

Woodlands Nurseries

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CARING FOR GARDEN BIRDS

With this guide we hope to provide you with some hints and tips on how to care for garden birds; what and when to feed them, seasonal tips and information about bird houses.

Food ...

Birds love seed and household foods such as bread, pastry, cheese and bacon rind. Don't forget to put some on the ground for birds such as chaffinches.

Water ...

Water is important to all birds for drinking and bathing. A shallow birdbath or upturned dustbin lid is ideal. Make sure you keep water ice-free in winter and replace water daily in the summer months.

Winter tips

- put out food and water on a regular basis
- use good quality seed mixes with lots of millet and sunflower seeds
- bread is great too – even if it is mouldy – but moisten if it is dry
- try 'bird cake' – pour melted suet or lard onto a mix of seeds, nuts, cake or dried fruits (1/3 fat to 2/3 mix), mould and cool. A coconut shell can provide the perfect mould to place this in!

Spring/summer tips

- avoid fatty foods in summer – they can harm young birds
- put peanuts in rigid mesh – whole nuts can choke young chicks
- fresh fruit is always a hit with birds and insects
- birds adore dried fruit, such as raisins, sultanas and currants - make sure the fruit is soaked and softened for chicks in summer.

Bird feeders

Tables should be kept clean, using a mild disinfectant. If possible, move your feeding station several times a year to prevent disease.

Homes for birds

Nest boxes should be kept out of reach of cats, two to five metres above ground. The hole in the box should be around 30mm across for small birds.

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Planting gardens for birds

Trees and shrubs

Native trees are best as they provide insects, seeds and shelter - Alder, birch or willow are suitable for gardens; only plant oaks and beech if you have a large garden as they can grow very big. Shrubs, such as hawthorn and holly provide shelter and food.

Native plants

Cornflowers, forget-me-nots, evening primrose and sunflowers are a good choice to encourage birds to the garden. All of these provide fruit or seeds that are attractive to garden birds. Climbers, such as honeysuckle and clematis, can provide great nesting sites.

Lawns and rockeries

Birds, such as blackbirds and starlings, spend time on mown lawns in search of earthworms and other invertebrates. A rockery is often home to snails – a favourite with song thrushes, providing food in dry summer weather.

Ponds

Ponds are wonderful for wildlife. No matter what size, they will provide food and homes for many birds and other wildlife. Warm, sunny sites are best. Visit the pond section of our website for more information about how to build your garden pond.

It is best to allow the pond to stock itself, but if you can't wait for nature to take its course, plant native species, such as yellow iris. A low branch or log in the middle will help birds to drink and bathe safely. Don't dig your pond under a tree – you'll spend a lot of time cleaning out leaves!