



Wildlife Shrubs and Edge Habitat

One of the projects that you may want to consider undertaking on your property is to enhance the quality of the edge habitat.

The term “edge” usually refers to new vegetation and young trees growing in the transition area between the uncut forest and a harvested site. Edge habitat can also be the border found along a field, road, wetland, or waterway and that of the treed area of your property.

Establishing fruit-bearing shrubs or trees as habitat for wildlife adjacent to your treed woodland will provide both food and cover for a variety of small mammals and songbirds that may not be found in the interior of your woodlot. Here are five different methods you could use to enhance or create wildlife shrubs on your property.

Bare root stock – there are a number of nurseries located across the province where landowners can purchase a variety of bare root native wildlife shrubs. An extensive listing of these suppliers can be found in the *2001-2002 Native Plant Resource Guide for Ontario*, produced by the Society of Ecological Restoration (Ontario Chapter) and the Forest Gene Conservation Association. The guide is available for \$5.00 from the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources Information Centre by calling 1-800-667-1940.

Transplanting – you can dig up a shrub from one part of your woodlot where it is abundant and transplant it to another part where it is less plentiful.

Cuttings – certain woody shrubs will grow by planting a sprout or twig cut off a mature shrub. This method will work on such species as willow, staghorn sumac, or poplar.

Seed – this method may involve the most work and be the least successful. However, some landowners may want to grow their own shrubs from seed and then transplant the seedlings once they have become established. This method requires a good seed source, some knowledge on seed stratification, and a lot of patience.

The Ontario Seed Plant is a good source of seed for wildlife shrubs. Their 2001/2002 seed catalogue includes staghorn sumac, black elderberry, red osier dogwood, American highbush cranberry and black cap raspberry. The Ontario Seed Plant can be contacted by calling 1-877-861-8881 or visit their Web site at www.ontariotreeseed.com.

Sprouting – to stimulate added sprouting and growth, some species respond well to being cut back. This works well with species such as dogwood, staghorn sumac and striped maple.

Table #1 provides a list of native species and some information about their growing requirements.

Table #1: A Guide to Wildlife Shrubs				
Shrub species	Preferred Site	Range	Characteristics	Wildlife Value
Highbush Cranberry <i>Viburnum trilobum</i>	Well-drained to moist fertile soils.	All of Ontario.	Does well in full sun but will grow in light shade. Grows up to 3 m in height.	Fruit available for songbirds from September through the winter. Browse for deer, moose and rabbits.
Red Osier Dogwood <i>Cornus racemosa</i>	Best suited to fertile and moist sites.	All of Ontario.	Requires full sun and will grow up to 2.5 m in height.	Fruit is available for songbirds from August to September. Twigs are good browse for deer, moose and rabbits.
Raspberry <i>Rubus spp.</i>	Requires well-drained sites and will grow on most soil types.	Most of Ontario.	Full sunlight is best. Grows in clusters less than 1.5 m in height.	Fruit available late June to September. Excellent summer food for wildlife. Good cover for rabbits and birds.
Sumac <i>Rhus typhina</i>	Well-drained sites and can adapt to most soil types.	Grows best south of Parry Sound.	Full sunlight is preferred however, it will grow in light shade. Grows up to 4.5 m in height.	Fruit available August through winter. 30 species of songbirds eat the fruit. Winter food for deer and rabbits. Provides cover for most wildlife.
Pin cherry <i>Prunus pensylvanica</i>	Will grow in any type of soil. Well-drained sites are preferred but will grow in moist conditions.	All of Ontario.	Requires full sunlight. Grows into a small tree up to 10 m in height.	Fruit available July to September. 25 species of songbirds and some small mammals eat the berries. Browse for deer, moose, rabbits and beaver.
Hawthorns <i>Crataegus spp.</i>	Suited best to dry to well-drained sites. Grows best on deep fertile soils.	Grows best south of Parry Sound.	Best grown in full sunlight. Will grow into a small tree up to 9 m in height.	Popular food for over 25 species of songbirds. Provides excellent nesting sites and is sometimes browse for deer and rabbits.
Black Elderberry <i>Sambucus canadensis</i>	Best suited to well-drained, sandy to loamy sites.	Grows best south of North Bay.	Full sunlight is best. Grows to a height of 1 m to 4 m.	50 species of songbirds and some small mammals feed on the berries. Browse for rabbits, deer, and moose.

Whatever method you choose, remember, when determining which species to plant, you should give consideration to three important points. First, plant only native species. Do not contribute to the ever-expanding population of non-native species that are invading our forest landscape. Second, shrubs should be planted in areas that match their growing requirements (e.g. shade,

exposure, soil and moisture). And finally, it is probably best to leave transitional habitats such as wetlands and shorelines alone if they are already well vegetated.

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