The Garden Corner

By: Art Kammerlohr

Master Gardeners of Johnson County Missouri

            Imagine for a moment:  A nice, cool, fall day.  The sky is the deepest blue you’ve ever seen; and, sitting right in the middle of the birdbath is a Robin – wings outstretched – lounging in the warm water.  That critter is announcing, to no one in particular, that he has done his job and now is the time to prepare for winter.  I thought, “Oh! My!” what a great topic for this month’s article.  Soooo, local Birders, this one is for you.

            Our average first frost is October 15th and by that date we need to be ready to take care of our feathered friends and get them through a winter.  By mid-month, the hummingbirds should have all gone south – the original “Snow Birds”.   The hummingbird feeders can be taken down, cleaned, and stored until April 15th 2019.   By this time, all the flying bug brigades have ceased creating new recruits so bird houses can be taken down, cleaned out, and disinfected.  Putting them up again will provide winter protection.

            Check out the water situation.  Is the birdbath or watering hole located far enough away from bushes and other predator hiding places?  The more inviting you make the watering and feeding area, the more you will attract our winged friends.   It won’t be long and you can test your water heater to make sure all the visitors to the backyard get good, clean, unfrozen water.

            Food! If you don’t have a favorite, you might try what we use.  For most of our residents, Black Oil Sunflower seed is a constant selection from the menu – also loved by both Red and Gray Squirrel.  Thistle is another highly requested entrée and enjoyed by all the Finches, Sparrows, and Cardinals.  Last on our list and a For Sure Crowd Pleaser is suet.   Any kind will do unless you’re dealing with the majestic Pileated Woodpecker.  That Dude seems to prefer the fat mixed with seed types.

            Another thing we could do to make the Dining Room more appealing and safe would be to provide protection.  Planting evergreens (bushes and trees) is an excellent way to improve the area.   Leaving the ornamental grasses uncut until spring will become a hiding place for the little ones.

            You provide the food, water, and protection and they provide the entertainment. What a deal!  OK – THAT’S IT! I’ve written this article and that lazy bird is STILL in the water.  Questions? Write: 370 NW 121 Rd., Warrensburg, MO 64093 or email: [maandpak@embarqmail.com](mailto:maandpak@embarqmail.com) and I’ll get back with you.  Pardon me – Gone to get a Robin.