

Plants for the aviary



This fact sheet gives details of the plants that are suitable for aviaries.

The choice of plants will depend on your location – clearly, some plants suitable in Cornwall will not be suitable in the North of Scotland. Soil types too need consideration – some plants and shrubs require different soil conditions.

Plants are employed in the Aviary for two reasons - for decorative or for practical purposes. A decorative aviary is pleasing to the eye and can blend into the surroundings to become an attractive feature of the garden. The practical type may be less pleasing to the eye as they are used to provide cover for the birds and their nesting sites.

Many species, by nature can be destructive and may take a fancy to nipping out young shoots and developing flower buds on growing plants. There are two ways to overcome this problem. Firstly, plants may be grown in containers which can be removed for the plants to recover. Secondly, the use of vigorous growing climbing plants or planting evergreens may address the problem. However, a word of warning must be given if climbers are used, the aviary wire netting should be checked at regular intervals for damage. Holes can appear in the wire, which the birds will certainly use as an escape route, but more seriously an entrance for vermin would put your stock at risk.

To keep your stock in a planted aviary the best policy would be to employ both practical and decorative qualities. This can easily be accomplished by using evergreen shrubs and climbers inside and to have decorative flowering plants on the outside. Here are some suggestions for plants and shrubs you may use in your garden aviary.

BUSHES

Box (*Boxus Semperivens*)

Evergreen shrub that grows in almost any condition. It grows very densely branched wiry stems and may become dusty in the centre. It is most suitable for nesting sites.

Common Elderberry (*Sambucus Canadensis*)

Easily grown in most soils. It is most vigorous, providing clusters of white flowers in May – June, with black berries produced in the Autumn. It must be pruned regularly.

Cotoneaster (*Contoneaster Horizontalis & Rotundifolia*)

There are some varieties which may grow 5 Feet tall, while others may take the form of a domed shaped bush. Generally, dark green oval, pointed leaves and clusters of white flowers, followed by bright red berries.

Ceanothus (*Caenothus Burkwoodi*)

An evergreen, providing an abundance of blue flowers in May and June. Compact in growth and needs little pruning. Requires a sheltered position, as it can be delicate.

Conifers

Various conifers can be grown in the aviary. They provide excellent cover but you are recommended to buy slow growing species. The silver, for example, will provide a contrast in colour.

Laurel (*Prunus*)

Reasonably hardy, evergreen shrub. Will grow in any soil, in sun or partial shade. Provides excellent protection against the weather for nesting sites.

Pyracantha (*Pyrancantua Atalantiodes*)

The Firethorn, stiff stemmed and thorny evergreen shrub, has clusters of white flowers in Summer, followed by red, orange or yellow berries in Autumn. Provides good cover but best grown along the sides of an aviary.

Snowberry (*Symporicarpus Abus*)

Densely twiggy shrub, which will grow anywhere. It produces a mass of marble-like berries in October but must be kept in check.

CLIMBERS

English Ivy (*Hedera Helix*)

An evergreen self-clinging climber or ground cover plant. A useful ground covering plant that provides cover all the year and will grow in places with little sun.

Honeysuckle (*Lonicera*)

A very rapid growing climber. It gives good cover and produces attractive flowers. There are many types but the evergreen type will provide an attractive feature throughout the year.

Jasmine

There are two main types; a white flowering Summer variety with pleasantly perfumed blooms (*Jasmine Nudiflorum*) and the Winter flowering variety which produces an abundance of yellow flowers in January-February (*Jasmine Officinale*)

Russian Vine (*Polygonum*)

A popular plant with aviculturists. The plant to cover any unsightly structures

with its strong rapid growth of up to ten feet per year. Needs to be strongly pruned each season. The dense green foliage with white flowers will provide good nesting sites.

GROUND COVER

Bamboo (Arundinari)

Grows rather tall and dense so may need pruning but provides good cover.

Berberis (Mahonia Aquifolium)

Grows in any soil in most conditions it is variable in character, containing evergreen and deciduous kinds may be grown for their bunches of yellow flowers, some for their leaves or for their berries.

Catmint (Nepeta)

Spreads well and produces a mass of purple flowers.

BORDER PLANTS

These are grown for their decorative qualities. They should be grown outside the aviary. Many varieties are available, including Aubrietia, Pinks, Phlox, Fuschias and many more. Bulbs may be planted either in grass covered aviaries or in the border outside. They will provide some colour when most other plants and shrubs are not in bloom.

NOTE – Plants such as Lupins, Laburnams, Foxgloves and Snowdrops should be avoided. These groups of plants can be poisonous.

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