WINTER IN THE GARDEN... FEEDING THE BIRDS

Watching the birds in your garden and at feeders is one of the most pleasurable ways to enjoy nature through a cold winter. On snowy days, their liveliness, colors and sounds bring joy and fascination. I got into winter bird watching when I was a teenager. My mom would feed the birds and even send me out to fill the feeders and then we would wait for them to come and eat, and she would identify all the different birds that were at the feeders. I lived on a farm in Texas County, in the Ozarks, and we had a lot of birds that would visit the feeders during the winter. I live in town now, Kirksville, and even though I do have some birds that visit the feeders, it's not like the numerous birds I saw at feeders on our farm as a kid.

For the greatest variety and number of birds, try a variety of feeding spots and feeders. Start with one or two feeders and increase the number as you learn which foods and feeders the birds prefer. Place the feeders so you can watch them easily from a convenient window. Also, when the feeders are in sight, you'll see when they need to be filled or cleaned. Hang feeders near shrubs or trees so birds have nearby cover and can escape from predators such as hawks and cats. In extremely windy areas, choose sheltered locations for the feeders.

Squirrels are a major pest of bird feeders. In some areas, so are raccoons and rats. Luckily, there are several types of feeders and tips about placement that will help deter visits by uninvited guests. To prevent squirrels from reaching the feeder, use one that includes an attached baffle or that has a funnel-shaped top. You can also buy baffles separately and attach them to your favorite feeder. Elevate the feeder at least five feet off the ground. Place it eight to 10 feet from the nearest building and overhanging tree branches. If larger birds such as grackles are a problem, choose feeders designed for small birds, such as a thistle tube or hanging globe. If you have a cat, keep it inside during the day, especially at times when birds visit the feeders.

Black oil sunflower seeds are relished by chickadees, evening grosbeaks, cardinals and finches, and are less attractive to non-native sparrows and starlings. White proso millet is the best small seed, especially attractive to juncos and sparrows in winter. Goldfinches prefer thistle seed (also called niger), which also attracts house finches.

Birds have four basic needs: food, water, shelter from predators and the...
elements, and safe nesting places. In addition to setting out feeders to provide food, you can help birds meet their needs in the following ways:

- As you clean up, leave a brush pile that birds can use for cover. Also leave seeds and fruits on plants such as sunflowers (for jays and chickadees); cosmos, chicory and evening primrose (for goldfinches); and grapes (for cedar waxwings).
- Provide fresh water in a shallow container. Water should be no more than two inches deep. In winter, it is especially important to keep the water ice-free by changing it frequently or by using an immersion-type water heater designed for outdoor use.
- Landscapes with abundant trees and shrubs, and a relatively small lawn, are most attractive to birds. To enhance your garden with plants that provide natural food and shelter, develop a landscape plan this winter in preparation for spring planting.

HEALTHY YARDS FOR CLEAR STREAMS WORKSHOP TO BE HELD IN KIRKSVILLE JANUARY 14 & 15

University of Missouri Extension-Adair County and the Missouri Department of Conservation Northeast Regional Office in Kirksville, are partnering to put on a two day workshop called “Healthy Yards For Clear Streams”. This is a statewide Extension program focusing on having a healthy, beautiful yard with minimum effects on water quality. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) considers stormwater runoff from yards, streets, parking lots and other urban areas to be one of the most significant sources of contamination in our nation’s waters. Homeowners use more chemicals per acre on lawns than farmers use on crops. Some of these chemicals are finding their way to our streams and lakes. All stormwater flows directly from gutters and storm drains straight to streams and is not treated in any way. This means our lawn and garden chemicals have the potential to cause fish kills and harm other living things. The cost for the workshop is $15 for two days or $10 for one day and includes lunch. Please call the Adair County Extension Center at 660-665-9866 for a registration form. The bad weather dates are February 18-19. The deadline for registering is January 8.

January 14
8:30-9:00- Registration
9:00-9:45- Why Connect Yards to Streams (Jennifer Schutter, University of Missouri Extension)
9:45-10:45- Rain Gardens (Missouri Department of Conservation)
10:45-11:00- Break
11:00-12:00- Soils and Erosion Prevention (Alix Carpenter, University of Missouri Extension)
12:00-12:45- Lunch
12:45-2:00- Healthy Lawn Care (Luke Mudd, Truman State University)
2:00-2:15- Break
2:15-3:00- Companion Planting and Using Raised Beds (Jennifer Schutter, Extension)
3:00-4:00- Tree Selection/Right Plant, Right Place (MDC)

January 15
8:30-9:00- Registration
9:00-10:00- Controlling Invasive Plants (MDC)
10:00-11:00- Designing and Installing a Native Plant Garden (MDC)
11:00-11:15- Break
11:15-12:00- Making and Using Compost (Gigi Wahba, Sandhill Farm)
12:00-12:45- Lunch
12:45-1:45-Where Have all the Bees Gone? (Stan Hildebrand, Sandhill Farm)
1:45-2:45- Integrated Pest Management and Using Garden Chemicals (Jennifer Schutter, Extension)
2:45-3:00- Break
3:00-4:00- Insects and Diseases of Woody Plants and What to do (MDC)
10 HEALTHY FALL FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

Story source: Melissa Bess

COLUMBIA, Mo. – Fruits and vegetables are easier to come by in the summer than in the fall and winter. But to stay healthy and ward off diseases, it’s important to include fruits and vegetables in your diet year-round, notes a University of Missouri Extension specialist.

Melissa Bess, MU Extension regional nutrition and health specialist in Camden County, offers a top 10 list of superstar fruits and vegetables of the fall and winter months:

1. **Sweet potatoes** are loaded with beta carotene, a powerful antioxidant that is good for the eyes. Sweet potatoes also contain vitamin C, potassium, fiber, iron and vitamin B-6. “Sweet potatoes have more nutrients than regular white potatoes and can replace white potatoes in some recipes,” Bess said. “Try them mashed, baked or as a dessert.”

2. **Pumpkins** are another great source of beta carotene,” she said. “They also contain potassium.” You can make canned or prepared fresh pumpkin into a variety of soups, baked goods and desserts.

3. “**Apples** are a quick, easy snack and can be paired with peanut butter or cheese for protein,” she said. Apples contain antioxidants, which may help protect against certain cancers and reduce levels of LDL or “bad” cholesterol. Apples have vitamin C, vitamin K and fiber.

4. **Broccoli** can be eaten raw or cooked, hot or cold, by itself or with other foods. “Broccoli may help prevent cancer and heart disease, and boost the immune system,” Bess said. Nutrients in broccoli include vitamin C, vitamin A, vitamin B-6, iron, calcium, magnesium and vitamin E.

5. **Kiwi** can be eaten alone (after peeling) or added to many different dishes, including soups, salads and desserts. “Kiwi contains antioxidants, vitamin C, fiber, potassium, magnesium and vitamin E,” she said.

6. “**Avocados** contain healthy monounsaturated fat,” Bess said. “But even healthy fat is a dense source of energy, so it’s important to eat avocados in moderation.” They also contain vitamin E, fiber, potassium, folate and vitamin C. “Avocados can be used on sandwiches, salads, or made into guacamole.”

7. “**Green beans** are high in vitamin K, which protects red blood cells and helps reduce the severity of asthma, osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis,” she said. They also contain vitamin C, potassium, folate, iron and magnesium. “Green beans can be served as a side dish, in salads, soups or casseroles.”

8. “**Spinach** is packed with vitamin A, vitamin K, iron, folate, magnesium, vitamin C, calcium, potassium, fiber and vitamin E,” she said. “Frozen or fresh spinach can be added to just about any meal. Try using it on pizza, lasagna or instead of lettuce in a salad.”

9. **Pears** are a good source of fiber, antioxidants and vitamin C. Research suggests that regularly eating pears and other fruits may guard against macular degeneration. “Pears seldom cause allergies and are usually safe for infants and small children,” she said.

10. “**Winter squash** contains fiber, potassium, iron and vitamin A,” she said. “Vitamin A helps ensure healthy skin, hair, vision and bones.” Bess suggests serving winter squash mashed, using it in breads, desserts and soups or as a snack or side dish.

For healthy recipes and other nutrition information from MU Extension, see [http://missourifamilies.org/nutrition/](http://missourifamilies.org/nutrition/).

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**UPDATES NEEDED**

If you have gotten a new mailing address or email address in the last six months, please send us the update. We send the newsletter out electronically and some emails are bouncing back. Or, if you are a Master Gardener on a club roster and you are not getting emails regarding upcoming Master Gardener activities, it could be that your emails are bouncing back. We do have some that come back. This means that you either have a new address and I do not have it or that your mailbox is full, and until you check and delete old emails, you will not receive Master Gardener emails for upcoming activities because they will keep coming back. If you are in a household that is receiving two of these newsletters because you are both Master Gardeners, please let us know.
GARDEN TIPS FOR JANUARY

ORNAMENTALS:
- Brush off heavy snow from trees and shrubs
- To reduce injury, allow ice to melt naturally from plants.
- Check stored summer bulbs such as Dahlias, Canna’s, and Gladiolus to be sure they are not rotting or drying out.
- Limbs damaged by ice or snow should be pruned off promptly to prevent bark from tearing.
- Sow pansy seeds indoors.

HOUSEPLANTS:
- Wash dust off plant leaves on a regular basis. This allows the leaves to gather light more efficiently and will result in better growth.
- Set pots of humidity-loving house plants on trays filled with pebbles and water.
- Kill mealy bugs on plants by wiping them off with a cotton ball soaked in rubbing alcohol.
- Insecticidal soap sprays can be safely applied to most house plants for the control of many insect pests.
- To clean heavily encrusted clay pots, scrub them with a steel wool pad after they have soaked overnight in a solution consisting of 1 gallon of water, and one cup each of white vinegar and household bleach.

MISCELLANEOUS:

All Month
- Store wood ashes in sealed, fireproof containers. Apply a dusting around lilacs, baby’s breath, asters, lilies, and roses in spring. Do not apply to acid-loving plants. Excess ashes may be composted.
- Check fruit trees for evidence of rodent injury to bark.
- Avoid foot traffic on frozen lawns as this may injure turf grasses.

Week 1-2
- Christmas tree boughs can be used to mulch garden perennials.
- If you didn’t get your bulbs planted before the ground froze, plant them immediately in individual peat pots and place the pots in flats. Set them outside where it is cold and bury the bulbs under thick blankets of leaves. Transplant them into the garden any time weather permits.
- Seed and nursery catalogs arrive. While reviewing garden catalogs, look for plants with improved insect, disease, and drought-tolerance.
- Old Christmas trees can be recycled outdoors as a feeding station for birds. String garlands of peanuts, popcorn, cranberries, and fruits through their boughs.

- Missouri Botanical Garden -