



## MAKE YOUR YARD 'HABITAT-FRIENDLY'

### Checklist - SHELTER, FOOD, WATER

- Keep lawns only where they serve a purpose, such as play space for children or pets. Reduce unnecessary open lawns by replacing portions with more diverse vegetation.
- Remove known invasive woody species which overpower and destroy diversity. Replace them with noninvasive species. Check Ontario Invasive Plant Council invasive species list.
- Increase shrub and tree cover, especially in urban gardens far from forested areas.
- Protect adjacent green space. Don't allow any garden plants to wander into natural areas. Also don't mow or apply pesticides adjacent to green space. Boundary areas can be very diverse habitat.
- Increase shelter with ground litter such as a corner with piled branches and dead leaves. Unless they're a hazard, retain dead trees ("snags"), stumps and logs. Even a small area can provide habitat for many beneficial birds and insects.
- Cover bare soil with coarse, woody mulch to not only protect and improve the quality of that soil but also to improve habitat for insects, reptiles and small mammals. Leave some soil uncovered for certain bees and wasps.
- Increase the diversity of plants in your yard to provide food throughout the seasons, improve shelter options and give your landscape a pleasing natural appearance. It's also the best possible bet you can make against a future disease or pest wiping out your entire landscape.
- Grow plants such as rudbeckia and coneflower and allow seed-heads to linger as a fall and winter food source.
- Plant fruit or nut-bearing trees and shrubs for consumption by you and your wildlife.
- Eliminate the unnecessary use of pesticides which kill the good with the bad. Integrated Pest Management (IPM) practices and a balanced ecosystem are your best and cheapest long-term defense.
- Add a source of accessible water such as a pond, fountain or regularly-refreshed birdbath. Water is a critical necessity.

SUM IT UP - a good habitat includes a reliable and diverse source of food throughout the seasons and availability of water and shelter. We recommend that some native species be included in the 'diverse source of food'.