



# Backyard Wildlife



## WILDLIFE HABITAT NOTES:

### Native Evergreen Trees and Shrubs

Kentucky has a diversity of native evergreen trees and shrubs, particularly in the Cumberland Plateau and Cumberland Mountains regions of the state. Evergreens provide excellent winter cover for wildlife, particularly when planted on the north side of the yard. Many evergreens also produce nuts or seeds that are important wildlife foods. The rhododendrons are beautiful landscape plants that grow easily in eastern Kentucky. Generally, they prefer a well-drained, sandy loam rich in organic matter. They grow well in raised beds in soils amended with large amounts of compost or other organic matter such as humus or peat, with shredded pine bark added to increase acidity and improve drainage, and a mulch of pine bark or needles.

The pH, or acidity, of the soil will affect how plants grow. A neutral soil has a pH of 7.0, while an acid soil is lower and a basic soil is higher. Some evergreens will tolerate a wide range of soil pH while others have a narrow range of tolerance. Most evergreens prefer a slightly acid soil (pH 6.0). Rhododendrons, on the other hand, require a very acid soil (pH 4.5 to 5.5). To increase soil acidity, add sulphur (aluminum or copper sulphate), at a rate recommended by the manufacturer.

#### SPECIES

#### SOIL PH TOLERANCE

#### *Overstory Trees*

Eastern Hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*)

moderately acid to neutral

Pine

Pitch (*Pinus rigida*)

slightly to moderately acid

Shortleaf (*Pinus echinata*)

slightly acid to neutral

Virginia (*Pinus virginiana*)

slightly to moderately acid

White (*Pinus strobus*)

slightly acid to neutral

Red Cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*)

neutral to basic

#### *Understory Trees*

American holly (*Ilex opaca*)

moderately acid

#### *Shrubs*

Dog hobble (*Leucothae recurva*)\*

moderately to strongly acid

Mountain laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*)

moderately to strongly acid

Rhododendron

Great (*Rhododendron maximum*)

strongly acid

Rosebay or Catawba (*Rhododendron catawbiense*)

strongly acid

\*There are no current records of natural occurrence for this species in Kentucky, but it occurs in the mountains in neighboring states and performs well here as a landscape plant.