



The Gardener's Nest



A guide to enjoying your backyard

March—April 2011



Spring Birds

Page 3

Grow It Yourself

Page 4

Custom Garden Boxes

We Build custom garden boxes.



This 1.5' x 4' box works well on a patio or deck

Not everyone has the space for a large garden. We offer a great alternative to the conventional garden. We build quality garden boxes using 2" pressure treated lumber that will last for years. Our garden boxes are available in sizes that range from 1.5 ft x 1.5 ft up to 4 ft x 10 ft. Recommended box depth is 16 inches deep.

Contact us at the Garden Box for pricing.

Inside this issue:

Spring Birds	3
Grow it yourself	4
Bird at the feeder	6
Unintended consequences	8
Have you selected the right house	9
What do the numbers mean	10
Aphids (Natural solutions)	11

Spring Birds

Spring is an exciting time of year for backyard bird watchers. Migratory birds return from a long winter trip, bringing songs and color to liven up the backyard landscape. Spring is also a time when many birds engage in many intriguing behaviors right outside our windows.

Passions run high in the spring, birds are hormonally primed for defending territories and mating. Birds will intentionally fly into windows, car mirrors, and hubcaps. These birds are not suicidal or crazy but are fending off brazen intruders; their own reflection. A reflection is a perfect match, returning blow for blow and only tiring when the bird himself is tired. The bird may return day after day to continue the battle.



It is spring, excitement and love are in the air. Look around your back yard and you'll see lovebirds everywhere as the mating season kicks into gear. The coo-coo of the Morning Dove's ring throughout the neighborhood. The return of the Ruby Throated Humming Bird buzzing the bay window again for you to get up and fill the feeder.

If you thought the bird singing outside your window is the same one who nested there last year, you may be right. Many migratory songbirds return to the same territory or local area each spring. Studies of banded birds show that 20-60 percent of migratory songbirds typically return to the same area. Its Spring, enjoy the color and excitement. It has been a long winter for us and our feathered friends.

If you want to know what is in the food, grow it.

How many times have you wondered what the grower uses to make the vegetables and fruit grow so big? Were there chemicals used to enhance the growing cycle? What types of pesticides were used to keep the insects away? Is it really safe to eat? Will there be a recall of the produce? If these are questions you ask while shopping for food, why not grow your own.

Growing your own vegetables is something you will enjoy and can trust. Of course you can't grow everything, but you can grow many of the vegetables you see on your dinner table everyday. There is something exciting about going out to the garden to gather fresh vegetables for dinner. Gardening is not an easy task. There are many hurdles to overcome, the first one being getting started. But it is so rewarding at the end of the season.



You can grow vegetables that do not take up a lot of space such as, carrots, radish and lettuce. Or crops that bear fruit over a period of time, tomatoes, cucumbers, eggplant and peppers are just a few. There are dwarf and miniature varieties fruit bearing vegetables that mature and bear fruit earlier. The trick to any garden is the amount of sunlight your garden receives during a day. Crops that produce fruit require at least six hours of full sunlight a day and perform even better with eight hours. If you have an area that receives less than six hours a day consider growing root or leaf crops (carrots, radish, lettuce) in this area, they can tolerate partial shade.

When growing your own vegetables fertilizers and pesticides are a choice you make, not one sold to you over the counter. There are a host of organic and natural soil amendments available to you for use in your garden that will provide the required nutrients for healthy productive plants. Also available are effective and safe techniques for control of insects and pest, cultural practices, biological controls, and mechanical controls.

Plants are starting to come in be prepared to plant.

Cultural Practices: Do not grow the same kind of plant in the same place. Avoid placing all plants of one kind together. If an insect attacks a specific species the presence of another species of plant will dilute the odor of the preferred plant and interrupt the attack. Early morning watering will allow time for the soil to dry before cool evenings and prevent disease.

Biological Controls: The garden is alive with beneficial organisms and they are present naturally. Predators are normally other insects, praying mantises, lady bugs, ground beetles, and others; however these populations have suffered significantly due to the use of pesticides.

Mechanical Controls: Use the appropriate trap to reduce specific insect populations. Several are available on the market, light traps, Japanese beetle, slug traps and many others.



A vegetable garden does not demand a lot of space. If you only have a little space on the patio you can use containers to garden your vegetables. There are so many types available, clay, wood, plastic and metal are some of the suitable materials available. A container can be a 10 inch pot or a 4 foot by 10 foot wooden raised bed. Containers must be large enough to support the plants when they are fully grown. They should be able to hold soil without spilling or allowing it to migrate outside the container. There should be adequate drainage and never have held a product that could be toxic to people. If you use wood, cedar and redwood are most rot resistant. Wood treated with pentachlorophenol (penta) and creosote (railroad ties) should never be used around the garden. It is toxic to plants and harmful to people. Wood pressure treated with chromate copper arsenic (CCA) is no longer available for home use. Pressure treated wood purchased at your local lumber yard is treated with a water born compound, Alkaline Copper Quat (ACQ) or Copper Azole (CBA) and is safe for use in the garden.



Chickadee At The Feeder

Black-capped Chickadees are approximately 5 inches (13 centimeters) in length. A small active bird with a black cap, white cheeks, and a black bib, the Black-capped Chickadee is easily recognizable. Both sexes are similar in appearance. Where the zones of the Black-capped and Carolina chickadees overlap, identifying these two birds can be difficult.



Description: During the fall and winter when the Black-capped Chickadee is in fresh plumage, the forehead, crown, nape, and upper mantle are sooty black. Black-capped Chickadees are white from their cheeks to the side of their nape. A sooty black bib extends from the chin and throat to the lower sides of the cheeks and upper breast, where its demarcation is poorly defined. The breast, belly, and vent are whitish. The flanks, breast, and belly are buff, the extent of which is variable. The upperparts are olive gray with slightly darker tail and flight feathers. The inner greater coverts are broadly edged with white; they contrast sharply with the rest of the olive-gray upperparts. The outer tail feathers are broadly fringed with white. The bill, legs, and feet are dark, predominantly black.

Care must be taken when identifying Black-capped Chickadees and Carolina Chickadees in areas where their ranges overlap. This overlap occurs from southern Kansas through northern Ohio, south to the Great Smoky mountains, and north to central New Jersey.

Plumage differences are slight but obvious:

- The bib is smaller and better defined in a Carolina Chickadee.
- In fresh plumage the Black-capped Chickadee has broad white edges on its inner greater coverts, whereas the greater coverts on the Carolina are uniform gray. Thus, a white patch on the wing of a Black-capped Chickadee is broader than it is on a Carolina Chickadee.
- The outer tail feathers are more broadly edged in white on a Black-capped Chickadee.
- The cinnamon-buff coloring of the under parts is less extensive in Carolina Chickadee.





The Carolina Chickadee is the chickadee of the Southeast. It is similar in appearance to its northern counterpart, the Black-capped Chickadee. These two species often produce hybrid young when they intermingle and mate.

Carolina Chickadees can be found south of a line extending from southern Kansas through northern Ohio and across to central New Jersey. This excludes the higher regions of the Appalachian Mountains.

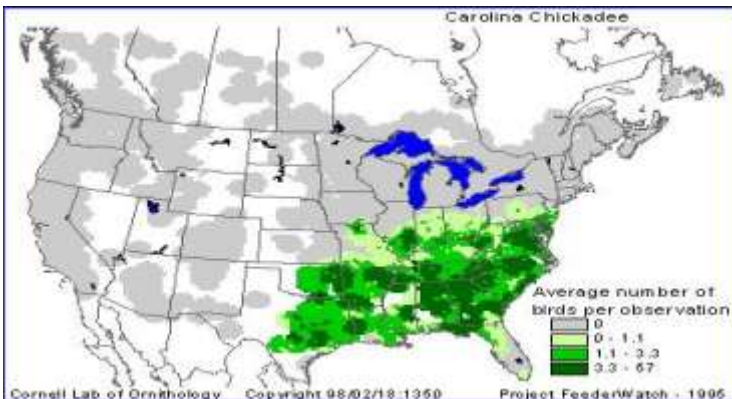
Description: At 4.5 inches in length, the Carolina Chickadee is the smallest of the North American chickadees. Its cap is black and its cheeks are white. The back and greater coverts are gray, whereas the wings and tail are darker gray. The flanks show a slight buff color, and the belly is white. The bib is black and distinct.

When observations are made under optimal conditions in the fall and winter, it is possible to distinguish the Carolina Chickadee from the Black-capped Chickadee because the birds are in fresh plumage.

Diet

Chickadees glean insects on the bark of trees, feasting on a variety of invertebrates. They also dine on seeds and berries and are frequent visitors to bird feeders.

Nesting Habits: Although the nesting behavior of the two species are very similar Carolina Chickadees tend to rely less on the presence of natural cavities and old woodpecker holes than its northern relative. Rather, it excavates its own cavities in snags, rotting tree trunks, and limbs for nesting purposes. This species also occasionally nests in nest boxes, but not as frequently as the Black-capped Chickadee. The male and female of both species work together to excavate the nest cavity, which takes around two weeks, but only the female builds the nest. The nest has a moss base and a cup made of grass, plant down, and feathers. The female lines the nest with finer materials such as fine grass, fur, and hair.



Unintended Consequences

Many of us have been feeding birds for a long time and we have seen so many different species of birds over time. We try to create an environment in which birds feel comfortable and safe while we enjoy their presence. Sometimes in our effort to provide this environment we make some deadly mistakes. Just a few are listed below.

- Using a deep bowl bird bath. A birdbath with a deep bowl is perfectly fine but you should place a large object in the center for small birds to land on and drink. Most backyard birds don't swim. Water 5 to 6 inches deep could be deadly.
- Using Caged feeders could cause problems for some determined large birds (Blue Jays, Cardinals and Brown Thrush). They will make their way through the cage to feed and find themselves unable to get out. In most cases the bird will kill itself trying to get free of the cage.
- Using poisons to control rodents in the yard can result in the death of other small animals such as Rabbits, Chipmunks, turtles, dogs, cats and ground feeding birds.
- Placing feeding stations to far from cover or to close to the ground will result in the birds being exposed to predators for extended amounts of time. A bird away from cover or close to the ground becomes easy prey for Hawks and cats.
- Putting out large amounts of food can be unhealthy for birds. When using large amounts of food remember to clean the feeder before each filling. Moldy or spoiled seed at the bottom can cause the birds to get ill.



While enjoying the birds in your backyard make sure they are safe from unintended consequences.



Have you selected the right house.

It is important to know what goes on when birds look for a house. I would think much of the same things we look for when we are looking for a new home. Listen, you can just hear the questions going through the bird's head.

- 1) Is the house large enough to accommodate my family?
- 2) Is the house located in a safe neighborhood?
- 3) Will the kids be able to go outside and play with no problems (predators)?
- 4) Is it convenient to our food and water source?
- 5) Are we far enough away from the (feeder) neighborhood bar to relax?
- 6) Is the house ready for us to move in?
- 7) Will another family be able to evict us once we have set up house?

These are just some of the things we need to think about when we are selecting and placing a house for our friends to use. The below list will aid you in how to select the right size entrance for the right bird.

Chickadee/Wren	1 1/8" to 1 1/4"
Blue Bird	1 1/2"
Nuthatches	1 1/4"
Tufted Titmouse	1 1/4" to 1 3/8"
Downy Woodpecker	1 1/2" to 1 5/8"
Purple Martin	2"
House Finch	1 1/4" to 1 3/8"

Remember the size of the hole controls the size of the bird not the type. In the world of nature it is first come first serve, and the stronger the longer.

Fertilizer: What do those numbers mean?

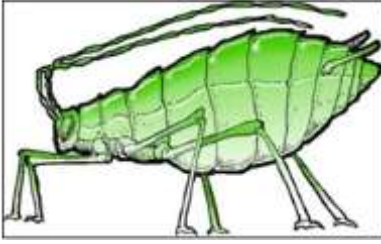
1-2-3: 1st number (nitrogen), 2nd number phosphorus, 3rd potassium.

Most vegetable gardens need between three and six pounds of actual nitrogen per 1000 sq. feet of root area per year, depending on the length of the growing season. A bag of 29-3-4 contains twenty-nine percent of actual nitrogen. A bag of 5-10-15 contains only five percent.

Without going into the magic behind the numbers, it's easy to figure out how much fertilizer to apply to a garden or lawn area. Just divide the first number on a fertilizer bag into 100. The result is the number of pounds of that product needed to supply one pound of actual nitrogen per 1000 square feet. (Lawns need more than gardens, trees need less). Example: 10-10-10.... Divide 10 into 100. The result is 10. Therefore, apply 10 pounds of 10-10-10 to 1000 square feet monthly in order to apply 1 pound of actual nitrogen to that area during the height of the growing season (April - June).

Example: 29-3-4..... Divide 29 into 100. The result is approximately 3. Apply 3 pounds of 29-3-4 to 1000 square feet in order to apply 1 pound of actual nitrogen to your lawn.

Yes, the rates of the other two nutrients (phosphorus and potassium) in a fertilizer bag are important. They promote strong root growth. If your soil is low in one or both, your plants will benefit if the situation is corrected...but not as dramatically as applying the correct amount of nitrogen. The best way to know which fertilizer to use and in what amount is have the soil tested by the Soil Testing Laboratory, through your county Extension office.



Aphids, or plant lice, are small, soft-bodied insects. There are hundreds of different species of aphids, some of which attack only one host plant while others attack numerous hosts. Most aphids are about 1/10 inch long (2.54 mm), and though green and black are the most common colors, they may be gray, brown, pink, red, yellow, or lavender. A characteristic common to all is the presence of two tubes, called cornicles, on the back ends of their bodies. The cornicles secrete defensive substances. In some species they are quite long, while in others they are very short and difficult to see. Aphids feed in clusters and generally prefer new, succulent shoots or young leaves. Some species, known as wooly aphids, are covered with white, waxy filaments, which they produce from special glands.

Aphids are common pests of nearly all indoor and outdoor ornamental plants, as well as vegetables, fruit trees, and field crops. Aphids feed by sucking up plant juices through a food channel in their beaks. At the same time, they inject saliva into the host. Light infestations are usually not harmful to plants, but higher infestations may result in leaf curl, wilting, stunting of shoot growth, and delay in production of flowers and fruit, as well as a general decline in plant vigor.

A sticky glaze of honeydew may collect on lower leaves, outdoor furniture, cars, and other objects below Aphid's feeding sites. Honeydew coated objects soon become covered by one or more brown fungi known as sooty molds which can interfere with photosynthesis in leaves.

NON-CHEMICAL/LEAST-TOXIC CONTROL: Natural enemies play a very important part in controlling aphid populations. Lady beetles, lacewings, damsel bugs, flower fly maggots, certain parasitic wasps, birds, and fungal diseases all attack aphids. Without them, these pests would be much more destructive. Gardeners should avoid use of insecticides, which are harmful to beneficial organisms in the garden. Gardeners should also strive to keep their plants healthy and growing vigorously since migrating aphids are attracted to the unhealthy, yellow-green color of struggling plants.



**The Nesting Box
And
The Garden Box**

Invites you to our
Annual Garden Party

April 16, 2011

Rain or shine

11:00 A.M.— 3:00 P.M.

Demonstrations

Activities for kids

Mini Gardening Classes

