

Section 503.6 Points

Thermo-Scan Inspections gathered the following information from the National Wildlife Federation. To get points for the NAHB Green Standard Section 503.6 you should meet all the requirements listed in red below. You may take it a step further and have your wildlife program certified at www.nwf.org, although the certification would not be required for the NAHB points.

National Wildlife Federation Program

1) Provide Food for Wildlife

Planting native plants or **hanging feeders in safe places** are two easy ways to make your habitat the latest and greatest five-star restaurant for wildlife of all shapes and sizes.

Native forbs, shrubs and trees provide the foliage, nectar, pollen, berries, seeds and nuts that many species of wildlife require to survive and thrive.

Natives are well adapted to survive in a particular geographic area according to the climate, soils, rainfall and availability of pollinators and seed dispersers. And because they are indigenous to a specific region, **native plants usually require little maintenance** and are welcomed by wildlife, serving an important role in the local ecosystem.

In times when natural food sources are not as available, it is important to also provide **bird feeders**, hummingbird feeders, squirrel feeders and butterfly feeders to add to the native food sources for resident and migrating wildlife.

What food sources do I need?

*Your habitat needs **three** of the following types of plants or supplemental feeders:*
Seeds from a plant • Berries • Nectar • Foliage/Twigs • Nuts • Fruits • Sap • Pollen • Suet • Bird Feeder • Squirrel Feeder • Hummingbird Feeder • Butterfly Feeder

2) Supply Water for Wildlife

Wildlife need sources of clean water for many purposes, including drinking, bathing, and reproduction. Water sources may include natural features such as ponds, lakes, rivers, springs, oceans and wetlands; or human-made features such as bird baths, puddling areas for butterflies, installed ponds or rain gardens.

The easiest water source to install in your garden is a **bird bath**. Be sure to change the water 2-3 times per week during warm weather when mosquitoes are breeding, so that any eggs laid in the water don't have time to hatch. If you live in a climate with cold winters, consider buying a small heater available at wild bird feeding stores to keep the water from freezing.

Climate change is threatening our sources of clean water by increasing temperatures and reducing rainfall in some areas, causing **drought conditions** and lower water tables. In other areas, increased rainfall and extreme weather events such as tornadoes and hurricanes cause flooding and erosion of natural ecosystems and can pollute local watersheds. These problems highlight the importance of providing a constant source of clean water for birds, mammals, fish and other wildlife in their different habitats.

Certified Wildlife Habitats not only provide water for wildlife, they use **sustainable gardening practices** that help ensure our human demands on water are kept to a minimum.

What water sources do I need to certify?

*Your habitat needs **one** of the following sources to provide clean water for wildlife to drink and bathe: Birdbath • Lake • Stream • Seasonal Pool • Ocean • Water Garden/Pond • River • Butterfly Puddling Area • Rain Garden • Spring*

3) Create Cover for Wildlife

Wildlife need places to hide to feel safe from people, predators, and inclement weather. Native vegetation is a perfect cover for terrestrial wildlife. Shrubs, thickets and brush piles provide great hiding places within their bushy leaves and thorns.

Even **dead trees** work, as they are home to lots of different animals, including some that use tree cavities and branches for nesting and perching.

If natural options aren't available for you, consider **constructing a birdhouse** specifically for the types of birds you would like to attract to your habitat.

Providing these places of cover not only helps wildlife, it can also help your overall garden if you "branch out" to attract other helpful pollinators, such as **bats** or **bees**.

Ponds provide cover for aquatic wildlife, such as fish and amphibians. A "toad abode" can be constructed to provide shelter for amphibians on land.

What kind of cover should I provide?

*Wildlife need at least **two** places to find shelter from the weather and predators: Wooded Area • Bramble Patch • Ground Cover • Rock Pile or Wall • Cave • Roosting Box • Dense Shrubs or Thicket • Evergreens • Brush or Log Pile • Burrow • Meadow or Prairie • Water Garden or Pond*

4) Give Wildlife a Place to Raise Their Young

Wildlife need places to reproduce, bear and raise their young, and see their young survive to adulthood, all safe from predators, bad weather and human intervention.

Creating a wildlife habitat is about creating a place for the entire life-cycle of a species to occur, from tadpole to frog, from caterpillar to butterfly.

Many habitat features that serve as cover can double as locations where wildlife can raise their young: from wildflower patches where butterflies and moths lay their eggs and small mammals burrow into the undergrowth, to constructed birdhouses, ponds for amphibians and fish, or caves where bats roost and form colonies.

How can I give wildlife a place to raise their young?

*You need at least **two** places for wildlife to engage in courtship behavior, mate, and then bear and raise their young: Mature Trees • Meadow or Prairie • Nesting Box • Wetland • Cave • Host Plants for Caterpillars • Dead Trees or Snags • Dense Shrubs or a Thicket • Water Garden or Pond • Burrow*

5) Garden in an Environmentally Friendly Way

How you maintain your garden or landscape can have important positive or negative effects on the health of the soil, air, water and vegetation that we all use! Here are some sustainable gardening techniques that you will help you conserve and protect our natural resources.

Mulching

Mulch helps keep water in the soil and available to the plant, rather than evaporating into the air. This can help **reduce water consumption**. As mulch breaks down, it provides nutrients to the soil, which can help reduce or eliminate the need for additional **fertilizers**. Be sure to use mulches that are from sustainable forestry practices (not Cypress tree mulch), and that are free from pests and diseases. Your cooperative extension office can help you find sources of mulch in your local community.

Reducing Lawn Areas

Grass lawns often require chemicals and frequent maintenance. Gas-powered lawnmowers produce high amounts of greenhouse gases, which contribute to the air pollution that causes global warming. Since lawns are often made of only a few types of plants that most animals do not consume, they do not provide a lot of value for wildlife. **Replacing grass lawn** with native wildflowers, bushes, and trees provides the food, shelter, and cover that help to maintain healthy, natural ecosystems and reduces your time and labor working on the lawn!

Xeriscaping

Xeriscaping is an approach to landscaping that **minimizes outdoor water use** while maintaining soil integrity through the use of native, drought-tolerant plants. This is a

common practice in drier areas, such as the West and Southwest, where water supplies and water quality are in very short supply.

Removing Invasives and Restoring Native Plant Communities

Native plants are better for the environment than exotic plants, generally requiring less fertilizer and other additives, less water, and less effort in pest control. They are especially important to native wildlife, such as pollinators, that may have coevolved with a particular species. Pollinators often rely on a certain type of flower as a source of food, while the flower depends on the pollinator to transport its pollen to other flowers for reproduction.

When **non-native plants** are used, they often times upset the delicate balance of a local ecosystem and sometimes even out-compete native species to the point of extinction. Wildlife benefit more when native plant communities remain intact, or are restored to their natural habitats, providing the best source of food for wildlife.

What sustainable gardening practices do I need to certify?

*You should be doing **two** things to help manage your habitat in a sustainable way.*

Soil and Water Conservation: Riparian Buffer • Capture Rain Water from Roof • Xeriscape (water-wise landscaping) • Drip or Soaker Hose for Irrigation • Limit Water Use • Reduce Erosion (i.e. ground cover, terraces) • Use Mulch • Rain Garden

Controlling Exotic Species: Practice Integrated Pest Management • Remove Non-Native Plants and Animals • Use Native Plants • Reduce Lawn Areas

Organic Practices: Eliminate Chemical Pesticides • Eliminate Chemical Fertilizers • Compost