

Quad City Audubon promotes using native plants whenever possible for many reasons:

1. Native plants evolved within the ecosystem to help support other native species including birds by providing food or shelter. For example in an oft quoted study, Douglas Tallamy, [Bringing Nature Home](#), writes that an urban oak may host over 500 species of caterpillars while the non-native ginkgo hosts only one. Over 90% of native insects can only feed on the native plants with which they've evolved.

Many birds have evolved to eat insects and even seed eating birds feed high protein insects to their young. Those pesky bugs are very important.

2. Native plants evolved to help support and to be supported by a host of native pollinators including bees, wasps, moths, butterflies, flies and beetles. The earth is full of an incredible mosaic of organisms. Non-natives simply do not support the mosaic.

3. Non-native plants grown largely for ornamental purpose generally require much more care and are not very drought resistant.

4. Many of our garden/landscape plants were developed from European or Asian species. These plants escape into the wild where they have no natural predators or competition. Native species are unable to compete, monocultures are formed further harming diversity.

6. Many cultivars have been developed from native plants. These cultivars may retain many desirable characteristics but often the cultivars are not nearly as valuable to insects and birds as the original.

7. Though the natural North American Ecosystem is in tatters, remnants can be an oasis to help support what is left. If we turn our residential landscapes into enough oases, we begin to approximate an ecosystem. For example if the cool season lawns were replaced with native grasses and forbs we would start to have a prairie.

Establishing native species takes some effort and knowledge. A good place to start is National Audubon Web Site, www.audubon.org/. National Audubon has a comprehensive section discussing which native species to plant to attract specific birds. In addition it lists a few retail outlets in our area. However three more mail order sites should be mentioned: Ion Exchange, near McGregor, Iowa; ionxchange.com/; Prairie Moon Nursery, near Winona, MN; www.prairiemoon.com/ and Prairie Nursery, Westfield, WI; www.prairienursery.com/.