



## Spring Blooms and Plants for Birds

by Marilyn Loser

2017 May 10

Taking a deep breath in the garden I smell rain and the scent of spring flowers. I have white and dark purple lilac (*Syringa vulgaris*) blooms opening up already! Usually the lilacs in my yard bloom during the Summerfest on the Rio – the first weekend in June. We've had a fairly warm spring and almost double our average year-to-date precipitation (average: 1.8 in. -- current: 3.4 in. as of Tuesday morning).

Canada Red Chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana 'Shubert'*) trees with their white blossoms are especially fragrant and the yellow flowers on native Golden Currants have a fresh, light scent. My 'Spring Snow' Crabapple (*Malus 'Spring Snow'*) was in full bloom and fragrant until Monday night's rain. The blooms must have been near the end as they're mostly on the ground now. The Crabapples (*Malus*) around town are nearly past the bloom stage this year.

My two 'Arnolds Red' Honeysuckles (*Lonicera tatarica 'Arnold Red'*) are blooming, but I'd describe the blooms as pink, rather than red. They do produce red berries in the summer and are rated as very cold hardy at zone 2. Several websites describe the flowers as fragrant, but I don't detect any scent. Perhaps it's because my plants are still small.

Other early bloomers don't seem to have much scent. Bright yellow Cushion Spurge (*Euphorbia polychrome*) is in clumps around the garden. They might be mistaken for Dandelions from a distance as they have the same color. That brings to mind recent posts I've seen on Facebook suggesting folks allow Dandelions to bloom early in the season as bees are coming out of hibernation, need food, and there is little else to dine on. I am fanatical about removing Dandelions any time I see them, otherwise, I'd be overwhelmed by them. By the time Dandelions bloom in my yard I have at least eight other flowers blooming that bees are attracted to. I do tend to notice a lot of Dandelions in parks early in the spring.

White Meadow Anemones (*Anemone Canadensis*), yellow Buttercups (*Ranunculus acris 'Flore Pleno'*), and lavender Jacob's Ladder (*Polemonium caeruleum*) are all starting to bloom. Lavender and pink creeping phlox (*Phlox subulata*) have been blooming for three weeks and are still going strong.

Strawberries, lavender creeping thyme (*Thymus*) and veronica (*Veronica oltensis*) are looking great in between flagstones in garden paths. For more information on any of these plants, please visit the AlamosaFlowers.net website.

I'm always on the lookout for new plants for the garden and ones that attract birds and/or butterflies. Recently I visited the native plants database at the Audubon.org website. I entered my zip code and got a list of 25 'best results' and a list of 113 'full results'. Ones that caught my eye are discussed below.

I am considering trying a Ninebark (*Physocarpus*) shrub again. I had one that did well for a few years and then just didn't come back one summer. It attracts a number of birds and butterflies. Other shrubs that I have that are on the list are Snowberry (*Symphoricarpos rotundifolius*), pink Woods' Rose (*Rosa woodsia*), and Saskatoon Serviceberry (*Amelanchier alnifolia*)

Flowers on the list that I don't have much of include: Blue Bells of Scotland (*Campanula rotundifolia*) and Colorado Four O'clocks (*Mirabilis multiflora*). Both flowers attract hummingbirds. I'll look for Blue Bells of Scotland this year. For many years I had several clumps, but last year was down to one. They did so well for so long I will look for some new ones this year. I tried Four O'clocks a couple of times and they didn't return. I'd love to hear from anyone who has done well with them – I could use some growing tips!

Other flowers in Audubon's list that I have in my garden include Strawberries, Flax (*linum lewisii*), Goldenrod (*Solidago*), and common Sunflowers (*Helianthus annuus*).

*"A beautiful blossom is a fleeting thing. It stays for a moment and then takes wing..."* Albert Richards