

## Attracting Birds with Proper Habitat

Birds can be an important aspect of our backyard environment. In many cases, the quality of our environment is perceived to be directly related to the population of birds. The bird population in your yard or neighborhood park can be increased with the proper selection and arrangement of ornamental trees and shrubs. The selection of food-producing plants can ensure the presence of birds year-round.



To attract and maintain a bird population, a habitat should provide food, cover, nesting areas and water. Ornamental trees and shrubs can supply the necessary cover (shelter) and nesting areas. Many ornamental plants can satisfy more than one habitat requirement. For instance, multi-stem plants that form a dense canopy will satisfy the needs for nesting and also provide cover.

The food source for birds should be supplied, as much as possible, by the trees and shrubs in the yard. To maximize the natural food source, select plants to ensure an available food source year-round. The use of trees and shrubs native to your locale will help ensure that

appropriate fruits and berries are available for the local bird population. If the landscape does not supply food during certain periods, you can supplement with commercial mixes of bird seed. This will help keep birds in the vicinity of your yard. Some birds eat a wide variety of seeds while others prefer one or two types. The seeds that appeal to the majority of birds are sunflower, proso millet and peanut kernels.

Birds require a place of cover or shelter if they are to become long-term residents. They require protection from inclement weather (sun, heat, wind and rain) and natural predators. This is why the multi-stem plants that form a dense canopy are preferred by birds. The dense canopy also provides an ideal environment for nesting. Since birds require shelter year-round, the yard should have a mix of deciduous and evergreen

plants. Evergreen plants include broadleaf evergreens (such as holly) and conifers (such as red cedar). Several references suggest that at least 25 percent of the trees and shrubs should be evergreen.

A source of fresh water is also necessary to maintain your bird population. The water source should be shallow (no more than two to three inches deep) and replaced on a regular basis. Running water, such as a shallow fountain, is the ideal water source. The water source should be elevated or in the middle of an open area to minimize predation by cats and other animals. An elevated bird bath or fountain is ideal. (DJ)

*For more information on attracting birds to your backyard, visit [lancaster.unl.edu/enviro/pest/wildlife.htm](http://lancaster.unl.edu/enviro/pest/wildlife.htm) for links to various resources, including "Landscape Plants That Attract Birds," "Attracting and Feeding Songbirds" and *NebGuide* (G84-671) "Backyard Wildlife: Planting for Habitat."*

## Urban Agriculture is Branch of Modern Sustainable Agriculture

Urban agriculture's overall nature makes the concept difficult to define. Taken literally, urban agriculture means "to establish and perform an agricultural practice in or near an urban or city-like setting." This is an oversimplified and somewhat open-ended attempt at defining what is a much broader and more complex system of dynamic variables. Despite the lack of a proper definition, urban agriculture has experienced a recent surge in worldwide popularity.

Agriculture, until recently, was considered an exclusively rural activity. Today, up to 30 percent of agricultural production in the United States originates from within metropolitan areas, and up to 15 percent on a global scale (Smit et al., 1996). In the U.S. and other developed parts of the world, urban agriculture is a convenient novelty full of potential. In contrast, it often serves as the sole means of personal and economic survival in the less-developed regions of the world. Agriculture has a long and outstanding history, but what many may not realize is that agriculture began as an activity within densely-populated areas. Population growth in these areas increased demand for food and sustenance. As a result, urban human settlement became segregated from rural animal and crop production areas.

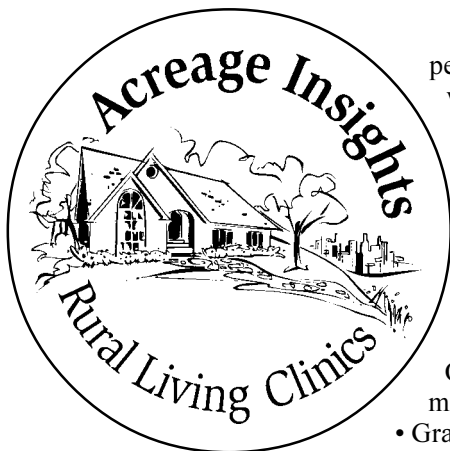
Unfortunately, in modern times, arable land acreage is decreasing due to soil and environmental degradation, surges in industrial development and the need to accommodate increasing urban populations. Urban sprawl causes annual cropland losses equivalent to an area one kilometer wide stretching from New York to San Francisco. These trends contribute greatly to concerns about natural resources and food security. One solution to meeting future urban food security demands, while protecting and conserv-

ing natural resources, is the conversion of unused parcels of land in the urban environment to sustainable food production areas. This transformation of urban areas is occurring worldwide at an ever increasing rate.

Urban agriculture is an alternative to what has been labeled *conventional* agriculture. However, it should not be considered solely an alternative means of producing food; it also is a viable, adaptive function and response to urbanization. Urban agriculture is not so much an alternative to existing agricultural systems as it is an established branching of modern sustainable agricultural systems. Ideally, urban agriculture incorporates various elements of modern sustainable agriculture to establish productive, reusable, self-contained waste and nutrient cycles. Resource conservation and management, integrated pest management (IPM) and organic food production, for example, can contribute toward developing safe, non-polluting environments.



Today, urban agriculture takes the form of hydroponic and community gardening; roadside urban fringe agriculture; and field-to-direct-sale farmers' markets. Urban agriculture promotes food security, improving each participant's health and quality of life, while creating dynamic, aesthetically pleasing cityscapes. (DJ)



Clinics are \$10 per person advanced registration and \$15 per person at the door. Preregistration is required three working days before each program. If a minimum number of pre-registrants are not received, clinics will be cancelled and preregistered people will be notified and given a full refund.

The programs will be offered at the following locations:

- Omaha — Douglas/Sarpy County Extension Office, 8015 W. Center Road
- Columbus — Platte County Courthouse - Extension Office Conference Room, 2610 14th Street (participants must use the east basement door to enter.)
- Grand Island — Hall County Extension Office - Main Extension Meeting Room, 3180 W. Highway 34 (located in College Park)

- Lincoln — Lancaster Extension Education Center, 444 Cherrycreek Road

2004 PROGRAMS	DATE/TIME/LOCATION		
February <b>ACREAGE WEED CONTROL</b>	9, 7-9 pm Omaha	12, 7-9 pm Grand Island	14, 9-11 am Lincoln
March <b>PASTURE MANAGEMENT</b>	15, 7-9 pm Omaha	18, 7-9 pm Columbus	20, 9-11 am Lincoln
April <b>SEPTIC SYSTEMS &amp; WASTE WATER TREATMENT</b>	19, 7-9 pm Omaha	22, 7-9 pm Grand Island	24, 9-11 am Lincoln
May <b>VERTEBRATE PESTS</b>	17, 7-9 pm Omaha	20, 7-9 pm Columbus	22, 9-11 am Lincoln
June <b>SMALL SCALE MEAT ANIMAL PRODUCTION</b>	21, 7-9 pm Omaha	24, 7-9 pm Grand Island	26, 9-11 am Lincoln
July <b>PRIVATE DRINKING WATER SYSTEMS</b>	19, 7-9 pm Omaha	22, 7-9 pm Columbus	24, 9-11 am Lincoln
August <b>PONDS</b>	16, 7-9 pm Omaha	19, 7-9 pm Grand Island	21, 9-11 am Lincoln
September <b>WINDBREAK DESIGN &amp; MAINTENANCE</b>	20, 7-9 pm Omaha	23, 7-9 pm Columbus	25, 9-11 am Lincoln
October <b>GRAPES</b>	18, 7-9 pm Omaha	21, 7-9 pm Grand Island	23, 9-11 am Lincoln

For information about each of the programs in the workshop series or for a registration form, call the extension office for a brochure or go online at [lancaster.unl.edu/hort/Programs/AcreageInsightsClinics.htm](http://lancaster.unl.edu/hort/Programs/AcreageInsightsClinics.htm).

## Power Tool Safety

- Before you use a power tool, take a minute to look it over for problems that might make it unsafe.
- Always wear proper safety attire, such as safety goggles or a face shield.
- Remove rings and other jewelry.
- Don't wear loose-fitting clothing.
- If you have long hair, tie it back.
- Only use a power tool for the job it was engineered to do.
- Never remove safety guards. They are there for your protection.
- Make sure safety guards are in working order.
- Clear your workspace of any clutter.
- Disconnect it immediately when done, and store in a safe place.
- Do not wrap the electrical cord around the tool when storing. This can weaken or break the cord and possibly cause an electrical hazard. (DJ)