



BACKYARD nature center News

April/May 2018 • Issue 46

My “leaf litter” yard

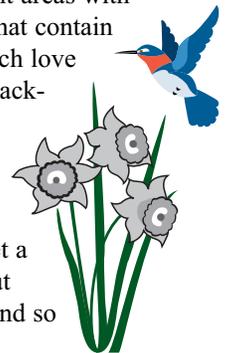
Why would anyone want a leaf litter yard? Well, let me make one thing clear. My yard, by no means looks messy. Unless you really looked, I doubt you could even tell where there is leaf litter except in the garden compost pile. Raking the yard is only done to pick up some small branches from cottonwood trees that are old enough to tower over a two-story house, or to move sweet gum balls from the middle of the yard into the bushes on the north side of the house. They will decompose by the time I do it again next



spring. Try to imagine all the wildlife and beneficial insects that will find a cozy retreat there not to mention food. When we mow, the mower mulches adding the extra nitrogen that it needs to stay green. On occasion, I use the bagger but only because we need to feed the compost pile with the magic nitrogen filled greens! Catching a glimpse of a brown thrasher or Carolina Wren nosing through the leaves under bushes, makes me feel good about not having a yard that’s compulsively

manicured to the point of being sterile. Using only organic fertilizer and no chemical weed killer’s keeps the lawn organic. I keep the mower set as high as possible makes sure sun seeking weeds get choked out.

An occasional field mouse or wood rat dodging in and out of the firewood doesn’t scare me at all. Good food for the owls, right? Plant areas with wild flower mixes that contain coneflower (goldfinch love it!) coreopsis and black-eyed Susan’s (rudbekia), autumn blaze sedum, house finch eat the buds, often before they get a chance to bloom, but whatever, I love it and so do my birds!



Don’t Stop Feeding Now!

Lots of folks ask us here at the store, if they should continue to feed the birds during the spring and summer. The most common misconception is that the birds can fend for themselves during the warmer months, when in fact, the nutritional needs for the birds during nest building and feeding young, is so high that the birds can really use the help. Think about this.....flowers, shrubs and bushes are all in bloom and looking quite beautiful while providing good cover for the birds....but.....natural seed is not available until those plants reseed themselves in fall! There you have it. Those are the facts. Insects are plentiful for sure and the birds will take advantage of their abundance. Feeding young mouths is a never ending job from dawn till dusk. Seed-eating birds feed their fledglings’ regurgitated insects but they themselves would prefer a nice oily sunflower!

Spring and summer activities are so fun to watch. It is really a special time of year and one that I always look forward to. There’s nothing sweeter than watching a male cardinal feeding his mate, or a seeing a full sized baby downy woodpecker follow mom to the feeder, stand there dumbfounded waiting for a hand out. They soon get the idea. Bird feeding is a most enjoyable hobby and we know the birds are grateful. I say, if you want to see birds in your yard, feed them.



Welcome Spring! Hummingbirds and Orioles

When you receive this newsletter, it will probably be time for the return of two of my favorite summer visitors. Around the middle of April, one of our smallest and most interesting nesting species returns to our area. The Ruby-throated Hummingbird is the only hummingbird that nests east of the Rocky Mountains. This little



bird nests in all of the states in the Eastern US and in Kansas east to about the middle of the state. It prefers wooded areas that are close to water, so habitat will be a big factor in if you see hummingbirds the first half of the summer. But you could see one any day during this time by using a little patience and putting out a hummingbird feeder with fresh nectar (change at least every other day) in a place that is easy for you to see, on the patio, close to a window or on the deck where you spend a lot of time relaxing. Hummingbirds are attracted to the color red so even hanging up red ribbons or wearing



a red hat may be enough to bring them up to investigate. But if you really want to have the best luck, improve your green thumb and plant as many flowers that bloom throughout the summer. Some suggestions,

Trumpet Honeysuckle, Bee Balm, Columbine, Cardinal Flower, Red Salvia, Impatiens and Butterfly Bush.

Your hummingbird feeders may also attract another nectar loving bird, the orioles. Both Baltimore and Orchard Orioles return to nest in our area and may try to use your hummingbird feeders for the nectar in them. Male Baltimore Orioles are brilliant orange with black on their head and back. The females are a muted yellow orange without the black head. Orchard Orioles

are a wine color with black wings and a black hood. The females resemble the Baltimore females.

If that happens, you can put up an



oriole feeder for nectar that is basically a nectar feeder with bigger perches and bigger openings for the larger beak of the oriole. You can use the same nectar that you put in the hummingbird feeders, 1 part sugar, to 4 parts water. However, in my yard, what really attract the orioles attention are the jelly feeders! Orioles love grape jelly (sugar and grape juice). Jelly feeders are just hanging bowls in most cases and some have prongs for fruit also. Oranges seem to be the best for attracting orioles but you can try apples or other fruits too. There have been times in our yard when we have had a dozen orioles in the same tree at the same time waiting to get on the two jelly feeders we try to keep filled. If you keep these feeders clean and filled with fresh nectar and jelly, you can have continued activity all summer long! Come in and let us help you choose the right feeder to get the absolute best activity!

FREE
can of hummingbird
instant nectar
w/purchase of any
hummingbird feeder
of \$20 or more

C180401; Expires May 31, 2018.
Cannot be combined with other offers.

Give Mom a bath!
20% OFF
All Birdbaths, glass,
copper and even our
granite birdbaths!

C180402; Expires May 31, 2018.
Cannot be combined with other offers.

Great Mothers Day gift!
15% OFF
any beautifully
designed art pole

C180403; Expires May 31, 2018.
Cannot be combined with other offers.

Purple Martins are here!

Our parking lot is already buzzing with nesting activity and the beautiful song of the purple martin. Last August our 20-compartment house fledged almost 90 young martins. It was a sight to behold.

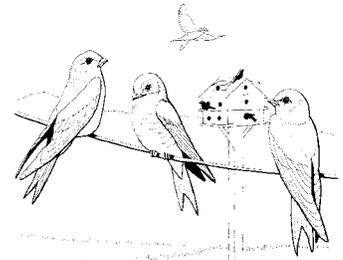


This is the 13th year for the house with it's 6x12" compartments. The 8" martin greatly benefits from the house with the larger compartments, and they find them very attractive! Can you imagine raising and feeding 4 to 8 young birds in a house with 3x5" compartments? It's too crowded and somebody at the back may not get fed at all. Many house kits now include instructions on how to retrofit your 12-compartment house to a 6-compartment house creating the large roomy suites.

Come in and let us give you a one on one mini-seminar about martins and what it takes to be successful in both attracting and keeping America's favorite bird, the Purple Martin. Learn the importance of regular nest checks and the proper way to do them. Keep on top of mechanical things with troubleshooting tips. Learn the physical differences in adult and sub-adult birds and why the young birds come to the area so much later than the older birds.

Purple Martins have a long standing relationship with man starting with Native Americans providing natural gourds for the birds to nest close to their communities. Man has come to realize the benefits of having the colonizing birds nearby. They are great insect eaters, have a wonderful cheery song and are very social. The Purple Martin is the only bird in North America who is both

colonizing (nests with other martins in the same house), and who is now totally dependent on humans providing housing for them. We are



so lucky to be in their range. Their activity starts in March and they return to their winter homes in South and Central America in mid to late August. A short period of time but so well worth your investment. It's easy to become so involved with your martins, even to the point of having PMS,

New Products

Aquascape Premium Fish Food

Many nature lovers enjoy both birds and fish! We are now carrying AQUASCAPE Premium Fish Food Pellets for all pond fish including Koi. Floating pellets are ideal for all pond fish. They contain a stabilized multivitamin, will not break



apart or cloud the water and has the highest quality protein. Look for it displayed at the front of the store near the seed bins. While most fish food packaging indicates that it can be used year-round, the manufacturer is considering local weather circumstances dictate whether or not you feed during frigid temperatures. We do not recommend feeding after the water temperature drops to 55 degrees or lower. The fish go into a state of torpor, or sleep. Their body metabolism slows down and is not able to digest food.

They look like they are awake with eyes open and gentle movement allowing oxygenated water to pass through their bodies. On a sunny winter day, they may even beg but don't fall for it, they need to wait a few more weeks!



The Hummer Ring

"Feed hummingbirds out of your hand! Use with any nectar, great for all ages.

Teaches children to sit still when observing wildlife. Holds 10 milliliters of nectar!" Does this product really work? Watch the video playing in the store. It works.

Art Poles

Beautifully designed architecture for your yard comes with a stake that screws into the landscape so it won't blow away, and fade resistant in Kansas sun. Makes a great Mother's Day gift!



**BACKYARD
nature center**

For people who feed and care for backyard birds
The Shops at Tallgrass
8336 E. 21st Street, #500 • Wichita, KS 67206
www.backyardnaturecenter.com
316-683-2121

STORE HOURS

OPEN 7 DAYS WEEK

Monday–Friday: 10 a.m.–6 p.m.

Saturday: 10 a.m.–5 p.m.

Sunday: 12 noon–4 p.m.

PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT:
WWW.BACKYARDNATURECENTER.COM

Remember to Recycle 

**Mother's
Day
•
Sunday
May 13**



Give Mom a breath of fresh air
with the gift of nature from the Backyard Nature Center!

Here are a few suggestions:

pewter nature jewelry • wind chimes
decorative bluebird houses • birdbaths • nest boxes
beautiful embroidery accented pillows • hummingbird feeders

GREAT TIP!

Here's another great tip shared by bird-watcher and super-gardener, Linda. Linda says the neighborhood's wandering kitty loves to just camp out under her bird-feeder! How annoying for sure. She says it's the perfect place to catch some rays and.....some poor unsuspecting birds. Linda raked up some of her sweet gum tree's prickly, dried up seed balls and spread them around under the feeder. EUREKA, no more lounging kitty!



P.S. I've got tons of these wonderful sweet gum balls if anyone wants them!