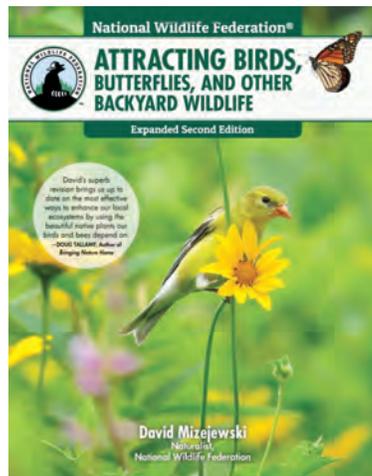
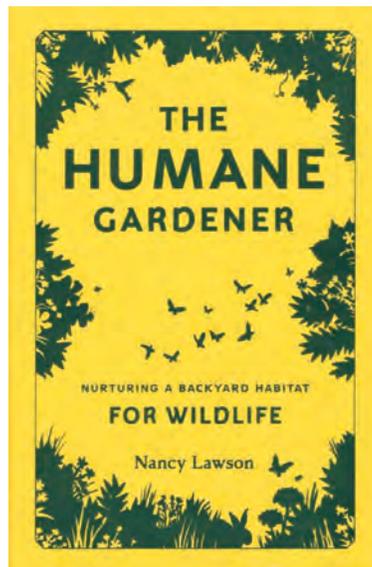


# Gardening for Biodiversity



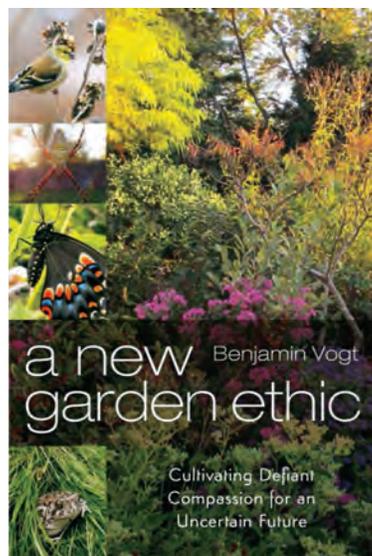
Just as gardeners enjoy reading books about gardening during the winter, and birders enjoy reading about birds, I like books with ideas for increasing biodiversity—ideas that do not require a lot of money or big machinery to implement. So, I went looking for new books. I came up with three.

***Attracting Birds, Butterflies, and Other Backyard Wildlife***, by David Mizejewski of the National Wildlife Federation, is a well-organized presentation of the topic—beginning with an assessment of your land and its current plants, followed by chapters on meeting the critical needs for wildlife. Chapters deal with food, water, cover, nesting places, and sustainable gardening practices. Beautiful color photographs grace every page. There are lists of species to encourage and instructions for making bird baths, feeders, nesting boxes, and more. Of the three books covered here, this one offers the most practical guidance.



***The Humane Gardener***, by Nancy Lawson, covers much of the same ground as *Attracting Wildlife*, and is also illustrated with many color photographs. It offers illustrated stories about particular wildlife gardens. Ms. Lawson also emphasizes ways to keep wildlife safe from pesticides, machinery, and other hazards. As implied by its title, the book deals at length with wildlife seen as “pests”—suggesting not only humane ways to deal with them, but also a frame of reference recalling who was here first, who encroached on whose home, and who is endangering whom. This context implies a more cooperative relationship between humans and non-humans.

***A New Garden Ethic***, by Benjamin Vogt, PhD, differs from the previous books in lacking color photographs and focusing on the philosophy of gardening, rather than specific practices. As the title indicates, the author seeks an ethical foundation for today’s gardens.



When I chose the books for this review, I tried to avoid those with a strictly nativist philosophy. The belief that all of the plants in our environment should be those that are native to the place has resulted not only in practical and philosophical conundrums, but has also led to ill-advised herbicidal campaigns to eradicate so-called “invasive species.” Peter Del Tredici, PhD, a botanist, author, and former senior research scientist at Harvard University’s Arnold Arboretum, gives cogent reasons that non-native plants are often good elements of urban environments in his book *Wild Urban Plants of the Northeast*, reviewed in the Spring 2019 issue of *Pesticides and You*.

However, the three books covered in this review all do have a strong bias toward growing native plants in gardens designed to support wildlife. Notwithstanding Dr. Del Tredici’s approach to urban plants, there are convincing reasons to emphasize natives while gardening to support native wildlife. The reasons are practical and biological—native wildlife has evolved with native plants—as well as ethical. *A New Garden Ethic* discusses the ethical reasoning at length. As Dr. Vogt says, “The whole world is now a garden—a space altered by human influence.” In this context, the native plant garden can be seen as a necessary part of preserving biodiversity.

*Attracting Birds, Butterflies, and Other Backyard Wildlife. Expanded Second Edition* by David Mizejewski. *Creative Homeowner*, 2019. 176 pages.

*The Humane Gardener: Nurturing a Backyard Habitat for Wildlife. Princeton Architectural Press*, 2017. 224 pages.

*A New Garden Ethic: Cultivating Defiant Compassion for an Uncertain Future. New Society Publishers*, 2017. 192 pages.