

Best Practices to Start Building your Backyard Refuge

All species are in constant need of suitable habitat in which to dwell and give the next generation a chance to thrive. By building a refuge for wildlife in our yards, we can enhance our own landscapes while providing spaces for our wild neighbors to make their homes.



Leaf litter provides habitat for many species. Many butterflies lay their eggs in leaf litter to overwinter. Many other beneficial insects

overwinter in leaf litter or on the ground. Spotted Towhees and other sparrows find insects and seed under the leaves. Keep this habitat in your yard by leaving leaf litter where it falls.



Birds love sunflowers and the seeds produced by grasses. It is a common practice to cut off dried grasses and flowers in the autumn. Leaving dried grasses and the seed heads on flowers over winter provide food for seed-eating birds in the winter and early spring.



Many birds, such as hummingbirds, love to perch on dead branches. Trees with dead or diseased branches can provide food, shelter, and nesting sites for woodpeckers and other birds. If you do need to trim trees, wait until after summer nesting season and complete trimming before owls and hawks begin nesting in mid-winter.

Hummingbirds love nectar but also need protein, especially for growing babies. Challenge yourself to develop a tolerance for “pests” like aphids which are a food source for pollinators like wasps and young hummingbirds.



Butterflies and other pollinators feed on the flowers of weeds that bloom before other plants in the spring. Allow weeds and early aster flowers such as dandelions to bloom—they are early sources for pollen/nectar for bees, pollinating wasps and flies. Also, aster fluff is used by hummingbird mamas to build nests.

Insects of all sorts provide food for birds and other wildlife. Without spiders, hummingbirds would not be able to build nests that hold fast to branches and expand around their growing nestlings. Avoid using chemical controls at all costs. You don’t want to inadvertently kill the wildlife you’ve invited to your yard!

Owls and other raptors keep rodent populations in check, and die if they eat a poisoned rat or mouse. Use control methods other than rodenticides, and if you have a suitable tree, perhaps install an owl box!

Outdoor domestic cats are devastating to urban wildlife, killing millions of birds and mammals each year. Indoor cats lead longer and healthier lives, so you can protect your cat and wildlife at the same time.



**Join fellow Burqueños in making our city friendly for wildlife!
Visit ABQbackyardrefuge.org for more information!
(Website Coming Soon!)**