



**NATIONAL  
WILDLIFE  
FEDERATION**

**Certified  
Wildlife  
Habitat®**

## Habitat Essentials Checklist Worksheet

*\*Note: this checklist is only a tool to prepare your garden, please certify online at [www.nwf.org/certifiedwildlifehabitat](http://www.nwf.org/certifiedwildlifehabitat)*

Use this walk-through checklist to confirm you have all the elements necessary to be certified. Note that your property may already have naturally-occurring habitat elements that count towards certification. Meanwhile, other features may be things that you can manually add to your garden to increase resources for wildlife.

Some garden features may even meet more than one of the habitat essential requirements!

Please also be aware of any local ordinances or restrictions on what you can or cannot have in your garden and take care to follow them.

### Native Plants

Native plants are the foundation of a wildlife habitat garden. They provide ample sources of food, cover and places to raise young. National Wildlife Federation recommends a habitat garden space strive for 70% native plants. As you prepare your garden for certification, consider how you can add more native plants to your space to provide the required habitat elements listed below.

### Food

Your habitat needs to provide a minimum of **three** natural food sources for wildlife.

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Native plants     | <input type="checkbox"/> Seeds          | <input type="checkbox"/> Host Plants for Caterpillars |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nectar and Pollen | <input type="checkbox"/> Nuts/Cones     | <input type="checkbox"/> Foliage/Twigs                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fallen Leaf Layer | <input type="checkbox"/> Berries/Fruits | <input type="checkbox"/> Insects                      |

*If you would like to supplement the natural food sources listed above for wildlife with a bird feeder, be sure to regularly clean and disinfect it.*

### Water

Your habitat needs **one** of the following to provide clean water for wildlife to drink and bathe. If an existing water source is visible from and adjacent to your property, that can count for this requirement.

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bird Bath       | <input type="checkbox"/> Butterfly Puddling Area | <input type="checkbox"/> Lake            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Seasonal Pond   | <input type="checkbox"/> Rain or Water Garden    | <input type="checkbox"/> River or Stream |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Year-Round Pond | <input type="checkbox"/> Spring                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Ocean           |

### Cover

Your habitat needs at least **two** places for wildlife to find shelter from the weather and predators.

- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mature Trees      | <input type="checkbox"/> Evergreens           | <input type="checkbox"/> Pond or Water Garden  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bramble Patch     | <input type="checkbox"/> Brush or Log Pile    | <input type="checkbox"/> Animal Burrow   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Groundcover       | <input type="checkbox"/> Dense Shrubs/Thicket | <input type="checkbox"/> Leaving dead perennial stems 12-18 inches for overwintering insects |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rock Pile or Wall | <input type="checkbox"/> Meadow or Prairie    |  |

*If you would like to supplement natural cover sources listed above for wildlife with a roosting box, be sure to regularly clean and disinfect it.*

## Places to Raise Young

Your habitat needs at least **two** places for wildlife to engage in courtship behavior, mate, and then bear and raise their young.

- Host Plants for Caterpillars
- Mature Trees
- Meadow or Prairie
- Dead Trees (Snags)
- Dense Shrubs/Thicket
- Fallen Leaf Layer
- Pond or Water Garden
- Animal Burrow
- Hollow Stems

*If you would like to supplement natural places for wildlife to raise young listed above with a nesting box or native bee house, be sure to regularly clean and disinfect it.*

## Sustainable Practices

You need to employ practices from at least **two** of the four categories below to help manage your habitat in a sustainable way. To better help wildlife, we advocate employing one or more practices from each category:

- Soil and Water Conservation
  - Planted Shoreline
  - Capture Rain Water from Roof
  - Xeriscape (water-wise landscaping)
  - Drip or Soaker Hose for Irrigation
  - Limit Water Use
  - Reduce Erosion
  - Use Mulch
  - Plant Densely
  - Rain Garden
  - Leave the leaves in garden beds and around the base of trees and shrubs.
- Controlling Non-Native Species
  - Remove Non-Native Plants and Animals
  - Practice Integrated Pest Management
  - Use Native Plants
  - Reduce Lawn Space
- Reducing Pollution
  - Eliminate chemical pesticides
  - Eliminate chemical fertilizers
  - Turn off outdoor lights at night
  - Replace outdoor lights with amber-colored LED bulbs
  - Eliminate or replace gas mowers and garden tools with electric or hand powered tools
- Reduce/Reuse/Recycle
  - Compost kitchen and garden waste
  - Eliminate use of plastic weed liners
  - Use leaves as natural mulch
  - Clean and reuse garden pots
  - Repair or borrow garden tools before repurchasing

## Learn More Through Educational Resources

Interested in learning more about how to provide these habitat elements for wildlife? Go to <https://www.nwf.org/Native-Plant-Habitats/Plant-Native/Habitat-Essentials> or scan the QR code.

