



Altacal Audubon's **Neighborhood Habitat Certification Program**

Restoring Habitat and Protecting Water

www.altacal.org • neighborhoodhabitat.aas@gmail.com •  [@neighborhood_habitat](https://www.instagram.com/neighborhood_habitat)

Participation is open to residents of Butte, Glenn & Tehama Counties in Northern California

Thank you for your interest in the Neighborhood Habitat Certification Program. The goal of the Program is to support community members interested in converting unused lawns to natural, drought-tolerant California landscaping and habitat. Every yard counts! By acting now, we can conserve & protect valuable water resources, and rebuild needed wildlife corridors within our community.

If you have any questions, please email Deborah Halfpenny, Project Coordinator at:
neighborhoodhabitat.aas@gmail.com

Certification Requirements

Silver:

- Replace most or all of backyard or front yard lawn with drought-tolerant California landscaping
- Choose Native California plants for some of this new landscaping (minimum 30% California Native plants)
- Include 3 out of 5 vegetation layers, where applicable (see pg 2 for Vegetation Layers)
- Use low water-volume irrigation (ex: 'drip' or other water-wise method) for new landscaping, avoiding water-waste
- Avoid the use of herbicides and pesticides
- Pick at least one item from each of Wildlife Stewardship & Water Conservation

Gold:

- Replace 100% of backyard or front yard lawn with drought-tolerant California landscaping
- Choose a minimum of 50% California Native plants
- Include all five vegetation layers, where applicable
- Use low water-volume irrigation (ex: 'drip' or other water-wise method) for new landscaping, avoiding water-waste
- No use of herbicides and pesticides
- Pick at least two items from each of Wildlife Stewardship & Water Conservation
- Remove invasive exotic plants

Wildlife Stewardship & Water Conservation, and Vegetation Layers on pg 2



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Wildlife Stewardship

- Have a wildlife water feature: a pond, mud puddle, or a birdbath cleaned every 1–3 days, and located 10ft from cat hiding spots. Providing water is very helpful to wildlife.
- Have avian nest boxes for native species (cleaned annually)
- Create a native grass or wildflower patch
- Have a brush pile or decomposing nurse log (source of food & shelter) in the garden
- Keep cats indoors, or in a catio
- Use decals or ribbons on exterior of a large window to prevent bird collisions
- Have native bee houses (cleaned biannually) or an area of bare dirt (or native wildflowers) where native bees can burrow
- Reduce outdoor lighting

Water Conservation

- Contour yard with berms and swales to channel water where needed. Keep water on property with rain gardens, dry wells, rain catchment systems, etc.
- Group plants based on water needs
- Allow lawn slated for removal to die back in the summer
- Use permeable hardscapes for paths and other surfaces
- Use compostable weed barriers instead of plastic or landscaping cloth
- Mulch to prevent evaporations (except in native bee habitats)
- Allow fallen leaves to decompose in place, to add organic matter to soil and prevent weeds





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Self Assessment

Please fill out and return this form, and you will be contacted for certification review appointment. To help offset the cost of the program, please have \$20 (check, made out to "Altacal Audubon," or cash) ready at the review appointment. Checks made may also be mailed to: Altacal Attn: Neighborhood Habitat, PO Box 3671, Chico CA 95927-3671

Date: _____

Your Name _____ Email: _____

Property Address(s), City, Zip: _____

Phone Number: _____

1. **Portion of landscape** where lawn was replaced with natural landscaping & habitat

☐ Half of front or back lawn restored ☐ Front or back lawn restored ☐ No previous lawn

2. **Nature-scaping Details: Canopy Layers** (please check all that apply)

☐ ground cover (0-2') ☐ small/med shrub or perennial or grass (1'-4') ☐ large shrub (4'+)
☐ small tree ☐ large tree

3. **Plants:** Please include a list of all new plants installed. Please use botanical name and variety when possible. 30% of new plants must be California Natives.

4. **Wildlife Stewardship:** please list which items are incorporated into your landscape from the 'criteria' sheet.

5. **Water Conservation:**

☐ Indicate type of irrigation installed, and please list which other water-conservation criteria are incorporated in your new landscape:

6. The Neighborhood Habitat Program is designed to support homeowners interested in restoring habitat and conserving water (valuable to people and wildlife). The property owner is responsible for complying with all laws & regulations, obtaining necessary permits, and working with licensed contractors when appropriate. Though we certainly hope that information provided will be helpful to the homeowner, Altacal Audubon accepts no liability for actions taken by the homeowner, and the homeowner agrees to hold Altacal Audubon harmless from any liability, claims, lawsuits, judgments, attorney fees in connection with the Neighborhood Habitat Certification Program.

Signature of homeowner: _____ Date: _____



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A Few of Our Bird Friendly California Native Plants

For more ideas go to calscape.org

Restoring Habitat, Conserving Water, and Adding Beauty

Flowering perennials:

- California fuchsia (*Epilobium canum*) – low spreading, vivid orange/red trumpet-shaped flowers, can be cut almost to the ground in early spring (hummingbird favorite!)
- Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) – small perennial spread by rhizomes with clusters of cream-colored flowers, provides seeds (Lesser Goldfinches)
- Penstemon (*Penstemon sp.*) – bell shaped flowers in pinks, blues, purples, partial shade, moderate water, provides flowers (hummingbirds)
- Coral bells (*Heuchera sp.*) – grows in shade, compact & mounding, tall stems with dainty flowers, ground-cover or edging, moderate water (attracts birds)
- Silver Lupine (*Lupinus sp.*) – beautiful spikes of blue flowers, 3-5 ft., provides seeds (California Quail and others)

Shrubs:

- Wild lilac (*Ceanothus sp.*) from mounding ground cover to large shrubs with lovely blue flowers, drought tolerant, evergreen, full sun, provides habitat, seeds, insects (California Quail)
- Salvia's Bees Bliss – fragrant, deer-resistant, drought-tolerant ground cover with a profusion of purple flowers. Grows quickly to 8 ft. (birds & bees)
- Sage/salvia (*Salvia sp.*) many varieties of drought tolerant shrubs with a variety of colored flowers, aromatic, full sun, provides habitat, nectar, seeds, insects (Anna's and other hummingbirds, Calif. Quail, & other seed-gleaners)
- Manzanita (*Arctostaphylos sp.*) – from low growing to large shrubs, striking red bark, pink flowers & small berries, provides habitat & fruit (Western Scrub Jays, Mockingbirds, Fox Sparrows, Black-headed Grosbeaks, hummingbirds)
- Buckwheat (*Eriogonum sp.*) A hardy, long-stemmed, medium-sized, flowering shrub that provides seeds and leaves (Calif. Quail, House Finch, Dark-eyed Junco, California Horned Lark, sparrows, Spotted Towhee, and others)
- Golden currant (*Ribes aureum var. aureum.*) – for shade, 3-6 ft. tall & wide, small yellow spring flowers, summer berries, moderate water, provides fruit & flowers (hummingbirds, Western Scrub Jay, Steller's Jays)

Native Grasses:

- Purple Three-Awn, Blue Grama, California Fescue, Blue Wildrye, Deer Grass, and other lovely varieties to attract quail and other birds

Trees and Tall Shrubs:

- Valley Oak (*Quercus lobata*) – mighty 70 ft tall, deciduous tree tolerates high heat, lobed leaves & acorns, provides habitat, seeds, galls, insects, food-storage (Western Scrub Jays, Steller's Jays, Band-tailed Pigeons, California Quail, Oak Titmouse, Bushtits, Woodpeckers, and many others)
- Western redbud (*Cercis occidentalis*) – small, deciduous 6-16 ft high, many branches from base, heart-shaped leaves, magenta flowers, & pretty pods, provides seeds and flowers (hummingbirds, goldfinches)
- Toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*) – dense evergreen shrub, 8-15 ft high & wide, multi-trunk, bunches of red berries in winter, tolerates many conditions & can be pruned, provides habitat and fruit (Band-tailed Pigeons, Western Bluebirds, American Robins, Cedar Waxwings, other berry-eaters)
- Holly-leaved cherry (*Prunus ilicifolia ssp. ilicifolia*) – large shrub/tree, can be pruned for size & shape, full sun/part shade, with white flowers and large, red cherries, provides fruit (American Robins, finches, Cedar Waxwings, towhees, and others)
- Coffeeberry (*Frangula californica*) 3-15 ft tall, 8 ft wide, can be pruned for size, can tolerate shade or sun, drought tolerant, with berries, provides habitat, fruit, insects (Western Scrub Jays)
- Blue elderberry (*Sambucus nigra subsp. caerulea*) – large, airy, deciduous shrub/tree with white spring flowers & summer berries, provides berries, flowers, stems (hummingbirds & others)
- Pacific dogwood (*Cornus nuttallii*) – up to 50 ft. tall with beautiful flowers & red fruit, low water needs, provides fruit (Black-headed grosbeak, Yellow-billed Magpie, Flycatchers, American Robin, Tree Swallows, Tanagers, California Thrashers, Vireos, Warblers, Cedar Waxwings, Woodpeckers, Band-tailed Pigeons, etc.)
- Common Manzanita (*Arctostaphylos manzanita*) 6-20 ft tall, 10 ft wide, Native bees and Hummingbirds visit flowers, berries attract Northern Mockingbirds, American Robin, and Cedar Waxwings.



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Resources

Websites:

Garden Planning/Plant Selection:

- Audubon Native Plants Database for finding plants for your zip code audubon.org/native-plants
- Calscape garden planner for choosing native plants for your address gardenplanner.calscape.org
- Calscape Plant Database for finding native plants calscape.org

Websites for Workshops:

- Butte County Master Gardeners, with a variety of gardening workshops, local demo gardens, and a gardening 'hotline' ucanr.edu/sites/bcmg/
- Chico State Herbarium, with excellent workshops www.csuchico.edu/herbarium
- California Native Plant Society, Mount Lassen Chapter, for workshops, events, and detailed recommendations on ideal plants for your garden mountlassen.cnps.org
- Butte Environmental Council, for environmental issues & events, often offering water-wise gardening, grey-water, and rain barrel workshops www.becnet.org
- Gardening podcasts by Jennifer Jewell on NSPR, featuring thoughtful & informative insights on gardening (and wildlife gardening) www.cultivatingplace.com
- The State of CA offers water conservation rebates, sometimes for lawn replacement saveourwater.com

Websites with More Excellent Information

- Altacal Audubon Society, for local meetings, programs, and birding adventures www.altacal.org
- California Audubon, for everything bird-related, including current legislation ca.audubon.org
- American Bird Conservancy with good info on backyard birding www.abcbirds.org

- National Audubon, a great national bird organization www.audubon.org
- Cornell Lab of Ornithology, for their yard map project (a citizen science project designed to restore habitat) www.birds.cornell.edu
- Feeder Watch, Citizen Science activities related to backyard-bird observations feederwatch.org
- eBird, for bird observations and challenges ebird.org
- Las Pilitas Native Nursery, an excellent 'native' nursery & habitat website www.laspilitas.com
- Xerces Society, for expert information about pollinators www.xerces.org

Books:

- *The California Wildlife Habitat Garden*, with excellent advice on creating and designing for wildlife habitat, Nancy Bauer
- *California Native Plants for the Garden*, with thorough information on native plant species and some landscape design ideas, Bornstein
- *Sunset Western Garden Book*, a thorough book on natives and non-natives adapted to our California & Western locale, ISBN#978-0-376-03920-0
- *Xerces Society Guide to Attracting Native Pollinators*, for expert advice on pollinators
- *Secrets of the Oak Woodlands*, for wonderful narratives on our iconic species, Kate Marianchild
- *The Landscaping Ideas of Jays*, poetic writing about native restoration gardening, Judith Larner Lowry
- *Bird Homes & Habitats*, with help for cultivating backyard birding, Peterson Field Guides
- *The Bird-Lovers Backyard Handbook*, by Mahnken & Lauback
- *The Birds of Bidwell Park*, with fascinating details about our local birds, Lederer/Burr
- *On Meadowview Street*, For children, a treat! A sweet story about turning lawn into habitat, Henry Cole

(Note: Though these resources are currently useful, Altacal Audubon cannot guarantee that they will remain so.)

Altacal Audubon Society Inc. is a tax-exempt 501(c)3 nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting the awareness, appreciation, and protection of native birds and their habitats, through education, research, and environmental activities.



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Simple Steps for Creating a Habitat Garden

Make a plan

- Take some time to notice sun/shade, contours, moisture etc. in your garden
- Sketch your desired hardscape – pathways, seating areas, etc.
- Add your veggie beds, herb garden, fruit trees, shade trees
- The remaining niches (open spots on your sketch paper) will be wonderful spots for clusters of native landscaping – valuable to birds & other critters

Choose your plants

- The Neighborhood Habitat Resource packet contains excellent local resources: local workshops, local demonstration gardens, best books & websites, coupons for a local native CA plant nursery and more. Choose plants which will provide many vegetation layers, from large trees to ground covers, to provide varied shelter.

Here are some quick tips

- For large, evergreen native shrubs – along the periphery or fence line – try Toyon, or easy-to-prune and fast-growing Coffeeberry and Hollyleaf Cherry (all can do sun or part shade, all provide food and shelter as habitat)
For mid-size shrubs that love sun – try native Salvias, Buckwheat, California Fuchsia
For a manicured ground cover, try Bees Bliss, Manzanitas, and Deer Grass
- For shade, clusters of native Coral Bell and Currants might work
- When you've researched images of some of these (or other native California plants), add them to your sketch (giving them adequate space to reach maturity)
(If you have cats, look for bee-friendly plants rather than bird-friendly plants)
- Install plants & drip irrigation
- Best time for planting California native plants is in the autumn

- Sheet-mulch around your new plants
- The best way to get rid of a lawn and/or prevent weed growth is sheet-mulching
- There are lots of online videos with simple instructions for sheet-mulching.
- We recommend sheet-mulching with cardboard instead of landscaping cloth because cardboard is organic, will decompose, and is beneficial to soil health
- Bermuda grass will require several layers of sheet mulching, plus periodic spot treatments (of cardboard/newspaper & wood chips) until it goes away
- Remember to leave a few inches between the base of the plant and the cardboard
- Avoiding insecticide sprays is most important for the support of beneficial insects and wildlife

Enjoy adding some 'extras'

- A water source is very valuable to birds, pollinators, frogs, everybody
- Putting a bird bath on a timer/drip makes life easier
- Swishing and refilling once a day keeps baths clean & safe
- Critters prefer shallow, gritty surfaces they can cling to
- Keep baths 10 ft from cat hiding places
- A nearby perching tree is helpful for birds
- Undisturbed areas of wildflowers or native grasses (or even bare soil for native bee habitat) supports wildlife
- Logs, rock piles, and other hiding places (along with water sources) help all wildlife
- For more suggestions, see the Neighborhood Habitat Program's Resource Packet



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Demonstration Native and Habitat Gardens

- Gateway Science Museum, 625 Esplanade, Chico (on the Chico State campus) with a beautifully-landscaped and extensive 'native' habitat garden at the rear (plants labeled)
- Gardens at Patrick Ranch, created by Butte County Master Gardeners, 10381 Midway, Durham, including new 'native' and 'habitat' gardens (plants labeled)
- Chico Creek Nature Center, 1968 E. 8th St., Chico, with a native garden and wildlife-friendly pond on display (plant labels)
- New City of Chico Garden Sites with new rain gardens/swales: Including City Hall at 411 Main (5th St. garden), the Fire Station at 842 Salem, the Amtrak Station at 450 Orange, the entrance to the new Comanche Creek Greenway between Park Ave and the Midway
- Sacramento River Discovery Center in Red Bluff, 1000 Sale Lane, Red Bluff, with a nice native garden on the Sacramento River and a fun museum
- Feather River Nature Center by the 1930's WPA Bath House, entrance at Montgomery St. & Old Ferry Rd. for a fun walk
- Chico State University, Restoration and demonstration-garden, for a nice stroll along Big Chico Creek near the Creekside Coffee café. 'Campus Creekside Nature Walk' brochures at Bidwell Mansion, 525 Esplanade

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