

Conservation Notes



“Wildlife Food Source Summer” Important Native Plants for Your Shopping List

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We have celebrated Father's Day, Mother's Day and I urge you to consider “Wildlife Food Source Summer!” In conjunction with my last article, with a little help from Bill Cullina's book, *Native Trees, Shrubs and Vines*, and input from Carolyn Summers, here is a list of some very important food sources for our native insects and/or birds.

These plants are all native and most like the acid, woodland setting of Redding and also are zone appropriate. Copy the list and keep it close to your heart. Soon there will be summer sales at some of the nurseries, and you may score something of great benefit to our wild friends. Not enough nurseries carry native plants, and the more we ask for them, the more we will encourage them to be responsible stewards of the land, as we are.

AMELANCHIER known as shadbush and serviceberry. There are tree forms: *A. arborea* and *A. laevis*. *Amelanchier canadensis* is a multi-stem, other varieties are suckering shrubs. They have lovely spring white flowers, and even one cultivar, "Robin Hill," sports pink ones. The berries of the Saskatoon serviceberry (*A. alnifolia*) are the sweetest, attracting many birds, especially thrushes and grosbeaks – and people, if you get there first. Cree Indians used the dried berries when making pemmican. The berries are easily bruised so they don't make the cut for commercial growers. These are adaptable shrubs with shallow fibrous root systems, members of the rose family.



ARONIA - Commonly called chokeberry, *A. arbutifolia* (left) has clusters of red berries, and *A. melanocarpa* has black ones. Possibly an interbreed, a third cultivar, *A. prunifolia*, produces purple berries. Birds love the berries after they have fermented over the winter, especially robins. Their white spring flowers attract bees. They are best located in a sunnier spot for increased berry production. Aronia are adaptable, suckering shrubs, another rose family member.



CEANOTHUS *americanus* (left), known as New Jersey tea, is a sun lover, only 2-3' tall and appreciates a well drained location. It is drought tolerant and in summer produces white flowers which are nectar sources for many bees, butterflies and other insects. Many butterfly larvae need the leaves for food.



CEPHALANTHUS occidentalis (left). "Just call me a buttonbush." A shrub for sun to part shade that loves moist, even wet — think stream side or bog — locations. Not drought tolerant at all. It sports fragrant, white ball-shaped flowers in summer which are nectar sources for many butterflies, especially fritillaries and tiger swallowtails. In severe winters, they may die back but can be cut back to 6-12" and will regain size by summer.

CLETHRA alnifolia, also known as summersweet, is a moist to wet area shrub, liking sunny to part shady spots. They have lovely fragrant summer blossoms which are usually white. There is a Broken Arrow cultivar, "Ruby Spice," with rose colored blooms. A nectar source for many insects, they have glossy green leaves and a lovely golden fall color.

CORNUS alternifolia, the Pagoda dogwood, is an alternate branching tree that grows from 10-25' high with small white spring flowers and, later, berries that are a treat for the birds as they are very high in sugar content. Cornus prefer a moist area, and sun to part shade. If drought stressed, they may be susceptible to powdery mildew or stem canker. C. racemosa, the gray or swamp dogwood has red panicles, fragrant white spring flowers and berries that the birds love as they ripen in summer. C. racemosa sprouts new stems to form widening clumps.

FOTHERGILLA – The witch alders are nectar sources for insects. A dwarf form F. gardenii grows about 3' high, likes damp, coastal sunny to partly shady spots and has glaucous leaves ("Blue Mist") with spring blooming white flowers. F. major blooms later and is much larger, 4' up to 15' and prefers higher terrain. There is a compromise intermediate in F. "Mt. Airy."



GAYLUSSACIA baccata (left), is the black huckleberry which is only 1-2' high and is drought tolerant. Box huckleberry is a much larger shrub with glossy green small leaves and is slow-growing in sun to part shade. They both have pink flowers in the spring and are important for nectar for bumble bees and later, for berries for the birds.

ILEX means holly, and that means male and female plants are needed to get the berry thing going. Ilex glabra is inkberry which is an evergreen, slow grower, just over 6" a year. In moist to dry conditions it produces black berries on the female plants after tiny green flowers in the spring. The leaves are a deep lustrous green. Ilex verticillata, the winterberry, likes it a bit more moist in sun to part shade, growing from 4-10' tall. There are many new varieties with larger red or yellow berries, some too large for the birds to be able to eat. These are winter and spring forage plants for birds.

ITEA virginiana, known also as Virginia sweetspire, has handsome, glossy leather-like leaves, prefers sun to part shade and is a small 3' shrub which has white summer blooms that are nectar sources for butterflies and many other insects. It provides great fall color. "Henry's Garnet" and "Little Henry" are two popular cultivars.



LINDERA benzoin (left), a shrub preferring moist acidic soil and part shade, can grow to a height of 10' and has aromatic leaves and small, fragrant yellow spring blossoms. Fall color is a bright yellow. Female plants produce berries rich in fats, a boon for migratory birds as

well as those who will be toughing it out through winter.



OXYDENDRON arboreum ~ Known as sourwood, Oxydendron (left) is a modest tree, 15-30' high, preferring sun to part shade in moist or dry conditions. Sourwoods produce creamy white blossoms in summer, a time when nectar sources are harder to find, so this is a very important food tree for bees and other insects. The gorgeous scarlet fall color is another plus.

VACCINIUM corymbosum, otherwise known as highbush blueberry, can be a large shrub, up to 10', a sun lover that can take wet or dry conditions. *V. angustifolium* is much smaller, 8-24" and produces the small famous Maine blueberry. Both shrubs flower in the spring with lots of nectar and the berries are yummy for birds, small mammals and larger ones like bears and people. Many butterfly larvae also use them as host plants, especially sulfurs. The brown elfin butterfly actually eats the berries of *V. angustifolium*.

VIBURNUM With many species to choose from, they usually have white flowers in the spring which turn into great berries—fruit treats for many birds in the fall. Some are shade lovers, others need more sun to make better berry production. The ones I am listing are the native viburnums. There are many lovely ones that are not native, but **think native, native, native.**

V. acerifolium- mapleleaf, likes shade or sun, 3-6'

V. dentatum- arrowwood, moist or dry, likes sun to part shade, 6-12'

V. lantanoides (alnifolium) (above right) hobblebush- shade, moist soil, up to 10' high and wide

V. opules var. americanum (trilobum) American cranberry bush

V. nudum var. cassoides- wild raisin— a more northern variety than *V. nudum*

V. nudum- smooth witherod, great fall scarlet colors and berries, multi-stemmed

V. lentago- nannyberry, very tall, sun or light shade, dry or moist, flowers and fruit smell like a goat

V. prunifolium- plum-leafed, black haw is tall 8-`5' sun to part shade, moist or dry conditions

Good hunting. Keep the list until fall in case you can't get everything this summer!!!!