

Attracting Birds

You can enjoy the company of birds all year long if you provide three simple things - food, shelter, and water. Remember once birds become dependent on you for these things, you should continue to supply them especially throughout the winter months when little else may be available.

Housing

Nesting sites such as bird-houses can be provided to allow protection for the young. A bird house should have such things as drainage holes and vent holes. It should also be easy to clean out at the end of the season. The hole opening is important in attracting the type of bird you want. For example, house sparrows prefer a 1" opening and woodpeckers prefer a 1 ½" opening.

Birds also need hiding places. These can best be provided with trees and shrubs. Shrubs like the elderberry provide both shelter and food. It is also a nice addition to the landscape. Other shrubs and trees include the viburnum, hawthorn, spruce, fir and pine as well as the crabapple and cherry. For example, the pine grosbeak eats the cones from the pine trees and finds shelter in the branches all year round.

Water

A source of fresh water is always an attraction for any bird to drink from and wade in. Any container will do and one with sloping sides allows for easy access. In the winter, automatic electric heaters can prevent icing of the water.

Feeders

Feeders should be placed where they can be enjoyed from the house but also near trees or shrubs to provide quick shelter. Things to look for in a good feeder are ease of cleaning and refilling; wind shelter so the food does not blow away; it should hold several days supply of food; and consideration towards prevention of seed-thieves such as squirrels.

The most basic wild bird seed is probably sunflower seeds. It is very popular and will attract many types of birds. White millet will help attract house sparrows. A good premixed seed blend should include sunflower seed, milo, red or white millet and have a very small proportion of cracked corn. Animal suet is another great high energy feed for the birds. They use this energy for daily activity and for keeping warm on cold winter nights. Remember to destroy any old, mouldy feed to protect the birds from disease.

Common Birds and their Preferred Food

(Revised from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Urban Wildlife Research Program)

Blue jay: peanut kernels, sunflower seed

Chickadee: sunflower seed, Niger seeds

Dark-eyed Junco: (snowbirds) red and white millet, canary seed

Downy woodpecker: suet, sunflower seed

Evening grosbeak: sunflower seed

Hairy woodpecker: suet, sunflower seed

House finch: sunflower seed, Niger seed

House sparrow: red and white millet, canary seed, sunflower seed

Red-bellied woodpecker: suet, sunflower seed

Song sparrow: red and white millet

Tufted titmouse: peanut kernels, sunflower seed

White-crowned Sparrow: sunflower seeds, red and white millet, peanut kernels, Niger seeds

