

Native Plant Fact Sheet

Berries for Winter



Winter food is an essential component of a property planted for wildlife. If you are doing a wildlife backyard, it is important to remember that feeding commercial birdseed attracts birds into your area, but only provides 1% to 5% of their daily food requirements. You need to provide trees and shrubs that provide winter food. One of those types of foods is berries. Birds like small berries. They are easier to get into a beak.

Berries are on a plant as a means for animals such as birds to disperse the plant seeds. Some seeds even need to go through an animal's digestive system to germinate. Birds have spread some of the most highly invasive, non-native plants. Autumn olive and bush honeysuckles (*Lonicera*) are prime examples. Please use native, non-invasives when planting for wildlife.

Below are some deciduous plants that do well in Maryland and are recommended as winter berry food for wildlife.

***Ilex verticillata*- "Winterberry"**

Many songbirds, particularly robins, bluebirds and mockingbirds will use this plant as well as other hollies heavily. Remember, hollies are single sexed, so you need to as a rule have one male tree to four female trees in order to produce berries.



***Pyracantha sp.*- "Firethorns"**

This plant will hold its berries until very late. It also serves as a good source of shelter. It is a favorite of the cardinal.

***Rhus sp.*- "Sumacs"**

The fruit will hold on until early spring, which is essential for wintering bluebirds in Maryland. Look for varieties of smooth sumac, *Rhus glabra*, for the back yard plantings.



***Viburnum dentatum* – "Arrowwood"**

These plants are fairly easy to grow in moist, acid soils, and can be found growing in shade or sun. There are many species to grow. All provide berries that last from fall to winter to provide food to numerous wintering songbirds. Over 50 species of songbirds are known to use the various species of viburnum.



***Aronia sp.* – "Chokeberries"**

Black and Red Chokeberries are both good choices for the back yard. Robins, cedar waxwings, and mockingbirds will use both of these native species throughout the fall and winter.



Source: <http://www.dnr.state.md.us/wildlife/habichat4.html>