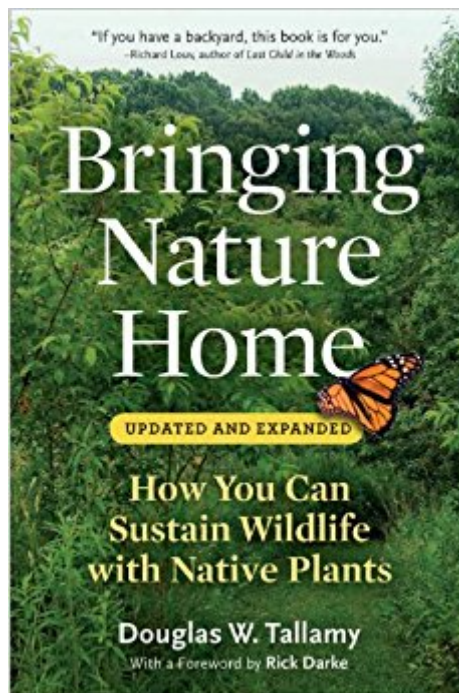




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Bringing Nature Home: How You Can Sustain Wildlife With Native Plants, Updated And Expanded



Synopsis

“If you cut down the goldenrod, the wild black cherry, the milkweed and other natives, you eliminate the larvae, and starve the birds. This simple revelation about the food web—and it is an intricate web, not a chain—is the driving force in *Bringing Nature Home*. The New York Times As development and subsequent habitat destruction accelerate, there are increasing pressures on wildlife populations. But there is an important and simple step toward reversing this alarming trend: Everyone with access to a patch of earth can make a significant contribution toward sustaining biodiversity. There is an unbreakable link between native plant species and native wildlife—native insects cannot, or will not, eat alien plants. When native plants disappear, the insects disappear, impoverishing the food source for birds and other animals. In many parts of the world, habitat destruction has been so extensive that local wildlife is in crisis and may be headed toward extinction. *Bringing Nature Home* has sparked a national conversation about the link between healthy local ecosystems and human well-being, and the new paperback edition—with an expanded resource section and updated photos—will help broaden the movement. By acting on Douglas Tallamy’s practical recommendations, everyone can make a difference.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Tallamy takes an obvious observation; wildlife is threatened when suburban development encroaches on once wild lands; and weds it to a novel one: that beneficial insects are being

deprived of essential food resources when suburban gardeners exclusively utilize nonnative plant material. Such an imbalance, Tallamy declares, can lead to a weakened food chain that will no longer be able to support birds and other animal life. Once embraced only by members of the counterculture, the idea of gardening with native plants has been landscape design's poor stepchild, thought to involve weeds and other plants too unattractive for pristine suburban enclaves. Not so, says Tallamy, who presents compelling arguments for aesthetically pleasing, ecologically healthy gardening. With nothing less than the future of North American biodiversity at stake, Tallamy imparts an encouraging message: it's not too late to save the ecosystem-sustaining matrix of insects and animals, and the solution is as easy as replacing alien plants with natives. Haggas, Carol --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

“A fascinating study of the trees, shrubs, and vines that feed the insects, birds, and other animals in the suburban garden.” • The New York Times “Provides the rationale behind the use of native plants, a concept that has rapidly been gaining momentum. . . . The text makes a case for native plants and animals in a compelling and complete fashion.” • The Washington Post “This is the best book in certain gardening circles. It really struck a nerve.” • Philadelphia Inquirer “Reading this book will give you a new appreciation of the natural world and how much wild creatures need gardens that mimic the disappearing wild.” • The Minneapolis Star Tribune “A compelling argument for the use of native plants in gardens and landscapes.” • Landscape Architecture “An essential guide for anyone interested in increasing biodiversity in the garden.” • American Gardener “I want to mention how excited I am about reading *Bringing Nature Home*. . . . I like the writing enthusiastic and down-to-earth, as it should be.” • Garden Rant “An informative and engaging account of the ecological interactions between plants and wildlife, this fascinating handbook explains why exotic plants can hinder and confuse native creatures, from birds and bees to larger fauna.” • Seattle Post-Intelligencer “Tallamy explains eloquently how native plant species depend on native wildlife.” • San Luis Obispo Tribune “Will persuade all of us to take a look at what is in our own yards with an eye to how we, too, can make a difference. It has already changed me.” • Traverse City Record-Eagle “Delivers an important message for all gardeners: Choosing native plants fortifies birds and other wildlife and protects them from extinction.” • WildBird Magazine

Tallamy points out that almost all songbirds raise their young on a diet of insects, and if you want to help them live and reproduce in your yard you need to make these insects available. He goes on to show that most of the invasive alien plants which are coming to dominate our landscape are hosts to very few insects (that's something that helps them be so invasive), and if we want to help out the birds we need to promote the native plants which are hosts to more insects. He gives a very useful table of the different species of trees which are hosts to caterpillars that the birds can use. He also points out that many imported plants have brought with them (in spite of inspections) diseases to which our native plants have little resistance, and he concludes that we should be much more restrictive in importing plants. As an entomologist, Tallamy's attention focuses on the insects, and his book contains relatively little discussion of some of the other aspects of a bird-friendly yard: berries which the birds can use in winter, water, shelter, etc. Cats are not found in the index and it's important that they not be found in the yard.

the book is good but there are few points that should've been covered:- the author talked mostly about ornamental trees, he did not discuss fruit trees.- the author talked about the pathogens that "alien" trees might bring with them, but he did not discuss starting those trees from seeds.- i believe in some places like deserts, the introduction of some "alien" tree species might do more good than harm if they will withstand the harsh environment. overall its an ok book. and i do agree that using native trees for landscaping is better.

Two features of the modern biosphere are driving us to a new Silent Spring. They are the invasive species that are consuming our forests, grasslands and waterways and the practice of most gardeners to plant non-native plants. If you are of a certain age, you have probably noticed that there are fewer insects in the yard, in the garden and plastered on our windshields than there used to be, and that there are fewer species of birds in the backyard. It differs from place to place, but in my own backyard, which offers almost perfect habitat, I do not see the red-headed woodpeckers, the rose breasted grosbeaks and the wood thrushes of my youth. There are fewer birds because there are fewer insects. Though many birds eat seeds in the summer, fall, and winter, almost all birds (the goldfinch is an exception, I believe) nourish their young with nothing but insects, often insect larvae. These bugs, for the most part, do not eat non-native plants. It turns out that in order to develop the digestive enzymes necessary to digest plant material, insects need to evolve over millenia with the plants. And insects will not eat just any old plant. They may only be able to subsist by eating one or

two species within a family that may contain dozens of different species. Gardens full of Japanese cherries, zelkovas, and the dreaded Bradford Pear are gardens devoid of insects and birds. Not only does nothing eat these non-native trees, hardly anything will nest in them, since birds need trees with a branch architecture that they are familiar with in order to be able to build a nest that will stick in the tree. This wonderful book explains all this, and gives examples of what eats what and encourages us all, the owners of suburban gardens and the owners of larger woodlots, to go native. If enough of us do that, we may begin to see the birds again and the price of this will be that we may have to put up with a few more bugs. It seems worth it to me.

The book club of the Southeast Gateway Group chose this book for our March meeting, and it was everything that I could have hoped for. Dr Tallamy presents the problem of non-native species in our yards and gardens in a new light -- that of feeding the insects that are necessary for feeding the birds and other higher animals. I write an environmental stewardship column for a number of churches in our area, and I cited him in my latest. I think it is worth reprinting here: Several years ago two little girls with newly gifted butterfly nets came up to me while I was working in the yard and plaintively asked where had all the butterflies gone. I showed them the little signs in a neighbor's yard saying the lawn had been sprayed with herbicide and insecticide and then pointed to all the other little signs in the neighborhood. I then led them to our back yard and my wife's "natural area" where we saw a couple of butterflies that were too quick to be caught. My little "teaching moment" was mostly on insecticides. Butterflies and their wild looking, hairy or horned larva (caterpillars) are insects and were being killed by those sprays. If you were fortunate enough to attend Douglas Tallamy's program at the Golden Rondelle a few weeks ago or to read his book "Bringing Nature Home", then you know that herbicides, killing off most everything other than our alien ornamentals, alien grasses in our monoculture lawns and possibly our imported trees, are at least as much a danger to the natural ecosystem as insecticides. Modern commercial agriculture and suburban developments have combined to destroy most of the natural ecosystems that used to be here. These ecosystems supported the great diversity that the European explorers and immigrants found here. Agriculture is not going to resurrect this diversity or we won't be fed, so it is up to suburbanites and rural dwellers to do our best. A few simple reminders: All the energy for every animal (except a few species near the thermal vents on the bottom of the ocean) is captured from the sun by plants. All the oxygen we breathe is produced by plants. Thirty-five percent of all the energy going from plants to higher animals goes through insects. Many insects eat only one species or family of plants with which they co-evolved. That is why it is so important to have native plants in our yards and

gardens. Without native plants those insects will die off and the birds and other animals depending upon them for food may also be extirpated (local) or become extinct (global and final). We are already losing too many species. We can resist this trend by greater use of native trees, shrubs, grasses, sedges and other herbaceous plants. It need not be a totally native garden, but give diversity a chance. Let's not lose the butterflies!

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