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Gardening for wildlife

By **Kathy Kramer and Nora Harlow**
Contra Costa Times correspondents
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BY GOING native, your garden could be alive with bird song and fluttering butterflies, become a home to myriad native bees and ladybugs and transform into a haven for other creatures, such as frogs and lizards, that are seeking a place to survive.

Each of us, whether we garden in pots, on a balcony or on a suburban lot, has the opportunity to replace a little bit of the wildlife habitat that once was here but is now taken up by our homes, driveways, and exotic plants.

By incorporating native plants into your garden and providing a source of water, you will be providing food, water, cover and a place for wildlife to raise their young.

For thousands of years before the arrival of

Europeans and the massive loss of habitat that accompanied them, native wildlife expected to find food, shelter, and nesting areas among the native plants.



Columbine *Aquilegia* is a native plant that attracts beneficial insects. (Kathy Kramer/Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour)

Give them the habitat, and they will return.

Can exotic plants perform the same function? Gordon Frankie, an entomologist and native bee researcher, has found that native bees prefer native plants to exotics by a ratio of four to one. Native plants provide seeds, pollen, nectar,

nesting materials, and shelter that wildlife require.

If you're interested in seeing how incorporating native plants can create a wildlife-friendly garden, each of these gardens are included in the Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour set for May 2.

Al Kyte created a low-maintenance garden

in Moraga, transforming his typical suburban lot into a landscape with a natural, woody feel that provides food, shelter, and nesting areas for wildlife.

More than 100 species of California natives attract more than 90 species of birds, including California thrashers, Western tanagers and black-throated gray warblers. In addition to providing food and habitat for the birds, Kyte also has supplied ample bird houses, suet and seed feeders, bird baths, brush piles and dust bath areas.

An extensive stream tumbles down through offset falls, a meander, and a shallow riffle/bird beach area before spilling into a fish and turtle pond. Rock outcroppings, wood piles and sandy areas for egg-laying add habitat for Western fence and alligator lizards.

Glen Schneider has created a landscape reminiscent of what the Berkeley flats might have looked like before the arrival of Europeans. Glen's approach is restoration, the style is wild and

natural and the boundary between "garden" and "nature" is dissolving.

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The anise swallowtail caterpillar on its... (Kathy Kramer/Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour)

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Native wildlife, especially flying creatures, have returned to Glen's garden in droves. Berries, seeds, nuts, nectar, pollen, nesting areas and shelter are amply provided.

The garden is home to 46 species of birds, 12 species of butterflies and more than 200 species of insects and spiders. Tiny native bees have been found in the garden, spending the night under dried yarrow flowers.

Inspired by the Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour, Concord residents Roy and Rosa Detwiler removed their struggling lawn and replaced it with a heady blend of natives and Mediterranean plants.

Their vibrant, unrepressed garden not only brims with color but features two ponds — one with a waterfall — and a bog, which feed into each other through an artful series of channels cut through the flagstone paths that separate them.

Plants that support both the caterpillar and winged stages of the butterfly life cycle were chosen for the Detwiler garden. Pacific chorus frogs found the pond on their own.

About 20 species of birds now frequent the garden, including a bevy of quail that have nested near the patio and raised 11 babies in the back yard.

Anni Jensen and Carol Manahan's well-known Richmond garden is in transition. The front garden is now planted with 130 species of native plants, with an emphasis on plants that attract native bees.

Coastal prairie plants were included because they might have grown on this site when the Huchiun Indians lived in their nearby village along Wildcat Creek.

Seeds, bramble thickets and a birdbath make this garden as attractive to wildlife as it is to people. Hummers love the "hummingbird buffet," and spend their days flitting back and forth between their nectar food plants and the native grassland.

Sixteen species of butterflies have been seen in this garden, which contains numerous butterfly larval plants and more than 20 species of nectar plants. Carol and Anni pride themselves on having created a "bug paradise."



In Al Kyte's back yard, trails lead through an open woodland to a 25 foot long stream that tumbles down through off-set falls, a meander, and a shallow riffle/bird beach area before spilling into a fish and turtle pond. (Kathy Kramer/Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour)

Kathy Kramer is the founder of the annual Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour. Nora Harlow is with the East Bay Municipal Utility District.

Garden tour

- What: Sixth annual Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour
- When: May 2
- Where: This award-winning, self-guided tour includes 50 showcase Alameda and Contra Costa gardens that are pesticide-free, water- conserving, provide habitat for wildlife, and contain 50 percent or more native plants. Several of the tour gardens will feature talks on how to garden for wildlife.
- Cost: Free, but space is limited. Deadline for registration is April 20. To reserve your place or to sign up to be a volunteer, go to www.bringingbackthenatives.net.
- More: Native Plant Sale Extravaganza, conducted in conjunction with the tour, takes place May 1-2. Details of the nurseries involved are available on Bringing Back the Natives Web site.

Resources

Resources for Attracting Wildlife with Native Plants

- For a list of native plants that support native butterflies, see the Native Here website at <http://www.ebcnps.org/nativehere.html>
- For a wealth of information on how to garden for native bees, see the Urban Bee Garden Web site at nature.berkeley.edu/urbanbeegardens/
- To learn more about gardening for wildlife, go the National Wildlife Federation's Backyard Wildlife Habitat Web site at www.nwf.org.

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The anise swallowtail caterpillar on its native host plant, yampah. People often grow the invasive fennel for this butterfly, but yampah is much better. (Kathy Kramer/Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour)

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Dutchman's pipevine is the only host plant for the pipevine swallowtail butterfly. (Kathy Kramer/Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour)



Concord residents Roy and Rosa Detwiler built a small backyard water garden and stepping stones using three ponds for water filtration. (Saxon Holt/courtesy)



Clarkia amoena (Kathy Kramer/Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour)



California lilac in Al Kyte s Moraga garden is a bee magnet in the spring. (Kathy Kramer/Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour)