

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

for yourself, but not at the cost of others.
George G. Brooks
 Eugene

REPEAT AFTER ME

Deck the halls with junk from China —
 Tra la la la la la la la la.
 'Tis the season for out-sourcing — Fa la
 la la la la la la la.
 Now we're lucky to work for nothing
 — Folly folly folly folly FALL.
 Will we all be chipped by Wal-Mart?
 Shop instead at worker-owned BiMart!
 Tra la la la la la la la la.

Kathy Ging
 Eugene


CHEESY UNION

I wholeheartedly support gay marriage.
 Gays have as much a right to be miserable
 as straight people! But it goes deeper than
 that. If gay marriage is legalized, it may be
 eventually be possible for me to marry a
 stuffed-crust pizza.

Dorothy Karstrom
 Eugene

LETTERS POLICY: We welcome letters on all topics and will print as many as space allows. Please limit length to 250 words, keep submissions to once a month, and include your address and phone number for our files. E-mail to editor@eugeneweekly.com (please put "letters" in the subject line), fax to 484-4044, or mail to 1251 Lincoln, Eugene 97401.

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Your Garden, a Gift for the Birds

Waking to the songs of finches, watching a flock of pine siskins swing through the air — these are joys in life. To thrive in your garden, birds need food, shelter, water, and protection from cats and collisions with windows.

You can plant a wildlife corner or a whole garden. A garden with seeds, fruits, flowers for nectar, and plenty of insects attracts a wide range of birds. Plants and insects free of pesticides are important to birds' health. Different birds feed in soil and leaf litter, at varying levels of shrubs and trees, in bark and moss, on and under bird feeders. Birds who visit feeders need consistent seed supply, clean feeders to prevent disease, and nearby trees and shrubs to perch in and escape from predators. Keith Oldham was puzzled when no birds came to the feeder on his deck — until he added a potted tree. Black sunflower seeds appeal to many kinds of birds.

Water helps birds survive hot and cold spells and brings them to drink and bathe where you can see them. Perching places and cover are important near water, too. To prevent mosquitoes, add goldfish or gumbusia to ponds, and change the water in bird baths every few days. Water in bird baths and bird-friendly areas of ponds should be about one inch deep, with good footing on the bottom. One of our bird baths is blue ceramic, pretty but slippery; we place a flat rock in it so birds can bathe. Our plainer bird bath is concrete with a textured bottom. Birds wait in line for this one, congregating on nearby bushes.

Birds need shelter to nest, hide from predators and avoid temperature extremes. Trees and shrubs, brush piles, nest boxes, snags, grasses growing long and perennials left untrimmed in winter all provide shelter. As I work my way through my winter garden, I notice a lot more birds where I haven't cleaned up yet. They are gradually persuading me to wait until early spring to make everything tidy. They also prefer shrubs and trees that I restrain myself from pruning: wild rose thickets, twiggy hawthorns and forsythias. The more tangled, the better.

Cats are the curse of bird gardens. People who are tender to their kitties may, inexplicably, establish a kill zone for birds around their houses — and their neighbors' houses — by letting their pets roam free. To protect birds, cats belong indoors until they are ancient and tottering.

BY KATE ROGERS-GESSERT



Crabapple Tree

The first line of defense against bird/window crashes is screens, which soften both reflections and impacts. You can try closing curtains. Hawk outlines on picture windows are somewhat effective, as are bits of outdoor glitter moving in the wind and white stains of bird poop from previous collisions. I've found the poop strangely effective. Though it's not aesthetically pleasing, neither is the thud of a feathered body hitting glass.

Bird feeders are safest very close to windows or over 25 feet away. Birds fly most wildly when they are mating or just leaving the nest. At these times, they need extra protection. I've also noticed more crashes on sunny days that burst forth in glory after weeks of clouds.

In city and suburbs, birds can flourish where neighbors provide wildlife corridors — hedgerows along fences — which increase habitat and also provide greater privacy between backyards. Neighbors can cooperate by growing larger wildlife trees in adjacent gardens: "You plant an incense cedar, I'll plant a Garry oak." The dense foliage of incense cedars makes for safe nesting; oaks provide food for scores of bird species. Oaks have not only acorns, but many insects living along their licheny branches.

Native plant species are good for native birds, and some non-natives are excellent additions. Rufous hummingbirds return to Oregon in February, in time for the bloom of native red-flowered currant. Maevie Sowles loves watching goldfinches hanging from sunflowers that grew from seeds the same birds planted last year. Dennis Lueck watches juncos, usually ground-feeders, feast on seed along the spreading branches of a coast redwood. Near my kitchen window is a crabapple with orange fruits that last through early winter. One January day, dozens of robins will assemble and strip the tree. The European birch above our patio is a cafeteria, yielding an ongoing stream of insects and slowly disintegrating seedheads for finches, nuthatches, and warblers. **EW**

Plant sources: Bloomers Nursery, Doak Creek Native Plants, Down to Earth, Lorane Hills Nursery. Great book: Russell Link's *Landscaping for Wildlife in the Pacific Northwest*, at Book Mark and J. Michael's. Plant list at www.laneaudobon.org. Search "native plants birds." Send ideas and comments to shadesofgreen@eugeneweekly.com