding blue-green foliage, delicate two-inch flower clusters and brilliant red and yellow fall color. Pea size purple fruits make fantastic pies and preserves and all varieties of wildlife will adore its fruit as well.

Oregon's state flower, the Oregon Grape (*Mahonia aquifolium*) breaks out in brilliant yellow flowers in mid-winter that leave behind bunches of blue-black berries. This lower-growing evergreen shrub provides an attractive anchor for the

border of a shady garden and grows best in partial sun.

Oregon Viburnum (*Viburnum ellipticum*), also known as the "wayfaring tree" is a native ornamental bush that adds texture to a garden. It is one of America's most prevalent and useful landscape shrubs because it is garden condition tolerant. It blooms in early spring with red, yellow, blue or black berries appearing in fall.

The Pacific or mountain Dogwood (*Cornus nuthall*), which are most often



Dogwood (*Cornus nuthall*) is most often seen as small trees.

seen as small trees in the Pacific Northwest are admired in landscapes because of their beautiful flowers, attractive foliage and showy fruit. The berries ripen from summer to fall depending on the species and their high-fat content provides valuable nutrients for migrating songbirds in the fall.

While studies show birds are slightly less

attracted to non-native plant species, some ornamentals provide welcome berries, like the Sweet Box (*Sarcococca confuse*) which blooms in February and March, when little else is available. These evergreen shrubs do well in tough shady areas and the berries are attractive to birds.

Planting any number of these flowers, bushes

or trees will be sure to liven up and keep your garden hopping with activity during the winter months.

*Do you have a gardening question? Email, call, or visit the Douglas County Master Gardener Plant Clinic at [douglasmg@oregonstate.edu](mailto:douglasmg@oregonstate.edu), 541-672-4461, or 1134 SE Douglas Ave., Roseburg.*