

Wilcox Nursery's 2024 Flyway: Plant Runway Show

The goal of this year's theme is to build on what we covered in 2023. The lifecycle of birds is very closely linked to insects, especially caterpillars. Insects are the most important food source for nesting songbirds. They provide the necessary fat, protein, and nutrition to get babies through the most vulnerable life stage and out of the nest. We will be highlighting our favorite bird-friendly plants that support birds year-round, season by season.



Winter

In addition to the typical Florida "snowbirds" that spend their cold months here, our avian friends come down to escape the freezing weather. Winter residents live and nest further north during the warmer months. These birds include Gray Catbirds, Black and White Warblers, American Robins, and many species of shorebirds, including Snowy Plovers and American White Pelicans.

Spring

Spring birding in Tampa Bay offers some of the best birding in the country. Migratory birds are moving from their winter locations in South and Central America and the Caribbean up to their breeding grounds. This epic journey can be thousands of miles and requires massive amounts of energy. You are likely to see and hear birds such as Blackburnian Warblers, Swallow-tailed Kites, and Blue-headed Vireos in large groups as they make their way north. Our year-round and summer resident birds also start courting and nesting during this time.



Summer

Summer is the season of love in Florida! Birds will be territorial as they protect their nests and fledglings. Nestlings need lots and lots of insects. Caterpillars make an excellent meal for baby birds. You are likely to see Northern Mockingbirds, Blue Jays, Boat-tailed Grackles, and Carolina Wrens during this time of year.

Fall

Fall migration is more of a trickle than spring migration. As birds come through, they are looking for fuel for their trip south. This is the first migration for birds that hatched over the summer. Birds are less territorial and tend to move in mixed species flocks for safety. We will see kettles of hawks, murders of crows, and bouquets of warblers moving through starting in August. Some birds, like American Robins, only migrate as needed to follow food sources and escape freezing temperatures.

Winter

Plant	Type	Blooms	Height	Width	Water	Sun	Hosts
Yaupon Holly	Sh	Spring	10-20 ft	8-15 ft	Moist - Dry	Part - Full Sun	Henry's Elfin
Red Maple	Tr	Late winter/Early Spring	45-50 ft	35-50	Moist - Dry	Part - Full Sun	Rosy Maple Moth
Rouge Plant	Sh	Year round	3 ft	3 ft	Moist-Very	Shade - Part	
Dwarf Shiny Coffee	Sh	Spring-Summer	3 ft	3 ft	Moist-Avg	Shade - Part	Coffee-loving Pyrausta
Beautyberry	Sh	Spring-Summer	5-10 ft	3-10 ft	Moist - Dry	Shade - Full Sun	

Spring

Plant	Type	Blooms	Height	Width	Water	Sun	Hosts
Purple Passion Vine	V	Spring-Fall	10 ft +	10 ft +	Avg-Dry	Shade - Full	Gulf Fritillary, Zebra Longwing
Sand Live Oak	Tr	Spring	20-30 ft	20-30 ft	Dry-Very	Part - Full Sun	Southern Oak Hairstreak
Sea Grape	Sh	Spring-Summer	15-30 ft	10-30 ft	Avg - Very	Part - Full Sun	
Coral Honeysuckle	V	Spring-Fall	12 - 15	4 ft +	Moist-Dry	Shade - Full	
Leavenworth's Tickseed	W	Spring-Fall	2 ft	1 ft	Moist-Avg	Full Sun	
Elderberry	Sh/Tr	Spring-Fall	10-15 ft	15 ft	Wet - Moist	Part - Full Sun	

Summer

Plant	Type	Blooms	Height	Width	Water	Sun	Hosts
Sea Oxeye Daisy	W	Spring-Summer	2-3 ft	2-3 ft	Wet - Average	Full Sun	
Dotted Horsemint	W	Spring-Fall	3 ft	3-4 ft	Avg-Dry	Part - Full Sun	
Firebush	Sh	Spring-Fall	10 ft	10 ft	Avg- Very Dry	Part - Full Sun	pluto sphinx moth
Fiddlewood	Sh	Spring-Fall	8-18 ft	5-12 ft	Dry-Very Dry	Full Sun	fiddlewood leafroller
White Oldfield Aster	W	Summer-Fall	2-3 ft	3 ft	Moist - Avg	Full Sun	Pearl Crescent

Fall

Plant	Type	Blooms	Height	Width	Water	Sun	Hosts
Muhly Grass	GR	Fall	3 ft	3-4 ft	Moist - Very	Full Sun	Saytr Moths, Skippers
Wax Myrtle	Sh	Late winter - Summer	15- 20 ft	10-15 ft	Moist - Dry	Part - Full Sun	Red-banded Hairstreak
Seaside Goldenrod	W	Fall	6+ ft	18"	Moist-Very Dry	Full Sun	
Saltbush	Sh	Fall	7-15 ft	5-7 ft	Avg - Dry	Full Sun	
Partridge Pea	W	Spring-Fall	3 ft	3 ft	Dry - Very Dry	Full Sun	Ceraunus Blue, Gray hairstreak,