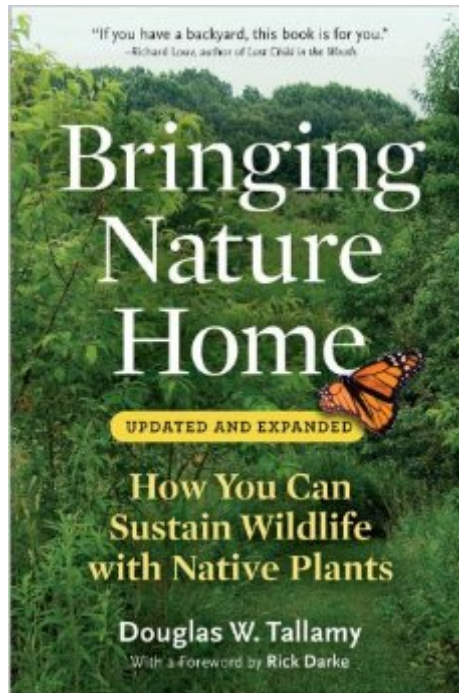


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Bringing Nature Home: How You Can Sustain Wildlife With Native Plants, Updated And Expanded



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

I heard Douglas Tallamy speak at the Native Plants in the Landscape Conference at Millersville University (PA) last June, and I’ve been waiting for his book to be published by Timber Press. I’m a gardener, and I don’t want to grow only native plants. But this book makes me stop and think.

Douglas Tallamy makes the best case for use of native plants I've read. I recommend it without reservation. Simply put, the book's message is this. All life on earth, except for some recently discovered, relatively rare forms that take energy from volcanic vents in the ocean floor, depend on energy from the sun that plants convert into food through photosynthesis. Most of that solar energy is made available to higher life forms through insects that eat plants. With the exception of a few direct herbivores such as cows, all other higher forms of life either eat insects (most birds) or eat other animals that eat insects (hawks eating sparrows), and so on up the food chain. The productivity of an environment, literally the weight of biomass produced in a given area, is directly related to the insect population, and the variety of wildlife - number of species of birds and so on - is also directly related to the numbers and varieties of insects living there. Research now clearly shows that native insect populations cannot be sustained by most alien plants. Our insects have co-evolved with native plants over millions of years, and most have highly specific preferences for certain plants as food. As Professor and Chair of the Department of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology at the University of Delaware, Tallamy has access to research that tells a disturbing story.

This is a first-rate popular work by a mature researcher. Tallamy's arguments for using native plants in suburban gardens are convincing, often eloquent (esp. in chaps. 3 and 4). He argues that native bugs can only eat plants with which they share an evolutionary history. Our bugs just can't eat plants that have evolved in other parts of the world (i.e. alien plants). Furthermore, our birds don't feed their young on plants but can only feed their young on bugs. (This is true even if adult birds can survive on plant food alone--e.g. berries from native and alien plants alike). So bugs are necessary for bird reproduction. Therefore, as the number and diversity of native plants diminish so do the number and diversity of bugs, and, therefore, so do the number of birds since bugs are less and less available for bird reproduction. So far as reproductive nutrition is concerned, alien plants are as useful as a parking lot. Since so far as making bugs available for food, alien plants have no ecological function. What's worse, there is very little in our native ecosystem to inhibit the spread of many of these alien plants--except us! Tallamy does not leave us hanging with just a lot of bad news. To the contrary, he offers a plan for initiating a recovery in which the suburban gardener plays the central role. He celebrates the role each suburban gardener can have in restoring the habitat of native plant and animal ecosystems right in each gardener's own yard. He gave me a real excitement about creating and observing a wondrous, healthy biodiversity just outside my backdoor, a diversity much more interesting than I could ever achieve with alien plants. His hope is that this excitement could become widespread among gardeners such that suburbia and nature could

reconcile.

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