Indigenous plants serve several functions in the life of birds. In addition to providing perches, plants supply food in the form of nectar, fruit or by attracting other creatures such as flying insects, lizards, spiders and scorpions. They also offer breeding birds shelter for nesting sites and/or nesting material. They also attract other creatures such as flying insects, lizards, spiders and scorpions. 

**WILD PEACH**
*Kiggelaria africana*

The wild peach (above) is a lovely evergreen shrub that in nature is found in forests and bushveld. It is a low-branching tree that can serve as a windbreak or screening element for a medium-sized garden. It produces tiny, bell-shaped flowers that bloom all year round. They attract feeding species such as sunbirds. 

The tree fuchsia varies in size depending on the environment. It can remain a small shrub of two metres or grow into a tree of six metres or more in warmer climates. The plant’s dense, bright green foliage makes it useful to grow for screening and it can be trimmed into a hedge. It grows in sun or shade and has a long flowering period (April to December). It produces green berries that ripen to black and attract numerous fruit-eating birds. 

Some excellent companion plants to use beneath the tree fuchsia include *Chlorophytum comosum* (hen and chickens), *Scadoxus puniceus* (paintbrush) and *Vulcinaea bracteata* (forest lily). 

**FOXTAIL FERN**
*Asparagus densiflorus*

This delicate-looking evergreen ground-cover (below) is a wonderful addition to the forest understorey. It has fine, bright green foliage and produces tiny white flowers that are followed by bright red berries beloved by fruit-eating birds. Some bird species may use the plant in the construction of their nests, as the fronds have tiny hooks that are useful for securing the structures. 

The foxtail fern can be planted as a single specimen or in masses under trees. 

**SPURFLOWER**
*Plectranthus species*

There are numerous indigenous *Plectranthus* species (above) that vary in height from 0.2 to 2.5 metres. All make ideal garden subjects and most thrive in shade with the addition of plenty of compost and a leaf-litter mulch. The flowers range in colour but are mainly in shades of white, pink and purple. 

*Plectranthus* plants attract numerous insects, which in turn draw insectivorous birds to the garden. 

**BIRD GARDENS**

Glenice Ebedes is the owner of Grounded Landscaping, a Gauteng-based company specialising in indigenous, wildlife-friendly gardens. She is a graduate of Lifestyle College and a member of the Guild of Landscape Designers. Her passion for indigenous plants, combined with her hobbies of birdwatching and photography, has given her an even greater appreciation for the interactions between plants and wildlife. She is the author of the recently published book, Gardener’s Guide: Indigenous Garden Plants of Southern Africa. 

**Many bird gardens of Southern Africa**

This hand-picked guide introduces some of southern Africa’s most beautiful, beneficial and easy-to-care-for indigenous plants, giving guidance on how best to use them and how to ensure that they flourish. It offers a selection of sixty garden-friendly, low-maintenance trees, shrubs and bedding plants perfectly adapted to our local soils and weather conditions. Full-colour photographs show plant details and in situ planting; icons indicate whether a species is evergreen or deciduous, frost-hardy, suitable for a sunny or shaded position, fast- or slow-growing, water-wise, fragrant and attractive to insects or birds. 

To stand a chance to win a copy of Glenice’s new book, generously donated by the publishers, and a Gardener’s Guide of Southern Africa, simply e-mail editor@birdlife.org.za with your name, full street address and telephone number, using ‘Forest Plants’ in the subject line. Entries for this lucky draw close on Friday, 23 June 2017.