You can make a difference! Native plants provide the resources and habitat structure birds are looking for. They provide food, shelter and nesting opportunities.

Thorny Desert Trees

**Whitethorn acacia, Acacia constricta**
Shrubby tree generally 10’–15’ tall; found between 1500’-5000’ elevation. Deciduous; Bloom May–Aug/Sept. Very cold hardy, tough when established, can handle full sun and poor soils. Harbors insects and produces seeds that draw verdins, doves, sparrows, finches, pyrrhuloxias and other birds. Verdins may nest in them. Hosts desert mistletoe, so can be important to phainopeplas. Larval plant for some butterflies. Good shelter for birds.

**Catclaw acacia, Acacia greggii**
Shrubby tree rarely to 20’ tall on floodplains. Likes sun, can be lanky in mesquite forests. Locally native in Tucson and Green Valley areas; found up to 5000’ elevation. Long-lived; semi-deciduous in winter and extreme drought. Catchy catclaw thorns—good for out-of-the-way places. Blooms Apr–Oct. with many small flowers clustered on catkins. Seeds attract doves, verdins, sparrows, pyrrhuloxias, quail. Blooms attract butterflies and other beneficial insects.

**Ironwood, Olneya tesota**
Tree to 26’-30’ found below 2500’ in upland areas. Long lived; Bloom May–June; Seed June-July; Avoid in low-lying areas where cold air settles, but seems to do well in most Tucson neighborhoods; Seeds eaten raw, parched, steamed, ground; wood used for tools, tool handles; Seeds: mammals, game birds; Nesting: cactus wren. Flowers: hummingbirds, bumble bees, carpenter bees, honeybees. Host for desert mistletoe. Browse for bighorn sheep, mule deer;

Figure 1: Catclaw acacia

Figure 2: Ironwood
Insects on plant eaten by birds.

**Blue palo verde, *Parkinsonia florida***
500’–4000’; Tree to 30’; Moderate age; Winter & drought deciduous; low water use. Blooms Apr–May; Fruit May-June; Seeds eaten raw or ground; Nectar and insects in flowers attract verdins, orioles; Seeds for food, branches for nesting for finches, mockingbird, mourning dove, hummingbirds; Seed for ground squirrels, kangaroo rats, antelope, javelina; Host plant for mistletoe which is food for phainopeplas; Fodder for bees; Fallen flowers: desert tortoise eat; Nest sites: doves; Nighttime roosting by many birds.

**Foothills Palo Verde, *Parkinsonia microphylla***
500-4000’; to 26’ tall; Slow to med growth rate; Blooms Mar-May; Seeds June-July; Seeds eaten raw or ground; preferred by some over blue palo verde; Jackrabbits like flowers; seeds eaten by birds & small mammals. Branches used for nesting & roosting; bee fodder; host for mistletoe providing food for phainopepla. Javelina like dried seeds.

**Screwbean mesquite, *Prosopis pubenscens***
Tree to 15’–20’ found below 4000’. Originally found along the Santa Cruz River. Bloom May-Aug, Moderate lifespan; Deciduous and medium to low water use; likes sun. Unique coiled pods set summer to fall, and can be soaked, dried, pounded to make flour. Wood used for tools. Pods eaten by desert animals.

**Velvet mesquite, *Prosopis velutina***
1000’-5000’; Tree to 30’; Long-lived; Deciduous; Bloom Apr–May, again in Aug ; Fruit June-Sept;low to med;summer, fall;Raw pods sucked for nutrition; dried pods ground and used in variety of foods, steeped for drink; major source of firewood, building materials. Seed pods attract dove, quail, raven, big horn sheep, sparrows, finches; Seedpods, leaves and bark: rabbits, coyote, ground squirrel, kangaroo rats, antelope, skunk, wolf; Twigs and foliage: deer; Flowers attract 60 species of native bees, plus wasps and butterflies; Nectar and larval plant for butterflies; Nesting: white winged doves, mourning doves; Host plant for mistletoe which attracts phainopepla; Insects on plant eaten by birds.
Non-thorny Desert/Riparian Trees

**Desert willow, Chilopsis linearis**
Tree to 25’. Luxurious willow-like catalpa found in lowlands and along washes, from 1500’ – 5000’. Deciduous; low; Bloom Apr–Aug/Sep. Spring and fall flowers valuable to hummingbirds, verdins and native bees like bumble bees and carpenter bees. Ruby-crowned kinglets in winter look for insects. Provides caterpillar food for pollinating moths; Shelter and nesting: birds; Insects on plant eaten by birds.

**Netleaf hackberry (canyon hackberry), Celtis reticulata**
Relatively large tree, growing to 35’, often in bottomland soils where a little more moisture is available; successfully grown in many Tucson yards. Found at elevations up to 6000’; long lived. Deciduous; blooms Mar–Apr; Fruits available to wildlife June to November. Seed-eating birds and other wildlife will eat fruits; snout butterfly host; Cover & nest: quail, white-winged dove, small mammals. attractive and distinctive growth form, light knobby bark.

**Arizona ash, Fraxinus velutina**
Tree to 20’; beautiful foliage (turns yellow in fall); requires more water to get established; found along bigger desert washes.

**Western mulberry, Morus microphylla**
Tree 6-10’; locally native mulberry; fruits good for birds; good cover during warm months; requires more water to get established than other desert trees

**Mexican elderberry, Sambucus nigra**
1000’ – 4000’; Tree to 30’; higher water use—use only in bottomlands/riparian areas; Bloom Mar–Jun; Fruit May-Oct; med; Edible fruit; ceremonial wine; poultices, Niethammer; Fruit attracts doves, phainopepla, orioles, cactus wrens, and many other birds; Foliage: deer and livestock.

**Western soapberry, Sapindus drummondii**
Tree to 15’; rare now in Tucson area, formerly found along bigger washes; like western mulberry, requires more water

Large Shrubs

**Four-winged saltbush, Atriplex canescens**
2000’-8000’; Shrub to 8’ tall, 8’ wide; Evergreen; low; Bloom Jul–Aug; Seed Apr-Sep; Seeds: quails,
doves, finches, towhees, and small mammals; Plant provides good cover and nesting sites; Great browse plant; Insects on plants eaten by birds. Shrub to 5’; gray-green, extremely tough, adaptable; survives with almost no water or grows big quickly with more moisture; good habitat restoration plant; very good wildlife cover.

**Quailbush, *Atriplex lentiformis***
Dense shrub to 7’ tall. Found below 4,000 ft. This sprawling gray-green shrub is native to west and west-central Arizona generally at lower elevations. Great cover for wildlife, quail like it; W AZ low elevation native. Cover plant for quail; Twigs and foliage: deer, bison, big horn sheep; Bee pollinated.

**Desert broom, *Baccharis sarothroides***
Shrub to 5’; bright green, very tough, low-water; best shrub of all for pollinators; weedy in disturbed soil, but is locally native

**Red barberry, *Berberis haematocarpa***
Prickly shrub to 5’; red berries eaten by birds; attractive fragrance and holly-like leaves

**Desert hackberry, *Celtis pallida***
Shrub to 8’; large, thorny shrub; one of the best shrubs to create cover, food and nesting opportunities for birds; orange berries in late summer eaten by bird and people alike

**Kearney’s snakewood, *Condalia Warnockii var. Kearneyana***
Shrub to 8’; Locally native, 1500 – 3500’, but hard to find at nurseries. A great, thorny desert shrubs that provide food (insects, berries), cover and nest opportunities; edible berries. Long-lived semievergreen. Low water use. Late spring to fall bloomer. Fruit June-Oct; Fruits edible dry or fresh, used by pyrrhuloxia, cardinals, mockingbirds, others, javelina, coyotes, fox. Foliage: deer and snout butterflies. Cover and nesting: quail, white-winged dove, small mammals, pyrrhuloxia. Shaded leaf litter foraged by birds looking for insects; Insects on plant eaten by birds.

**Coursetia, *Coursetia glandulosa***
Shrub to 8’; beautiful yellow-white flowers; butterfly larvae; underused in landscaping.

**Hopseed Bush, *Dodonea viscosa***
Leafy shrub to 7’; large, non-thorny shrub that can provide cover; good hedge plant

**Creosote, *Larrea tridentata***
low water usage. Black-throated and White-crowned Sparrows, pocket mice, kangaroo rats, other small mammals.

**Anderson wolfberry, Lycium andersonii**
Shrub to 5’. Locally native below 5,500 ft. Wolfberries are great, large spiny shrubs with edible fruits that provide cover and food for birds; small purple flowers visited by hummingbirds; fruits edible

**Narrow-leaf wolfberry, Lycium berlandieri**
Shrub to 5'; wolfberries are classic, large spiny shrubs with edible fruits that provide cover and food for birds; small purple flowers visited by hummingbirds; fruits edible

**Baja wolfberry, Lycium brevipes**
Shrub to 8'; wolfberries are classic, large spiny shrubs with edible fruits that provide cover and food for birds; small purple flowers visited by hummingbirds; this is the biggest species; Baja CA native; fruits edible

**Wolfberry, Lycium fremontii**
Shrub to 5’ tall; Found below 2500’, Wolfberries are large spiny shrubs with edible fruits that provide cover and food for birds. The small purple flowers are visited by hummingbirds. Drought deciduous; Bloom year round, primarily Jan-Mar; Can produce fruit year-round; reliable in spring/summer; Fruit, dry or fresh; made into beverage, pinole, in stews; Fruits used by wildlife. Other native species of *Lycium* good too (e.g., *L. andersonii*, *L. berlandieri*). Baja wolfberry (*L. brevipes*), native to Baja California, becomes a huge, sprawling shrub with great cover for birds.

**Graythorn, Ziziphus obtusifolia**
Shrub to 6’. Locally native 1,000 – 5,000 ft elevation. One of our classic large, thorny shrubs that provide food and shelter for birds; edible berries; used by moth larvae. Drought deciduous. Bloom May–Sep; Fruit Aug-Jan. Fruits August to January, and berries eaten by birds, including white-winged dove and Gambel's quail. Nest spots for birds such as Abert's Towhee. Flowers: honeybees, native bees, tarantula hawks. Insects on plant eaten by birds.

### Small to Medium Shrubs

**Indian mallow, Abutilon incanum**
Shrub, to 6’; large-leafed, likes sun, butterfly host

**Palmer mallow, Abutilon palmeri**
Shrub, to 3’; large-leafed, warm microclimate in winter, orange flowers attract pollinators, highly drought-tolerant
White-ball acacia, *Acacia angustissima*
Shrub, to 4’; attractive fern-like leaves, white flower balls attract butterflies, native bees; needs slightly more water than most

**Fragrant bee brush, Aloysia gratissima**
Shrub, to 4’; small, wispy white flowers have nectar that attracts pollinators; cold- and low-water-hardy; fragrant

**Wright’s bee brush, Oreganillo, Aloysia wrightii**
Shrub to 3’; good for pollinators; used as herb; medicinal uses

**Flame anisacanthus, Anisacanthus quadrifidus var. wrightii**
Shrub to 3’; attractive, dark orange flowers attract hummingbirds; tough once established. Native of SW Texas and N Mexico. A relative of desert honeysuckle, but eaves smaller and darker green, flowers redder.

**Desert honeysuckle, Anisacanthus thurberi**
Upright shrub to 6’; 2500-5500’; Blooms primarily in spring but sometimes other parts of warm season. Deciduous. Hummingbirds and solitary bees come to the tubular, red-orange flowers. Locally native to Tucson washes, canyons and uplands of the Santa Catalina Mtns.

**Western mugwort, wormwood, Artemisia ludoviciana**
Shrub to 3’; attractive feathery silver-green foliage; used by butterfly larvae; hardy when established, can spread

**Desert milkweed, Asclepias subulata**
Erect shrub to 4’; long mostly leafless stems with terminal flower clusters; attracts butterflies; striking accent plant; W AZ native

**Desert bahia, Bahia absinthifolia**
Shrub/wildflower to 1’; Small, tough plant with yellow daisy-like flowers

**Sweet bush, Bebbia juncea**
Shrub to 3’; not showy but tough and local, attracts butterfly and hosts larvae

**Smooth bouvardia, Bouvardia glaberrima**
Shrub to 3’. Locally native, 3,500 – 6,000 Santa Catalina Mtns. Showy red flowers attract hummingbirds. May need a little more water than most.
**Fairy duster, *Calliandra eriophylla***
Shrub to 3’. Local to the Tucson area—1,000 – 5,000 ft elevation. Puffy, pink flower clusters attract hummingbirds; hosts butterfly larvae; tough local native. Tough once established. The similar Baja fairy duster (*C. californica*) is from Baja California and gets bigger with a bigger red flower. Some people prefer how *C. californica* looks, and it is also useful to hummingbirds and wildlife, but it is more cold-sensitive and not as tough as our local native.

**Sundrops, *Calylophus hartwegii***
Shrub to 2’; large yellow flowers; hosts sphinx moth larvae

**Fragrant dalea, *Dalea bicolor var. orcuttiana***
Shrub to 3’; lavender flowers good nectar source; larvae host; most fragrant dalea, makes great tea; native to Baja California and Sonora

**Feather dalea, *Dalea formosa***
Shrub to 2’; larvae host; small, attractive spring blooms are purple; well-drained soil; teas can be made from most daleas

**Black dalea, *Dalea frutescens***
Shrub to 3’; purple flowers; pleasant odor; medicinal uses; W TX & Chihuahuan native; teas can be made from most daleas

**Trailing indigo bush, *Dalea greggii***
Trailing shrub/groundcover to 2’; lavender flowers; used by butterfly larvae; W TX & Chihuahuan native; teas can be made from most daleas

**Brush dalea, *Dalea pulchra***
Shrub to 4’; butterfly larvae; pink flowers; needs good drainage; teas can be made from most daleas

**Sacred datura, *Datura wrightii***
Shrub to 3’; perennial root, annual above-ground growth; large, attractive, white trumpet-shaped flower attracts sphinx moths

**Twin dropseed, *Dicliptera resupinata***
Shrub to 3’; small but attractive purple flower; used by butterfly larvae; tough
**Brittlebush, Encelia farinosa**
Shrub to 3’; Locally native below 3000’ attractive, daisy-like flowers good for pollinators; gray-green leaves; tough when established, may reseed. Flowers pollinate by butterflies, moths and small bees. Seeds eaten by sparrows, and wildlife in general. Exudate on stems used as incense. May grow better from seed than from transplants. Protect from frost in first year.

**Mormon tea; joint fir, Ephedra spp.**
Shrub to 4’; local species include E. trifurca, E. nevadensis; E. viridis from N. AZ also available; Local species up to 4,500 ft; used to make tea. Deer, sheep may browse; quail eat seeds; bees collect pollen

**Hummingbird trumpet, Epilobium canum (aka Zauschneria latifolia)**
Spreading shrub to 3’. Locally native in Santa Catalina Mtns, canyons, 3,000 – 7,000 ft elevation. Numerous showy, red flowers visited by hummingbirds and butterflies; used by moth larvae. Can go dormant in the winter.

**Butterfly mist, Eupatorium greggii**
Spreading low shrub to 3’; puffy bluish-purple flowers incredibly attractive to butterflies and other pollinators; native to some sky islands, needs a little more water than others on this list

**Goodding’s Verbena, Glandularia gooddingii (Verbena gooddingii)**
Shrub to 2’; light, blue-purplish flowers attract pollinators; hardy and showy

**Chuparosa, Justicia californica**
Sprawling bush to 4’-6’; 1000’-2500’ elevation. One of the best hummingbird plants; the tubular red flowers are showy and can be numerous in spring. A yellow-flowering variety is available. Very hardy once established; low water use. Cold and drought deciduous but stems are green so it retains a green appearance. Blooms on and off through year. Butterflies, carpenter bees and other insects use it too.
Red justicia, *Justicia candicans*
Erect shrub to 4’; found 1,500 – 3,500 ft elevation in the Tucson area. A relative of chuparosa with beautiful red flowers that attract hummingbirds and butterflies; may need slightly more water than Chuparosa to get established. More upright, less sprawling posture. Good for tight spots.

Mexican honeysuckle, *Justicia spicigera*
Roundish shrub to 3’ tall. Native to northern Mexico. Another chuparosa cousin. Tubular orange flowers attract hummingbirds. May freeze back but can recover if well established. Good for sunny, protected places.

Velvetpod mimosa, *Mimosa dysocarpa*
Shrub to 4’; showy purple flowers; butterfly larvae host; may need a little more water to get established

Tufted evening primrose, *Oenothera caespitosa*
Shrub to 1’; large white flowers visited by sphinx moths

Parry penstemon, *Penstemon parryii*
Short-lived perennial to 3’ tall. Grows 2,000 – 5,000 ft, and is our locally native penstemon in the lowlands. Attractive pink flowers attract hummingbirds and butterflies; reseeds easily. Doesn’t bloom the first year—remains a rosette of leaves. (Photo to right.)

Firecracker penstemon, *Penstemon eatonii*
Erect perennial to 3’. Native to Pinal County, 2,000 – 7,000 ft. Showy sprays of attractive, red flowers that attract hummingbirds. Lives longer than *P. parryii* but is less drought tolerant.

Canyon penstemon, *Penstemon pseudospectabilis*
Upright to 3’. Locally native 3,000 – 6,000 ft in Santa Catalina Mtns. Red flowers. May need a little more water. *Odora, Porophyllum gracile,*
Shrub to 2’; moth larvae host; fragrant; medicinal uses

Lemonade berry, *Rhus trilobata*
Shrub to 4’; airy, attractive shrub; small yellow flowers; berries used to make a lemonade-like drink
**Autumn sage, *Salvia greggii***
Lanky sage to 3’. Native to Texas and N. Mexico. Tough, cold hardy, flower nectar good for hummingbirds, butterflies.

**Desert senna, *Senna covesii***
Short-lived perennial to 1.5’; attractive yellow flowers, good for pollinators

**Desert mallow, *Sphaeralcea ambigua***
Short-lived perennial to 3’; lots of bright orange flowers great for pollinators; other varieties have pink to lavender flowers

**Golden dyssodia, *Thymophylla pentachaeta***
Small shrub to under 1’; lots of attractive yellow flowers; reseeds, good ground cover; used by butterfly larvae

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**Grasses**

**Purple three-awn, *Aristida purpurea***

**Sideoats grama, *Bouteloua curtipendula***
Grass to 3’: butterfly larva source

**Blue grama, *Bouteloua gracilis***
Grass to 3’; butterfly larva source; full or partial sun

**Deer grass, *Muhlenbergia rigens***

**Plains bristlegrass, *Setaria macrostachya***

**Alkali sacaton, *Sporobolus airoides***
Cacti, Succulents, Agaves, Yuccas and other Accent Plants

Golden-flowered agave, *Agave chrysantha*
Rosette to 3’ high; beautiful yellow flowers (flowers once)

Hohokam agave, *Agave murpheyi*
Rosette to 3’ 1500-3000’ elevation. Believed to have been grown in large Hohokam plantations, pit-roasted for food; used for fiber; easily reproduces vegetatively (pups). Must be observed to see if flower stalk is preparing to emerge; use only those for roasting. May be agave species cultivated by Hohokam & other prehistoric societies. Leaves cut with agave knife, heart long-roasted in pit; also a fiber source. Many agaves’ flowers attract pollinators (insects, & either birds or bats), & attracted insects may attract insect-eating birds. Agave murphyi matures faster and blooms earlier than other agaves.

Palmer agave, *Agave palmeri*
Rosette to 3’ high; bat-pollinated

Shin dagger, *Agave schottii*
Rosette to 1’ high; bat-pollinated

Saguaro, *Carnegiea gigantea*
Columnar cactus to 40’; bat and bird pollinated; woodpecker holes host many bird species’ nests; slow growing

Buckthorn cholla, *Cylindropuntia acanthocarpa*

Chain-fruit cholla, *Cylindropuntia fulgida*
Jointed cactus to 6’; flowers good for pollinators; good structure for cactus wren and curve-billed thrasher nests

Cane cholla, *Cylindropuntia spinosior*
**Staghorn cholla, Cylindropuntia versicolor**

**Desert spoon, sotol, Dasylirion wheeleri**
Yucca-like rosette to 4’ with annual flower stalk to 10’; white, spring flowers good for pollinators; attractive accent

**Prickly pear; Opuntia engelmannii**
1000’–6500’; Cactus to 5’ tall; Evergreen; Bloom Apr-Jun; Fruit: July-Aug, Sept; low; fruit in summer; Fruit & young pads; Flowers: solitary bees, sap beetles. Fruits and seeds: white-winged doves, mourning dove, gambel quail, cactus wren, curve-billed thrasher, finches, woodpeckers, coyote, rabbits, ground squirrel, kangaroo rat, javelina, desert tortoise; Pads: javelina, black-tailed jackrabbit. Cochineal scale insects feed on pads; Insects on plant eaten by birds.

**Soap tree yucca; Yucca elata**
1500’–6000’; Grow to 15’; Bloom May–Jun; Evergreen; low; buds spring to summer; fruits summer; Buds, stems, fruits & flowers were eaten, fibers. Roots used as soap; Flower stalks: mule deer, javalina; Seeds: mourning dove, gambel quail; Larval plant for butterflies; Pollinated by symbiotic yucca moth.

**Vines**

**Queen’s wreath, Antigonon leptopus**
Vine, grows prodigiously; beautiful clusters of pink flowers attract pollinators; perennial root, above ground dies back after first frost. Resprouts in spring. Sonora and Baja California native.

**Southwest pipevine, Aristolochia watsonii**
Vine to 5’ long; unobtrusive; attractive purplish foliage; annual growth on perennial root; hosts larvae of pipevine swallowtail

**Virgin’s bower, Clematis drummondii**
Vine 6-12’; used by butterfly larvae; inconspicuous vine but showy flower/seed clusters in summer
Snapdragon vine, *Maurandya antirhiniflora*
Vine to 8’; delicate vine with small but beautiful red to purple flowers. Used by hummingbirds. Likes partial shade.

**Arizona passion flower, *Passiflora arizonica***
Vine to 20’ long. 2,000 – 4,000 ft in Santa Cruz County. Astonishing flowers; hosts butterfly larvae; edible fruits; attractive.

**Mexican passion flower, *Passiflora Mexicana***
Vine to 15’ long. Locally native, 3,000 – 5,000 ft in the Santa Catalina and Rincon Mtns. Purple and white flowered vine host butterfly larvae.

**Climbing milkweed (Sarcostemma cynanchoides)**
Long clumpy vine. Local native, 1,000 – 5,000 ft elevation. Small leaves, interesting white flowers. Tough once established. Butterfly and moth larval host, great wildlife plant, showy when in mass bloom.