



CERTIFIED WILDLIFE HABITAT® REQUIREMENTS:

Certification Checklist

Use this checklist to assess if you meet the requirements of a Certified Wildlife Habitat. If you are ready to certify, scan the QR code or go to www.nwf.org/certifyonline.



Food - Minimum 3 Sources

Native plants provide the basic foods for wildlife (feeders can supplement).

- nectar & pollen
- host plant
- fallen leaf layer
- seeds & cones
- nuts
- fruits & berries
- bird feeders (e.g. seeds, suet)
- nectar feeders



Water - Minimum 1 Source

Wildlife needs a clean water source for drinking, bathing, and/or breeding.

- stream or river
- lakes
- natural spring
- year-round pond
- seasonal pond
- ocean
- puddler
- mud dish
- water fountain
- (container) water garden
- rain garden
- bird baths



Cover - Minimum 2 Sources

Wildlife needs shelter from bad weather. Both predators and prey need hiding places.

- mature tree
- dead trees (snags)
- fallen/decomposing logs
- dense shrubs/brambles
- brush or log pile
- fallen leaf layer
- 12in+ overwintered hollow stems
- meadow or prairie
- evergreen plants
- groundcover plants
- grasses, sedges, rushes
- year-round pond
- (container) water garden
- rock pile/formation
- rock wall
- animal burrow
- roosting box



Places to Raise Young - Minimum 2 Sources

Wildlife needs places for courtship behavior, mating and to bear and raise their young.

- mature tree
- dead trees (snags)
- fallen/decomposing logs
- dense shrubs/brambles
- brush or log pile
- fallen leaf layer
- 12in+ overwintered hollow stems
- meadow or prairie
- host plants
- groundcover plants
- year-round pond
- (container) water garden
- animal burrow
- nesting box
- native bee box



Sustainable Practices - Minimum 3 Actions

How you manage your space effects the health of the soil, air, water, and habitat for wildlife and people.

Soil Conservation

- use natural mulch (e.g. straw, wood)
- leave the leaves
- make & apply compost
- apply cover crops
- reduce erosions

Water Conservation

- use drought-tolerant native plants
- plant densely (if applicable)
- use natural mulch (e.g. straw, wood)
- harvest rainwater
- install rain garden
- use efficient irrigation (e.g. drip hose)
- use greywater
- reduce overall water usage

Pollution Reduction

- eliminate or greatly reduce chemical pesticides
- eliminate or greatly reduce chemical fertilizers
- eliminate use of plastic weed liners
- eliminate or replace gas mowers; use electric or hand-powered
- repair or borrow garden tools before repurchase
- turn off outdoor lights at night
- use amber-colored LED bulbs for outdoor lights
- clean and reuse garden pots
- compost kitchen and garden waste



Keep in Mind

From backyards to balconies, you can make an impact no matter the garden's size. Homes, schools, places of worship, parks, and even small businesses can create and certify their habitat.

Look for plants native to your region and strive for 70% native plants in your garden. These plants provide natural sources of habitat, which are ideal for wildlife. You can find species appropriate for your zip code at <https://nativeplantfinder.nwf.org>.

Every habitat looks different!

It's unique to your location, preferences, space, and even local restrictions. Many of the listed habitat features are things you can add to your garden, but some naturally-occurring elements may count towards certification too.

This abbreviated checklist is not comprehensive for all environments. You are

encouraged to adapt the specific habitat essentials to what makes sense for your location.

Need a deeper dive? Learn more here:



Controlling Non-Native Species

- remove non-native plants and animals
- practice integrated pest management
- reduce lawn space, replace with native plants