



Bucks Country Gardens

Bird Seeds And Bird Feeders: Attracting Birds To Your Yard

Attracting birds can be an all-year, entertaining activity for the entire family to enjoy. By providing the essential food, shelter and nesting sites that birds require, you will always be guaranteed a visit – with beautiful colors and cheerful songs. Develop your back yard into a “sanctuary” for these feathered friends, the follow paragraphs will guide you to the basic needs and will inform you of what you can do to keep them coming back, year after year!

BIRD SEEDS

Birds will consume 30-80 percent of their body weight in food each day- they have high metabolic rates and require extra energy for their daily flights. They depend on a wide variety of foods – including seeds, nuts, fruits and insects throughout the summer months – to provide for all their nutritional needs. However, during the cold, winter months these supplies diminish quickly and must be supplemented. Some of their nutritional requirements can be provided by us, humans, in the form of seeds (sunflower and other small seeds and mixtures), fats and suet cakes, nuts, peanut butter baked goods (such as breads and doughnuts), fruits and grit. It is also important to note that during the winter these birds will require even larger amounts of food to keep them warm, making it crucial to keep the bird feeders well stocked. The chart will guide you to the preferred seeds of some of the most common backyard birds. (Also check our “Recipes for Backyard Birds” on this handout for great projects during the winter for kids!)

BIRD FEEDERS AND FEEDING STATIONS

As mentioned in the proceeding paragraphs, feeding stations play an important toll to bird survival during the winter. By placing several feeders through your yard (especially near a window for observation) you not only can enjoy watching the many bird species that will visit but you will also help them to continue on during the cold, bleak months of winter.

There are many types of bird feeders and feeding stations available – from simple, basic designs of wood to the more complex, acrylic window or squirrel-proof styles – all which dispense many varieties of food and seed to the birds. Visit our garden center for your selection. You may even want to purchase a book, which explains in detail which types of feeders are best suited for your yard! There’s even a section on how you can make your own feeders out of common household items, such as jars, old milk cartons, etc. Another fantastic project for family participation!

When filling your feeders and stations, don’t forget about the ground-feeding birds, too (Sparrows, doves, etc.) - they usually get good at picking from beneath hanging feeders but would probably love a feeding spot of their very own. Try placing their food under a picnic table, under low shrubbery (try to avoid placing near a hiding spot of a hungry cat!)

Place your feeders in sheltered spots for protection against harsh, winter winds. If you suspend your feeder from a tree or line, remember to brace it down so that it doesn’t sway and scatter the seed. By placing several feeders throughout your yard you can offer a variety of seeds and attract many more birds. Experiment with different spots for the best results.

RECIPES FOR BACKYARD BIRDS

Create your own food for birds using these recipes or use your imagination to develop your own!

Basic Bird Cakes

- 2 cups suet
- 2 cups peanut butter
- 12 cups cornmeal

1. Melt the suet in a saucepan
2. Mix in the peanut butter and cornmeal
3. Spoon the mixture into muffin cups and cool.

Bird cakes can be offered whole in a mesh bag or suet feeder, or crumbled and scattered on the ground.

Fruit Cup

A special for summer birds! Chop up and mix an assortment of fresh and dried fruits and berries. Put the mixture for the birds in an empty grapefruit or orange half. Birds seem to enjoy apples, bananas, figs, dates, raisins, blueberries, strawberries and cherries. Use your imagination!

Peanut Butter-Suet Mixture

- 2 cups suet
- 1 cup peanut butter
- 2 cups cornmeal
- 2 cups finely cracked corn, millet or other small seed

1. Melt the suet. Allow it to cool thoroughly, then reheat it.
2. Add the peanut butter, stirring until melted and well blended.
3. Add the cornmeal and cracked corn and blend well.
4. Pour into forms or suet feeders and cool until hardened.

The peanut butter adds protein and the cornmeal adds carbohydrate to this easy to make offering. The mixture can stay fairly hard in warm weather.

Bird-Food Shish Kebabs

Assemble an assortment of foods that can be threaded on a string. Chunks of suet, apple slices, cranberries, raisins, dates, and stale bread or doughnuts are a few of the items that work well. Drape the shish kebabs in your trees or any other place convenient to the feeding birds!

Simple Pine Cone Mixture

- 1 cup suet
- 1 cup peanut butter
- 3-1/2 cups ground dog biscuit or cornmeal

1. Melt the suet in a saucepan.
2. Add the peanut butter, stirring until melted and well blended.
3. Add the ground biscuits (or cornmeal) to the cooling mixture, and blend into dough.
4. Pack the dough into the crevices of large pinecones.

Pinecones are a convenient way to offer birds soft foods. They're attractive and a great project for kids – of all ages!

FOOD PREFERENCES OF COMMON BACKYARD BIRDS

Blackbird, Red-Winged: Pecan meats (broken or ground)

Bluebirds: Baked apples, Baking Power biscuits, Cottage or pot cheese,