

Attracting birds to your home

It's cold outside and birds need some food to keep them warm. Now is the perfect time to attract them to your home for winter.

Bird feeding grows in popularity every year and it is easy to understand why. Songbirds provide us with entertaining sounds, bright flashes of color, and curious movements that are enjoyable to watch. The nuthatch shown on this page, for example, can walk upside down.

But I must warn you: bird feeding is getting to be a competitive hobby. The birds in your neighborhood have lots of choices when selecting a place to eat.

So how can you make YOUR home the favorite Bird Food Restaurant on the block? You need to think like a bird and consider the following factors:

Select the Best Feeder. A sturdy, comfortable perch is important for many birds. A traditional wooden feeder mounted on a post will work well. If you can only afford one feeder, this is the one to choose.

Hanging feeders are preferred by nimble birds, such as chickadees and goldfinches.

Some birds prefer to eat insects and meat, rather than seeds. Nylon-covered wire cages filled with suet will attract woodpeckers, nuthatches and chickadees.

A combination of all these feeders will give you the most bird feeding activity.

Select a Good Location. Place your feeder where you can comfortably watch the birds. Feeders should be placed fairly close to trees or shrubs. This will provide birds with nesting sites, sanctuary from predators, and protection from winter winds.

The feeder should be at least five feet high to discourage cats and squirrels. Place your feeder at least ten feet away from steps, rooftops, or sturdy tree limbs. Cats use these objects as launching pads to get at birds.

Provide Good Quality Food. Sunflower seeds are the favorite food of cardinals and several other popular birds. Sunflower seeds, especially the solid black oil-type, are loaded with calories. Birds need lots of calories to stay warm over winter. A mixture containing sunflower seeds, white proso millet and cracked corn is a good economical value. This

mixture will attract many popular birds, including cardinals, chickadees, finches, blue jays, juncos, sparrows, and nuthatches.

Don't be cheap. Bargain mixes often contain large amounts of wheat, milo,

peanut hearts, hulled oats, and rice. Bargain mixes are less attractive to popular birds. They also create a mess around the feeder since birds pick through the seed mix. Rather than buying bargain mixes, save money by purchasing good quality seed in bulk.



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