

Grow Your Garden for the Birds!

Sacajawea Audubon Society invites you to visit the exciting new 'Plants for Birds Garden' in the Wells Fargo Learning Garden at Story Mill Community Park in Bozeman*. With the help of a MNPS grant in 2020 Sacajawea Audubon volunteers installed a demonstration garden showcasing trees, shrubs, perennials, and vines that attract birds, pollinators and other wildlife with an emphasis on using native plants in our landscapes.

As urban growth and new subdivisions alter the native landscape, bird-friendly yards are becoming extremely important for the survival of our native songbirds, bees and butterflies. Native plants and bird-friendly landscaping go hand-in-hand. Birds and insects have coevolved with our native plants and they seek out habitats that provide these plants critical to their survival. Too often plants installed in our gardens and landscapes are exotics, often unpalatable to native insects and wildlife. This demonstration garden highlights over 35 species of plants that benefit birds and support biodiversity. Many of the plants are native to Montana or are cultivars of natives that grow well in a home landscape.

Our demonstration garden was a labor of love. We had almost 50 volunteers show up to help during the various work sessions of preparing the site, installing edging, planting about 100 trees, shrubs, and perennials, installing drip irrigation, and ultimately hauling and spreading 6.5 cubic yards of cedar mulch as the finishing touch. Everyone wanted to be a part of this exciting project. Since it was planted in June the garden has come alive with a variety of bees, butterflies, and other arthropods. Birds followed close behind and devoured the berries on the, chokecherries, elderberries, golden currants, and gooseberries this fall.

The educational aspects of this garden are two part. First, Sacajawea Audubon members will offer 'Landscaping for Birds' classes and provide garden mentoring on site at the garden in the future. Second, the garden will include interpretive signage for self-education of visitors to generate enthusiasm for providing bird-friendly habitat throughout the community. A large interpretive sign will welcome visitors to the garden and small botanical labels will identify the plants and describe their unique bird-friendly attributes.

Sacajawea Audubon sincerely appreciates the support of the Montana Native Plant Society in making this garden a reality. It was truly a collaborative effort. Our other partners include: Linda Iverson, who artfully designed the garden and provided invaluable consulting advice; the Gallatin Valley Food Bank, which manages the Learning Garden and provided volunteers; the Trust for Public Land, which provided financial support and assistance with the interpretive signs; the Gallatin Gardener's Club, which provided financial support; and the City of Bozeman, for their embrace of our garden within the Story Mill Community Park.

With the demonstration garden in place, and by providing future educational offerings, Sacajawea Audubon hopes to substantially influence homeowners' landscaping choices to help

restore wildlife habitat and support biodiversity in our communities. We encourage everyone to visit the Plants for Birds Garden in the Story Mill Community Park and learn about gardening for birds. Thanks for your support Montana Native Plant Society!

By Paulette Epple, Conservation Co-chair, Sacajawea Audubon Society

*Story Mill Community Park is located at 600 Bridger Canyon Drive in the northeast part of Bozeman. You can pull into the main parking lot at this address and you will see a fenced area along Bridger Canyon Drive. This is the Learning Garden and within it is our Plants for Birds Garden, as well as an Edible Food Forest and other display gardens