

Share Space with Wildlife

Build a backyard refuge!

abqBackyardRefuge.org



We share our spaces with hundreds, and even thousands of different plants and animals, but as cities continue to grow, places for wildlife become fewer and farther between.

The goal of the ABQ Backyard Refuge Program is to encourage and empower our community to create a mosaic of habitat patches across our region.

All living beings are in constant need of suitable habitat in which to dwell and give the next generation a chance to thrive.

By building refuges for wildlife in our yards, patios, and balconies we can give our wild neighbors space for making their homes and adapting to a changing world.



The ABQ Backyard Refuge Program is a partnership between the Friends of Valle de Oro NWR and Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge, with support from the Environmental Protection Agency Urban Waters Federal Partnership and Ciudad Soil & Water Conservation District.

Thank you, *Bernalillo County Water Conservation Program*
for supporting the 3rd edition of this guide!

Join fellow Burqueños in making our city more friendly to wildlife!

Making small changes contributes to a more wildlife-friendly community!

From a large, one acre lot that can host different trees, shrubs and flowers, to a patio or balcony large enough for a small container garden, everyone can contribute by landscaping for conservation.

Habitat can be created in spaces of every size! Whether getting started in a small part of your yard or making a container garden on a balcony or patio, you can provide important habitat for a variety of wildlife.

Diversity is key! A mosaic of plants can attract and provide for a wide variety of wildlife. You can weave the habitat necessities of food, water, and shelter into your yard and create an inviting space for you and your wild neighbors.

Plant natives! Native plants give you the most show with the least water, the most wildlife with the least effort, the most flowers with the smallest of green thumbs. Our desert plants are adapted to our arid and finicky weather. Plant them in the right sun/shade, soil type, watering regime, and they'll make you look like a pro.

Water is a wildlife magnet! A refreshing source of clean water is a simple, low cost addition to your habitat and even a dinner plate will do. Placing the water basin in the shade of a tree or structure will reduce the water evaporation from the surface. Flat stones in deeper basins can give insects an island for drying out and a way for wildlife to climb out if they fall into water. Change water every few days to avoid breeding mosquitoes. A sturdy brush is great for sweeping the basin clean before you put in fresh water.



Luckily, there isn't one right way to develop a habitat garden. If you already have a garden and have noticed that some plants draw birds, bees and butterflies, think about building your new habitat around these plants and gradually replacing the rest with plants and other features that fill in the gaps.

Support Your Backyard Refuge with Rainwater

New Mexico is facing warming and aridification due to climate change. A new study projects a 25% decline in surface water and groundwater recharge in the state over the next 50 years. Under these climate conditions, balancing supply and demand will require us to use less water.

Because our modern plumbing fixtures and appliances are so efficient, the greatest opportunity for water savings lies outdoors. Many beautiful native and drought-tolerant plants can thrive in our arid climate on rainfall and harvested rainwater alone **and** support wildlife in our backyard refuges! For ideas, check out the [plant list](#) on our website or go to a local nursery specializing in native plants.

We can also capture rainwater from our roofs and use it to support plants.

Everyone has access to this free water source—it makes sense to use it beneficially! Rainwater harvesting is a great way to support plants with higher water needs, like trees.

Many people are already familiar with active rainwater harvesting - capturing rainwater in rain barrels or cisterns and storing it for later use.

When you certify your space as a backyard refuge, you receive a free 55-gallon rain barrel from our partners at the Bernalillo County Water Conservation Program!

Passive rainwater harvesting uses earthen features to capture rainwater directly in your landscape. You can find more information on how to do passive rainwater harvesting at your home in *the Passive Rainwater Harvesting Field Guide* and training videos at: bernco.gov/rainwater. These resources give you step-by-step instructions on how to design, install, and maintain a residential-scale passive rainwater harvesting feature.

With these techniques, you can create a beautiful, locally adapted, low-water-use landscape in your yard that supports wildlife. Their benefits go far beyond your own yard—conserving our limited, shared water resources, protecting the water quality in the Rio Grande, creating shade and reducing urban heat, and supporting a mosaic of wildlife habitat in our city!



(Lazy) Gardening for Wildlife!

Creating your backyard refuge is easier than you think.

These easy-to-do practices provide safe habitat for our wild neighbors, and can save you time and money!

Birds love sunflowers and the seeds produced by native bunch grasses. It is a common practice to cut off dried grasses and flowers in the autumn but **leaving dried grasses and the seed heads on flowers** provides food for seed-eating birds in the winter and early spring as well as nesting or over-wintering habitat for beneficial insects. Leave them standing until spring and then remove last year's stalks to make room for the new season of growth.



Leaf litter provides habitat for many species.

Butterflies lay their eggs on the underside of leaves so leaving leaf litter over winter can mean more butterflies in the spring! Many other beneficial insects overwinter under leaf litter. Spotted Towhees, other sparrows, and

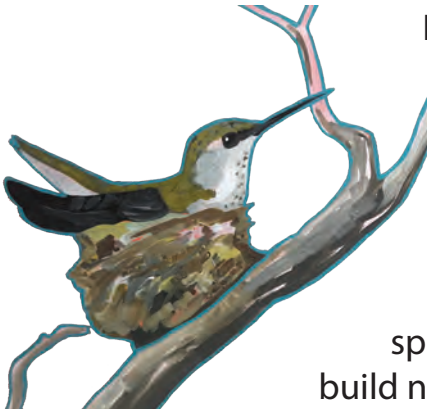
lizards find insects and seed under the leaves. **Keep this habitat in your yard by leaving some leaf litter where it falls.** Leaves don't decompose as quickly as they do in wetter climates, but you can leave them as mulch during the winter and then remove those who would smother new growth in the spring.



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 have dead branches who don't pose a safety hazard, consider leaving them for the birds!** If you

do need to trim trees, wait until after summer nesting season ends in late September and complete trimming before owls and hawks begin nesting in mid-winter.

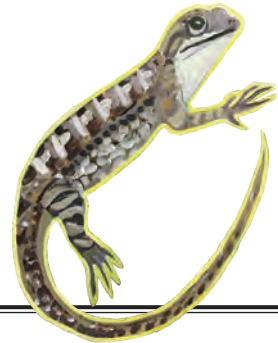
Butterflies and other pollinators feed on the flowers of weeds who bloom before other plants in the spring. **Allow “weeds” and aster flowers, such as dandelions, to bloom! They are early sources for pollen & nectar for bees, pollinating wasps and flies.** Also, aster fluff is used by hummingbird mamas to build cozy nests.



Insects of all sorts provide food for birds and other wildlife. 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.** 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!

Reptiles and amphibians eat insects and rodents. **To attract them to your yard, leave piles of rocks in a sunny spot for basking, and add stumps, logs, and rock piles in shadier spots for nesting.**



If you find an injured bird, put the bird in a box, and do not give them food or water. In an hour, take the box outside and open it. The bird should fly away. If the bird is still having trouble, contact a certified wildlife rehabilitator.

Wildlife Rescue of New Mexico, Inc.:
(505) 344-2500
<https://wildliferescuenm.org/>

On a Wing and a Prayer
(505) 897-0439
<https://www.facebook.com/wildbirdrehabber/>

In this time of changing climate, wildlife face daunting challenges. Keep wildlife safe by removing these hazards:

Window Collisions

Why do birds hit windows? As birds navigate yards, they see plants, sky, and clouds reflected in windows and mistake it for clear passage. Especially when being chased by a predator, they do not realize that a hard, transparent surface lies between them and safety.

How can I help? Here are ways to make your windows safer for birds:

- Locate feeders or birdbaths either within three feet (1 meter) or greater than 30 feet (9 meters) from windows. Cooper's Hawks and other predators have learned to chase birds on feeders and then pick up the dead or injured birds after they fly into a nearby window. Being close to a window decreases collision speed, and being far gives them more options for escaping.
- Move house plants away from windows so that birds do not think that there is a safe place to find cover.
- **Reduce reflections** - *A single decal, of any shape, is not enough to eliminate the hazard.* Placing visual markers spaced **every 4 inches** on the EXTERIOR of windows deters collisions.
- Consider purchasing treatments for your windows such as transparent "bird tape". Hang tape strips or cord every 4 inches across the exterior of the window.
- A low cost solution is to paint a design on the outside of the window with tempera paint or soap. *The key is to keep gaps in the design 4 inches or less in size.*
- Cover windows with screens.

Visit Bird Alliance of Central New Mexico website for more information about making your space bird safe: bacnm.org/protecting-birds/

Wildlife-friendly Solutions

Skunks, owls, and other raptors keep rodent populations in check, and they die if they eat a poisoned rodent.

Use control methods other than rodenticides, and if you have a suitable tree, perhaps install an owl box as well! Screech-owls and American Kestrels can use the same size of nest box. The raptor species who chooses to nest will depend on the habitat in your neighborhood.

You can buy a nest box or get instructions for building one at the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology's *NestWatch* site:

<https://nestwatch.org/learn/all-about-birdhouses/birds/western-scrreech-owl/>



**We love cats.
Cats love birds.
That's a problem.**



KEEP CATS INDOORS

Free-roaming cats and dogs, even if they are our beloved pets, all have strong hunting instincts that can pose a significant threat to wildlife. **Outdoor cats, both feral and domestic, kill millions of birds and mammals each year.** In the United States alone, outdoor cats kill approximately 2.4 billion birds every year.

Because cats are recognizable predators, their presence near nesting birds has been shown to reduce the health of chicks and decrease nest success. Veterinarians and humane societies recommend that cats be spayed or neutered and kept indoors. Indoor cats lead longer and healthier lives, so you can protect your cat and wildlife at the same time.

To learn how to maintain a happy, healthy indoor cat, please visit our partner's website:

Bird Alliance of Central New Mexico, bacnm.org/protecting-birds/

About 20 percent of the bacteria in the river comes from our pet dogs.

Bacteria doesn't break down in our dry climate; it just waits for the rain. By scooping the poop and utilizing rain right where it falls to reduce runoff, we can reduce stormwater pollution to the Rio Grande.

Lights Out Albuquerque

Most songbirds migrate at night and use celestial cues to guide them. Artificial lighting disorients birds and lures them into the city, where they collide with lit buildings. Reducing unnecessary night lighting not only helps minimize bird window collisions, but also reduces light pollution while saving energy.

Lights Out is a program where we work together to turn off unnecessary lights at home and work during bird migration.

Turn Lights Out from 11pm to 6am :

Spring Migration - March 15 through May 31

Fall Migration - August 15 through October 31



How to Help

Direct outdoor lights downward

Use timers or motion sensors to dim or extinguish lighting

Change the color of lights to amber

Protect Bees and Trees!

Bees are essential to pollination in our wild spaces and in our backyards. There are over 1000 bee species in New Mexico; they range in size from the size of a pin head to the size of a thumb, and in hue from red, green, or blue, to black-and-white or yellow-checked. Each female bee collects pollen and nectar from flowers, which she carries back to the nest to leave for their offspring.

With habitat fragmentation, pesticide use, and climate change, our urban environments are becoming ever more vital as refuges for these essential creatures. It is important that we make choices in the landscapes around our houses that support wild bees.

Supporting wild bees is easy! Just think: “Air Bee and Bee”

Air: The resources a bee needs should be close enough together that a small bee can make it from its nest to the flowers it visits and back.

Bed: Unlike our honeybees, who nest in hives, wild bees frequently nest in the ground, with nests ranging from 3 inches to 15 feet deep. They are opportunists, and can take advantage of any patch of undisturbed earth. Bees are discrete, covertly nesting right under our noses, and it is rare to see a bee enter its ground nest. Other bees nest in beetle burrows carved into woody material, or old plant stems.



©LWrenWalraven

Breakfast: Bees need food in the form of native flowers, with different colors, sizes, shapes, and plant families to suit all of the many bee species found in the region. Having plants that bloom for the duration of the warmer months will support the widest range of bees. Use our **plant list** at abqBackyardRefuge.org to find plants who bloom in each season. Just search the PDF for “bee” and look at the “Flowering & Fruiting Seasons” column to discover a wonderful variety of options.

Bees are forgiving and resilient animals. They will benefit from even the smallest gesture in the form of a potted plant, some undisturbed vegetation, (Yay! Less weeding!), and a moment of thought for their nests in the ground.

Weed barrier cloth is detrimental to the success of most wild bees. With over 70% of our native bees building nests in the ground, weed cloth is similar to pavement, in that it creates an impermeable membrane through which the bees can't go.

Because we don't often see bees using their nest entrances, it can be easy to forget that this material is so difficult for our wild bees to navigate.

Interestingly, studies have shown that weed barrier is detrimental to trees as well. Because water penetrates through weed cloth differently, more water can evaporate from the soil and less moisture makes it to tree roots. As drainage is affected by weed barrier, bee nests may stay wet and affect the nestlings.

Weed barrier only stops deep-rooted weeds, but affects all ground-nesting bees. Many of our most difficult weeds establish on top of weed barrier after it has been placed, meaning that its efficacy in keeping unwanted plants at bay is minimal. Because bee nests are so variable in depth and construction from species to species, there are bees that are impacted by its presence no matter how it is used.

I already have weed cloth in my yard. What should I do?

Remove the rocks or mulch and pull out the cloth carefully. If you have heavy gravel or a thick layer of accumulated soil, this can take much time and effort! Just start with a small space if it seems overwhelming.

Wherever possible, remove enough cloth to add some pollinator plants and also leave some undisturbed soil for our ground-nesting bees!



Alternatives to weed cloth

Laying down layers of newspaper and covering them with plant-based mulch such as wood chips or leaves can minimize or prevent the growth of weeds. When using thick mulch, make a mosaic with patches of undisturbed ground for bee nests.

Native groundcover such as desert zinnia, native grasses, white yarrow, native oregano, artemisias, and native spurges can out-compete weeds.

When choosing new plants, remember that cultivars are not as healthy as native plants for most bees. Cultivars, beautiful as they are, often lack the important pollen and nectar nutrients that bees must collect to feed their offspring. Planting the native flowers with whom they have evolved for the last 64 million years is a better choice for them. For the best options, and plants who have not been treated with pesticides, visit a local nursery to find native plants rather than shopping at a big box store. *Hint: If you see pollinators around the plants, you're in the right place!*

Habitat Design: Build a Habitat Mosaic

The more variation you can provide in plant heights and densities, the more inviting **your habitat will become**. Building a habitat mosaic is a balancing act. Group smaller shrubs, wildflowers and native bunch grasses in clusters of 3 to 7 individuals so they grow enough biomass to attract the wildlife they are intended to support. The mosaic concept also includes **open space** between plants and clusters of plants. **Plant a diverse array** of flowering plants, and also in order to provide for bees and other pollinators from spring through autumn. The online **plant list**, found at abqBackyardRefuge.org, gives sizes of the plants, blooming times and wildlife served.

Include the essentials of food, shelter & water

Food sources for wildlife include **pollen, nectar, seeds, fruits, nuts**, and **insects**.

Vegetation such as milkweed, rue, and tomato plant leaves are a source of food for young larval pollinators. Fermenting fruit left on the tree and ground until desiccated provides food. **Songbirds** eat insects, nectar, greens (especially new sprouts), and seeds. **Native bees** and other beneficial insects need bare ground for nesting close to plants. Some tiny bees can't fly far and solitary females waste time and energy in their 4 to 6-week lifespans if they have to fly far for food.

Water is a wildlife magnet! Providing clean **water** is one of the best things you can do for our wild neighbors!

Shelter includes layers of canopy, dead tree snags for roosting and bee nesting, leaf litter in some places, open soil or crusher fines (tiny rock) mulch **without weed barrier cloth** for ground nesting insect habitat, and rock piles for lizards and insects. Plants of varied heights and densities provides cover for wildlife moving through spaces. Dense native grasses and shrubs shelter songbirds, mammals, and insects.



Habitats can be quite orderly in appearance or wild and disorderly, if that is your preference, as long as the space provides food, shelter and when possible, clean water.

Bird feeders and water features can be centers of wildlife activity. Place them in **prominent locations** for watching all the activity, and to remind you to perform consistent **maintenance**. Clean birdbaths and feeders keep our bird neighbors healthy!

Habitat Design: Small Spaces and Container Gardens

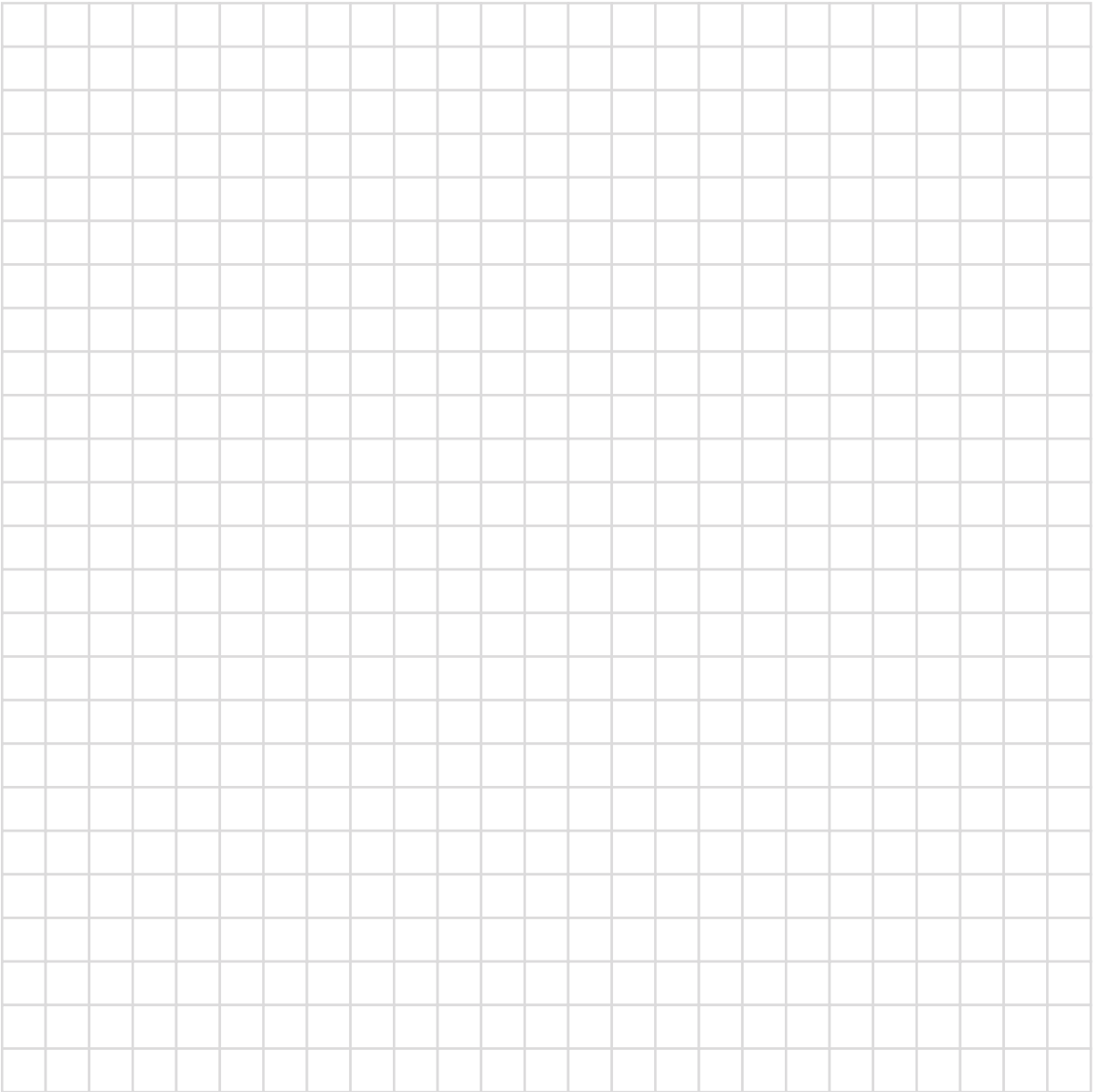
Habitat can be created in spaces of every size. Container gardens in tight spaces can still provide important habitat for a variety of wildlife.

Here are a few tips to keeping your container gardens fresh and fruitful:

- Group plants with the same light and watering requirements. Maximize the impact of your small space with a variety of size, shape and color in a single pot to add dimension without extra work.
- The bigger the better, on container size. Containers allow the soil to dry out more quickly, plus the soil gets heated from all sides. In winter perennial plant roots are exposed to both daytime warming and extreme cold at night. A larger volume of soil will help keep the roots of your plants cool and moist and provide more of a buffer along the sides of the container.
- Keep the container where it's easily seen to help you notice if your plants need care. You'll also have the best chance of seeing wild visitors to your habitat!
- Herbs grow well in pots. Plant an herb garden for yourself and allow some to flower for your pollinator neighbors.
- Need a screen for privacy or shade? Plant a vine in a container and add a small trellis to create a screen or even shade other containers that benefit from less sunlight.
- Containers allow you to experiment without much investment. The beauty and diversity are only limited by your creativity. So, get out there, explore, experiment, and grow your best habitat garden!



©Loren Walraven



Whatever space you have for a backyard refuge, make a plan.

Use the grid above to plan your space. To get started, decide the size of space each square represents. For example, if your space is 25x25 feet, 1 square can equal 1 square foot; if you are designing a 2.5 x 2.5 foot container garden, 10 squares can equal 1 square foot.

Use the suggestions on the next page to help design your habitat!

Creating Your Habitat Design

Organize space around **rainwater harvesting** opportunities to support existing large or water-intensive plants or space for a future tree or plant who will require extra water.

Consider what you value in a yard or garden space and **design a refuge for you and your family as well as our wildlife neighbors**. Be sure to leave space for play and engaging in your space.

Decide where to place the largest plants and trees first. This will help determine light availability for adjacent plants and water shared between them. Include trees and shrubs of varying heights to provide cover for wildlife moving through the space. **More diversity supports more wildlife!**

Plan for **seasonal abundance**. Early spring-blooming plants can be paired with plants who bloom in summer and fall to provide for wildlife all through the year. Add evergreen plants and native ornamental grasses, and remember to leave dried seed-heads standing for winter habitat and beauty!

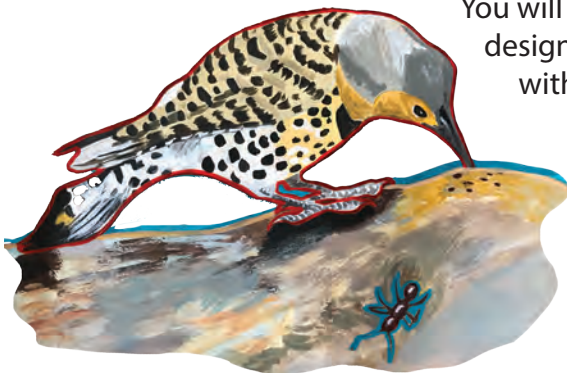
Clustering and massing plants in groups is especially effective for supporting pollinators. Aim for clusters of at least 3 to 7 wildflowers or grasses planted together, spaced far enough apart so each plant can grow well (see mature sizes noted in our **plant list**.) One shrub can grow large enough to attract wildlife and provide cover.

Native plants concentrate on growing roots before they grow very much above ground. Watch them and water when necessary, and be patient as they establish themselves!

Take note of **sun availability in your planting spaces during different seasons** to help choose plants with appropriate light requirements.

At the beginning, experiment with a variety of plants and build on what flourishes in different planting areas. If your time or budget is limited, start small and embellish over time. **Flexibility is key**, knowing this is a space you will continue to work on and play in.

You will better enjoy your space and the process of designing a refuge if you learn to become a partner with nature and learn from our wild neighbors.



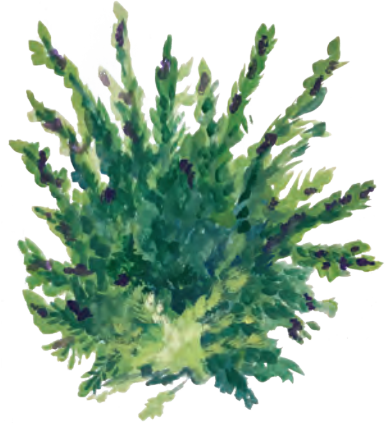
For more resources to help you grow your backyard refuge, download our **plant list, introductory guide, and design workbook at **abqBackyardRefuge.org****

Wildlife Superstores

Certain plants can provide for many different species during multiple life stages. Adding a variety of these plants to your backyard habitat can make the best use of the space you have.

Trees! Trees provide the top layer of habitat for roosting, nesting, foraging, all while shading your yard and making life on the ground cooler. Trees take the most water of all the plants, so whenever possible locate trees where rainwater from your roof and paved surfaces can satisfy some of their needs. One healthy tree is worth many struggling ones, so don't over-plant.

Shrubs! When space is limited, consider using smaller trees or large shrubs to add to the overall species diversity and richness of the canopy layers. There are many native shrubs adapted to a wide range of growing conditions, so it's possible to add to the complexity of your neighborhood ecosystem by choosing species for your refuge who are less common in the area.



Glorious Grasses! Native grasses are easy and cost-effective to grow from seed, add texture to your habitat, and use far less water than traditional lawns. Leave your grasses to dry overwinter and enjoy watching birds eat at the buffet! Grasses also provide excellent pollinator habitat. Bumblebees often nest in small colonies in the ground under a thick clump of grass, and tall grasses left standing give excellent cover for over-wintering butterflies, lady beetles, and bumble bee queens.

Sunflowers! If you have a sunny spot in your yard, sunflowers are a great way to start building your backyard refuge. Plant a diversity of sunflower species to provide year-round habitat. Annuals such as *Helianthus annuus* bloom early, providing a source of pollen and nectar in spring and summer, while Maximilian Sunflower *Helianthus maximiliani* blooms in the late summer and early autumn. Always leave the dried flowers on the stem to provide seeds for seed-eating birds and mammals in the autumn and winter. Sunflowers also provide great winter cover for birds. Leave them standing until spring and then remove last year's stalks to make room for the new season of growth.



Native Bee Buffet

The diversity and beauty of North America’s native bees is astounding, and worth celebrating. Our native bee neighbors are sized and shaped to take advantage of the diversity of floral shapes and sizes who flourish here.

Native bees need a home. When you look at the flowers in your backyard, it is rewarding to realize that the bees responsible for pollinating those flowers are living there also—nesting near, and even sleeping in, those flowers.



See pages 8 - 9 for ways you can provide great nesting habitat for these wild neighbors!

These plants can provide excellent foraging habitat for your neighborhood bees. Many also provide nectar for **butterflies** and **hummingbirds**. When the flowers dry, seed-eating birds can enjoy the buffet.

Bee-friendly plants	Size	Life Cycle	Light Exposure	Water Use	Blooms
Walkingstick Cholla* <i>Cylindropuntia imbricata</i>	8' X 6'	evergreen	full sun	Dry RW	Summer
Showy Milkweed* <i>Asclepias speciosa</i> ^	8' X 6'	evergreen	sun/shade	Dry RW	Summer
Rocky Mountain Penstemon* <i>Penstemon strictus</i>	2' X 2'	evergreen	sun/shade	Dry+	Spring-Summer
Blanketflowers <i>Gaillardia spp.</i>	1'x1'	deciduous	full sun	Dry	Summer-Fall
Purple Prairieclover <i>Dalea purpurea</i>	2'x2'	deciduous	full sun	Dry+	Summer
Mexican Blue / Chihuahua Sage* <i>Salvia chamaedryoides</i>	1'x3'	semi-evergreen	full sun	Dry+	Spring-Fall
Globemallow <i>Sphaeralcea spp.</i>	2'x2'	deciduous	full sun	Dry RW	Spring-Summer
Rocky Mountain Bee Plant <i>Cleome serrulata</i>	3'x1'	annual	full sun	Dry+	Summer-Fall

* also other plants from this genus

Dry RW - can survive on rainwater after established, except during extreme drought and heat waves

Dry+ - may need watering a few times a month

Dry - prefer periodic deep soaking

Download our plant list at
abqBackyardRefuge.org
for a list with hundreds of great plants
who provide habitat for pollinators
and our other wild neighbors!



Do you have native plants in your yard?

If you are not sure, you can use the *iNaturalist* app or website to identify your plants. You can also send photos to us at abqBackyardRefuge@FriendsOfValleDeOro.org (See the “Take pictures” section below for guidelines.)



Find the plants (or wildlife) in your yard who you want to identify: *iNaturalist* can help you identify any living being—plant, animal, fungi, slime mold, or any other evidence of life (scat, fur, tracks, shells, carcasses).



Take pictures: Use the *iNaturalist* app or upload digital photos to [iNaturalist.org](https://www.inaturalist.org). For plants, take close-up photos of the different parts of the plant and also a photo of the whole plant.



Share Your Observations: Create an *iNaturalist* account and upload your sightings on the *iNaturalist* app.



Identify: The *iNaturalist* community of scientists and naturalists will help to identify what you’ve observed. If your observation isn’t identified, send the observation link to us at abqBackyardRefuge@friendsofvalledeoro.org and we will share it with our experts for help with identification.



*It is fun to use **iNaturalist** to identify all the living beings in your space. You may be surprised by how many wild neighbors you have!*

Engaging With Your Backyard Refuge

Spend time in your yard watching and listening for wildlife and look for ways you can support them while attracting more wild neighbors.



Noticing and recording changes in the habitat you've created can help you connect to the space, better understand your natural community, and even contribute to the wider scientific understanding of our local ecosystems. You can record what you see in a journal and/or contribute to community science programs like Nature's Notebook, eBird, and iNaturalist to share your observations with other naturalists and scientists!

The City Nature Challenge is a friendly competition between urban areas across the world to see which communities can make the most observations of nature.



Help us document wildlife in Bernalillo, Valencia, and Sandoval Counties. You can get out and see some great urban nature while helping scientists collect biodiversity data—and help us show the world how much wildlife we have in the Middle Rio Grande Valley! Visit

abqCityNature.org for ways to participate.

We are working with the **Center for Community Geography** at the **University of New Mexico** to build an urban biodiversity map. We want to document all the living beings in our area (except humans and domesticated animals) and see our habitat mosaic grow!



By entering your observations in iNaturalist, you can help! We need more data from urban areas such as parking lots, city parks, and neighborhoods. You can contribute by documenting your yard, and making observations of plants, insects, and other wild neighbors around our community.

Community Spaces

Habitat created in community spaces can support wildlife, education, recreation, community involvement, and more. Installing interpretive signage, art installations, and additional structures like seating, plus providing regular maintenance and care, are all ways that you can help create spaces that are educational, engaging, safe, and sustainable. Outdoor classrooms with habitat gardens and community gardens are two examples of spaces that can provide habitat while also creating opportunities for students to learn and explore, and for neighbors to build community by growing food together. People are smarter, healthier and happier when they spend just a few minutes every day engaging with nature.



We have demonstration areas in community spaces around the city. If you would like to help with these habitat gardens, or have a community space where you would like to add habitat, contact us about volunteer opportunities and/or getting your space certified.

abqBackyardRefuge.org

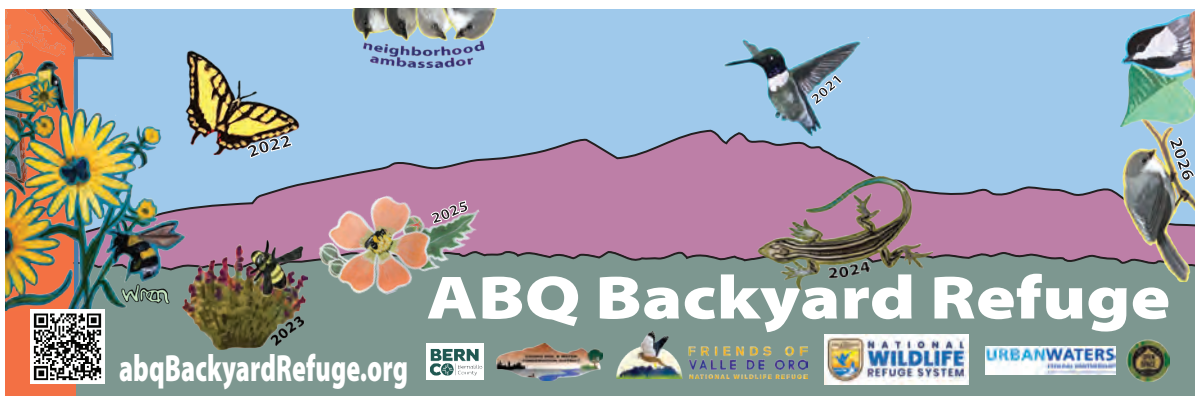
Certify your space as a backyard refuge!

You can spread the idea of sharing space with wildlife by certifying your yard, patio, or balcony as a backyard refuge!

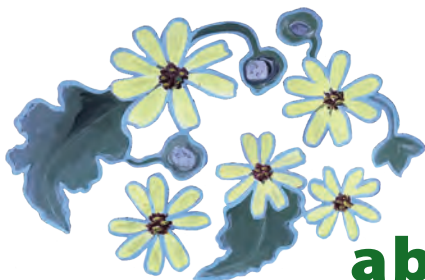
Visit our website and use the online form to apply. You can download the **habitat questions** and **plant list** to help prepare your answers for certification. The plant list provides details about the needs and habitat value of species who thrive throughout the Albuquerque area. It designates species who are best for container gardens or shady areas, and also those who grow well in the East Mountains.



When your certification application is approved you'll receive a yard sign and sticker with backyard species. You'll also qualify for a free 55-gallon rain barrel from the **Bernalillo County Water Conservation Program**. Each year that you re-certify your space you'll receive a new species sticker by local artist **LWren Walraven** to build your yard sign as you build your backyard refuge!



All ABQ Backyard Refuge Program art is by LWren Walraven. www.wrenzart.com



Certifying your space is FREE
if you need it to be!

*Donations are very appreciated and
help to support our program activities.*

abqBackyardRefuge.org



start
here

do you want to
share your space
with wildlife?

Do you have
Contributing
Habitat?

YES!

no or
not sure

do you have **two**
native drought-resistant plants who
provide food?(flowers, fruits, nuts, seeds)
OR
one native plant that provides food and
also maintain a supplemental
feeder or water source like
a simple bird bath?

download our
introductory guide to
find out how and why
to share space with
wildlife!

Check out our plant
list or email us at
[abqbackyardrefuge@
friendsofvalledeoro.org](mailto:abqbackyardrefuge@friendsofvalledeoro.org)
with questions!

no or
not sure

YES!

no or
not sure

can you do
two or more
of these
Best Practices?

YES!

Congratulations!
You qualify for
(at least)
Contributing
Habitat!

Best Practices

Engagement

- ☐ Post wildlife or plant observations on citizen/community science website (Examples: iNaturalist, eBird, Nature's Notebook, etc.)
- ☐ Advocate for land conservation
- ☐ Volunteer at public lands or with environmental conservation organizations
- ☐ Attend an ABQ Backyard Refuge or program partner event
- ☐ Promote the ABQ Backyard Refuge Program at community gatherings or on social media
- ☐ Recruit neighbors, friends and/or family to seek ABQ Backyard Refuge Certification

Soil and Water Conservation

- ☐ Capture rainwater from roof and move overflow water to landscaped areas using a swale, basin, or other method of diversion e.g., a hose attached to a rain barrel.
 - ☐ Have xeriscape elements (water-wise landscaping)
 - ☐ Use drip or soaker hose for irrigation
- ☐ Limiting water use
- ☐ Reducing erosion with mulch or contouring
- ☐ Use mulch to keep soil cool and help maintain soil moisture
- ☐ Make and use compost where plants need it
- ☐ Scoop the poop in your yard and on walks!

Wildlife Gardening Practices

- ☐ Keep pets indoors or in controlled areas
- ☐ Convert traditional lawn from one species to a diversity of native and drought-tolerant plants
- ☐ Add native and drought-tolerant plants to supplement or replace existing vegetation
- ☐ Prune after insect emergence in spring plants and before nesting season begins
- ☐ Trim trees and plants after wildlife nesting seasons, leaving some dead branches when possible for wildlife
- ☐ Leave leaf litter for over-wintering wildlife
- ☐ Eliminate chemical pesticides/herbicides/rodenticides and practice non-toxic methods of Integrated Pest Management
- ☐ Eliminate chemical fertilizers
- ☐ Allow plants to flower and go to seed, and leave seed heads over winter for food
- ☐ Leave some fruit on fruiting trees for wildlife
- ☐ Leave bare ground for ground-nesting native bees
- ☐ Use recommended window treatments to prevent bird collisions

