



BACKYARD nature center News

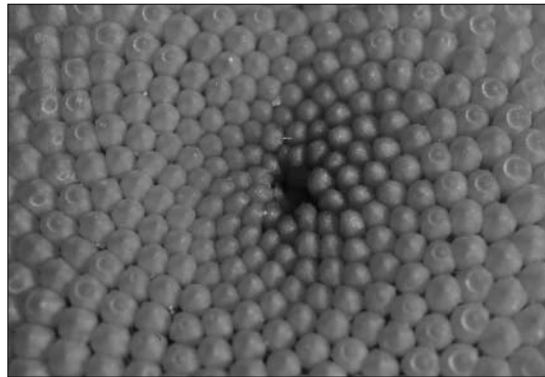
September/October 2012 • Issue 14



We spend a great deal of our time here looking at sunflower seed. It is the seed preferred by many of our feathered friends (and furry ones) and so has a very prominent position here in our store. We usually don't think more about them than that, but the hot weather has afforded us a little time and we decided to use it to learn more about this mainstay of avian diets! So, here we go with... Sunflower: The rest of the story!

We learned that Sunflowers are native to Central America and were probably growing in what is now Mexico as early as 2600 B.C. It reached as far as Tennessee a few hundred years later. By 1000 B.C. the Native Americans, who recognized a good thing when they saw it, domesticated the plant and used it by grinding it up for flour and for its oil. Oil is something that sunflowers are laden with. About 40 to 50% of the

and low in saturated fat. It's mild flavor means you can use it for baking and frying and even as a salad oil. The



The interconnecting spiral pattern of a sunflower.

Native Americans use to boil the seeds and then they would skim the oil from the water. We more modern folk just smash the whole sunflower head, making sure we squeeze out every drop we can.

Did you know that the sunflower head is actually not a flower but instead a bunch of flowers? Well, now you do!

sunflower seed by weight is oil.

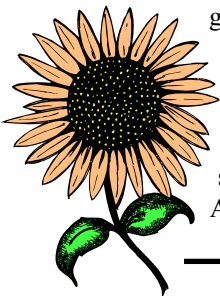
Ah, sunflower oil! Not only do the birds appreciate it but we have come to love it as well. It is a premium oil, light in color

What is even more interesting, if you are still with us, is the way the florets are clustered in the head. They are set in an interconnecting spiral pattern. This pattern allows for the most efficient packing of seeds within each head. We think it makes for a very pretty flower head as well.

Sunflowers belong to the genus *Helianthus annuus*. The simple translation of this is "sun" and "annual". Just by looking at this flower head one can see why it was named for the sun. But, there is probably another reason as well. Sunflower heads love to track the sun. They start each morning facing east and then spend the rest of the day following the sun as it moves west. During the night, they set themselves back to east in anticipation of the sunrise! This behavior stops though once the flower blooms.


Here in the states sunflowers are planted from May to early June. They are harvested in late October. In 2010, over 2 million acres were planted mostly in North and South Dakota. That is a lot of seed! But hold on to your hat... Russia, who got into sunflowers by the 18th century, sows over 10 million acres a year!

You might decide one day to try your hand at growing a few stalks of sunflowers. They grow quickly and kids especially love to watch them tower above their heads. Just know when you do, that the likely hood of you harvesting your seed heads is small. Remember, the birds love them best!





FALL BIRDSEED SALE

 **October 13-October 28**

Don't miss our Fall Birdseed Sale!

All premium wild birdseed, in bulk 20-pound and larger bags will be 20% off!

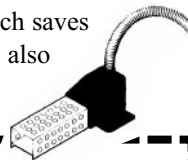
Prepurchase your seed at the 20% discount and let us store it for you by opening or adding to your seed storage account with a minimum \$150.

Cash or checks preferred.



Birdbath Heaters...

Water is one of the most enticing things you can offer any animal in your yard. Open water in the winter becomes even more exciting to all. They use it for drinking of course, but our bird friends also use it for bathing! Clean feathers are more important in winter than ever because only clean feathers insulate well... and the birds really need that insulation to get through the cold days and nights. Birdbath heaters, or more appropriately birdbath DE-ICERS are wonderful devices. You simply plug them into an outside socket and then set them in your birdbath. The ones we sell are thermostatically controlled so that you can use them with no worries. They will turn themselves on and off depending on the temperature (which saves you time and energy) and they will also turn off if the bath goes dry!



**\$5 OFF a heater
OR
\$10 OFF a heated birdbath**

C120901; Expires 10/31/2012. Not to be combined w/ other offers.

LOTS of new arrivals for fall birdfeeding! Check out the new peanut feeders that are squirrel proof!



Get kinds involved!

Fight "nature deficit disorder"! Get your kids or grandkids involved in your hobby and share the love of nature. Kids love to fill the feeders. They may be a little messy at first but that's okay.



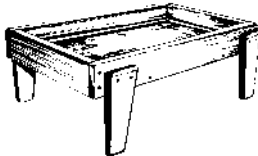
Welcome to Wichita Backyards

by Cathy Clausen, Master Gardener and Avid Backyard Birdwatcher



With crisp fall evenings and warm days, there is definitely change about to happen in Wichita backyards. Hummingbirds and orioles are leaving the area in September and gone by mid October. It won't be long before the activity turns to heavy feeding at seed feeders full of nuts and sunflower with high caloric value to keep little bodies warm at night. Molting has begun now and there are strange sights to behold. Cardinals and blue jays are shedding feathers only to be replaced with a heavier down undercoat. Sometimes they appear to have completely lost their tails or even their crest. Never fear, they will get them back before it really gets COLD!

Most plants form yummy berries in fall that are a real treat for Cardinals, chickadees, robins, and oh yes, not to forget, Cedar Waxwings. Cottoneaster, American Cranberry, Service Berry, and the crazy Wild Pokeberry plant with hanging grape-like clusters, will be attractive to seed and berry eaters until they are completely eaten or dry up. As a gardener, this is the time to search out new



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www.backyardnaturecenter.com
(316) 683-2121
Nick and Cathy Clausen, Owners

varieties of plants and bushes that will provide cover and food for my birds as well as all the wildlife in my little piece of heaven. If you want more birds in your yard, plant for the birds. You'll get as much satisfaction

planting in the fall as you did in the spring and with much less stress on you and your new plants.

Clingers? What's a clinger? Birds who hang upside down, right side up or any way they can to pull a peanut from a mesh feeder. Black-capped Chickadees, White-breasted Nuthatch, Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers, Red-bellied Woodpeckers and Carolina Wrens are in our area year round. So be sure to keep the peanuts fresh and ready to go!



Keep an eye out for the black and deep rust plumage of the Rufous-sided Towhee in fall as well as some of the most beautiful native sparrows like the White-crowned Sparrow with his little black and white bicycle helmet markings, the White-throated Sparrow sporting a tiny yellow spot at the top of his bill, and not to miss, the grandest native sparrow, the Harris's sparrow who only winters in Kansas. Lucky us for sure! Be sure to keep those ground feeding trays filled with sunflower and millet! Top on the list to attract birds who prefer the cover of thickets and bushes, they rush out from under cover, grab a seed or two and return quickly to safety. By the end of October, we celebrate the arrival of Junco hyemalis, commonly known as the dark eyed junco. Many folks call him the "snowbird" due to the timely arrival that seems to coordinate with the first snowflake.

SPECIES PROFILE:

Yellow-rumped Warbler

Warblers are a family of birds that usually just visit us in the spring and leave in the early fall. They are tiny guys that usually feed on insects (which is why they leave us for the winter). But there is this one warbler who is a bit different from the rest. He is the Yellow-rumped Warbler... but we call him Butter Butt!

These guys aren't the showiest of the warblers. Their colors are actually quite subdued. In the spring and summer they are a pretty grey, streaky color with yellow "shoulders" and of course a yellow rump. In the winter the grey turns to brown but the yellow markings stay.

What makes him a bit different is that he often stays here all winter! How does he manage this? Well the Yellow-rumped is the only warbler

able to digest the wax found on many of our winter berries. Because of this, he is able to survive on fruit when insects can't be found.

If you are serving up suet this fall and winter (and if you aren't you should be), keep an eye out for this fellow. He will steal your heart with his lively antics!





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.

Return Service Requested

PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT:

WWW.BACKYARDNATURECENTER.COM



We Recycle!

We are proud to say we truly "Recycle" at the BACKYARD Nature Center! Did you know that you can recycle the #4 bags that your birdseed comes in? Absolutely. It is important to us that we reduce our footprint on our planet. When we first opened, 21 years ago, we were so excited that so many of our products were made in America and that they were made from fragrant western red cedar. It even made the store smell good! Change is good and inevitable. Almost 75% of our products are still made in the USA, but now we are proud to offer feeders made of composite resin and wood that comes directly from the milk bottles, pop bottles, and water bottles that we all so diligently toss in our recycle bins. Check out the sticker on the top of the hopper feeders where it shows just how many bottles it took to construct that feeder. These feeders last longer and are so much easier to keep clean! It makes me so proud, how about you? May not smell as nice, but we can just add more cedar mulch to the display area.

