



Roof Gardens and Green Roofs

Roof gardens and green roofs create a vegetated space on an existing flat or slightly sloped roof by adding layers of growing plants over a water-proof roofing system.

Provides: Food, shelter, space

Supports: Birds



Flickr– UW Sustainability, Rebecca Gourley; background, Flickr–Arlington County

Green roof technology is a fledgling industry in the United States so there is still much to be learned when considering green roofs in the context of wildlife habitat. While we suggest that more green space in urbanized areas is always better, the species that benefit most from green roofs remains unclear. However, it will most likely be the more mobile species (i.e., birds) that can successfully utilize green roofs.

Implementation Steps:

- 1 Hire a Contractor** – For a project this complex, we highly recommend you seek out an experienced green roof contractor. Factors like roof slope, loading capacity, current roof materials and current drainage system all need to be taken into account prior to constructing a green roof.
- 2 Think Green** – Roof gardens can resemble a traditional planted garden, but there are some major differences between the two. Differences include increased solar radiation, requiring more watering of plant materials, and windy conditions. Wind breaks using trellises or lattice work may need to be built into your design.
- 3 Pick your Plants** – As with any garden, choosing your plants will depend on local climate, the depth and composition of your soil (or growing medium), and the presence or absence of an irrigation system, among other considerations. As your roof garden conditions allow, select plants that will cater to the wildlife you want to attract.



Flickr–pnwra

Other Resources:

- Green roof FAQs
www.greenroofs.org/index.php/about/greenrooffaq
- More in-depth reading about green roofs and wildlife habitat, including 6 research papers from studies in Europe
www.urbanhabitats.org/v04n01/introduction.html
- National Wildlife Federation article about the value of green roofs for wildlife
www.nwf.org/News-and-Magazines/National-Wildlife/Gardening/Archives/2014/New-York-Green-Roofs.aspx



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GRAPHIC DESIGN: UW Environmental Resources Center

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