



Four Seasons of Wildlife Gardening

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

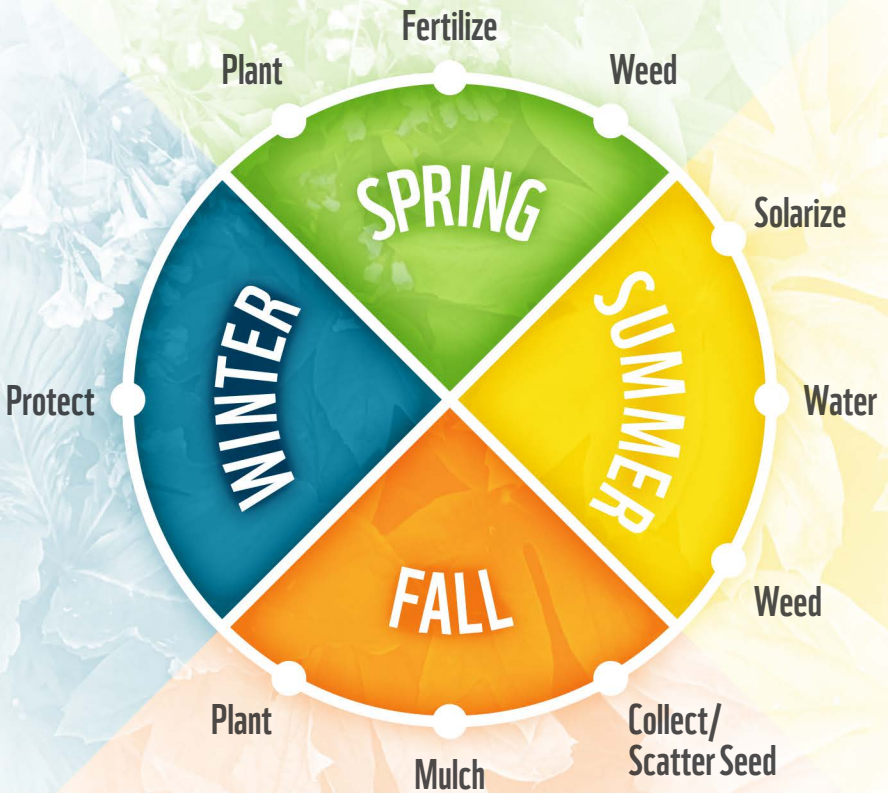


*Carolinian
Canada*



How to use this guide

This four-season guide allows you to start gardening at any point in the year. Just pick your starting season on the wheel and continue clockwise through your first year. You'll find everything you need to know on the Planning and Glossary pages.



Why garden with wildlife in mind?

Your garden is critical to restoring habitat and building a healthy future for your region and the wildlife that calls it home. When you fill your garden with plants native to your local environment, you're helping biodiversity thrive. When everyone does it, we're helping to grow Canada's biggest wildlife garden!

Planning

1 Choose Plants

Plants native to your region are the best options for attracting and supporting wildlife. Visit the links on our resources page inthezonegardens.ca/about-us to find books, webpages and apps that will help you choose plants. If in doubt, experiment! You'll learn a lot by trying out different plants in your garden.

2 Find Plants

Visit inthezonegardens.ca/where-to-find-native-plants to find native plant nurseries near you. The growers who run and operate these nurseries are experts in choosing the right plant for the right spot. Describe your garden conditions to them and they will set you up for success.

3 Gather Materials

At a minimum, you will need:



Shovel



Trowel



Stiff rake



Watering can
(or hose)



Solid fertilizer from a garden centre (manure, black earth, compost, worm castings)

Glossary



Collect/Scatter Seeds

Fall is the best season to grow native plants from seeds. Rake bare soil to loosen the top layer, scatter your seeds thinly over the ground and press down to loosely pack the soil. The seeds will germinate the following spring. Mark the boundary of the seeded area so you can find it the following year.



Fertilize

Spread a small amount (about 1 L/m²) of your solid fertilizer onto the garden area. Use a stiff rake to mix the fertilizer into the top 10 cm of soil. If you notice any weeds, use the rake to pull them out by the root and mix them into the top layer of soil. This is known as “turning under” the weeds and will help fertilize the soil. Avoid raking any existing native plants or sprouting seedlings if present in your garden bed.



Mulch

Dried leaves make for a perfect protective layer (leaf mulch) for your plants during winter. Take fallen leaves and pile them around your plants to create a 15-30 cm deep layer. Leaving dried plant stems in the garden also provides homes for insects including native bees and will indicate where plants will re-sprout in spring.



Plant

Dig a hole about twice as deep and twice as wide as the root of the plant. Scatter a handful of fertilizer and dug-out soil in the bottom of the hole, place the root into the hole then fill in the gaps with dug-out soil. Gently press the soil down and thoroughly water the plant. Space plants a minimum of 30 cm apart, leaving more room for larger plants. Don't forget to label your plants.



Plants in the ground, covered by a layer of leaf mulch, will be perfectly safe over winter. If your plants are in containers, they will need some additional protection. Bring them into a cold garage or shed or wrap them in a tarp, stuffing gaps with dry leaves to make an insulated “cushion” layer.



Solarizing “bakes” your soil so that all existing plants and seeds will be killed. Water the area you’ve chosen (e.g. section of lawn or weed patch), cover it with a tarp or thick plastic and weigh it down with bricks or stones. Let the sun’s heat “bake” the area under the tarp for a minimum of four weeks or until you’re ready to plant. Remove the tarp and rake the area.



During the 4-6 weeks after planting, water your plants once every 3-4 days. After this period, water your plants only if you see signs of wilting (limp leaves or stems) or browning leaves.



Generally, shallow-rooted plants or those that grow quickly in the Spring or Fall are likely weeds. Remove and compost, spreading stems and roots of any weeds. If you’re not sure what something is, leave it, take a picture and ask a garden expert.

Let nature be your guide. Join **In the Zone** to get free garden guides, easy-grow plant lists, expert advice and more.

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Cover photo: Bicoloured Agapostemon (*Agapostemon virescens*) feeding on
New England Aster (*Symphotrichum novae-angliae*) © Sara Shettleworth