



AUTUMN & WINTER

BACKYARD BIODIVERSITY

HOW TO HELP WILDLIFE IN YOUR YARD

With a little bit of education and a lot of heart, we can achieve peaceful co-existence with wildlife throughout the urban forest, starting with our own backyards! Both LEAF and TWC have extensive information on our websites, but here are some quick tips to keep wildlife safe and your gardens healthy.

KEEP EXISTING HABITATS IN YOUR YARD

Leave dead and dying vegetation in your garden and yard, especially those with seed pods, as they provide food during the winter for birds. Fallen leaves and other garden cuttings can provide food, shelter and nesting material. Where possible, leave cavities in the ground or in trees for our only native social bees - bumblebees - to nest in.

If you want wildlife to thrive, consider expanding on available habitats by planting trees or shrubs. Trees as well as native shrubs and gardens can provide food and shelter for butterflies, bees and songbirds.



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BE CAREFUL DURING ANY RENOVATIONS

Disrupting old foundations, septic systems and deep digging can disrupt critical shelter to snakes during the cold months of the year. These animals leave their hibernaculums in the late spring, so start your renovations then. Be aware that burrowing animals, like chipmunks, may still be present.

Regardless of the season, be mindful of any nearby trees. Damage to tree roots may take a few years to become evident and will often be fatal for trees. When you're digging, remember that 90% of a tree's roots are located in the top 50 centimeters of soil and can extend up to three times the width of the tree canopy.

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EXERCISE CAUTION WHEN PRUNING

Late fall and winter are the best times to do major pruning to your trees, as there won't be wild babies present. Some species, like owls, may still be taking refuge in the cavities of your tree though, so a thorough inspection should be conducted prior to cutting.

Before you prune, do some research on your particular tree or shrub species. Improper pruning can result in serious, long-term damage to trees. Be sure to hire only arborists certified by the International Society of Arboriculture and ask them how they will handle the situation if they encounter wildlife in your tree.

GIVE A BIRD OR A BAT A HOME

Bat and bird houses are a great way to provide much-needed shelter. Although they can be installed at any time, putting them up in late fall or during the winter will ensure that they are available for bats that have been in hibernation locally come spring, or for birds during breeding season.

Different bird species require varying habitats from thick brushy wooded areas, to open grass lands. Bats need solar exposure and easy access to their house, which are difficult to obtain if the house is installed in a tree. Instead, opt to install your bat or bird house on a free-standing pole in the most appropriate space for the species. This protects your trees from damaging nails or bindings, and keeps bats and birds safe and happy.



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CONSIDER NATURAL ALTERNATIVES TO FEEDERS

While bird feeders are well-intentioned, many problems arise because of them. Feeders present increased risk for the spread of disease like conjunctivitis, a virus which affects the bird's eyes and can lead to blindness. Congregating birds also makes it much easier for predators to find them.

Instead of feeders, consider planting edible shrubs. There are a variety of native shrubs which bloom at various times of the year, some even until mid-Fall. They can provide birds with natural food, without the drawbacks of a bird feeder.

TORONTO WILDLIFE CENTRE

If you find a sick, injured or orphaned wild animal, contact our Wildlife Emergency Hotline: 416-631-0662
And for more information, visit www.torontowildlifecentre.com

LEAF

LEAF offers subsidized planting programs that make it easy to help wildlife in your yard. To learn more about the trees, shrubs and garden kits we offer, visit www.yourleaf.org or call 1-888-453-6504

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