**BIRD FEEDING BASICS**

How To Feed Birds:

Birds require only three things to encourage them to return to your location: fresh water to drink and to bathe, plenty of cover to nest and to hide, and a variety of quality food to eat.

- Birds can get needed water from rainwater and dew. Add a convenient water source like a birdbath or a water feature to your landscape to attract a larger number and variety of birds.
- Birds require cover to nest, to hide from predators and to protect them from the weather. Even a small yard with a mixture of trees, shrubs and hedgerows can provide hiding places in summer and storm protection in winter. Nest boxes or birdhouses will encourage birds to stay and raise their families near your home. In addition, birds require protection from their natural enemies, so feeding areas should be out of the reach of cats and other predators.

**PREPARATION**

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**SELECTING FOOD AND FEEDERS**

Bird feed and feeders should be selected based on the local bird population throughout the year. Some species may only stay a few months while others will permanently make your yard their home. Ask a Lowe’s associate for assistance in identifying and selecting the appropriate feed for birds in your area.

**MATERIALS**

- Bird Feeder
- Bird Feed
- Storage Container
- Feeder Maintenance Materials (bleach solution, water)
- Bird Bath (optional)

**IMPORTANT**

Before mounting bird feeders in high locations, make sure you have a safe ladder and are comfortable working at heights. If you have questions about bird feeders or feeding, discuss the job with a Lowe’s associate or call a professional for help.

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**SELECTING FOOD AND FEEDERS (cont.)**

- **TIP:** Make sure the selected feeder is maintained year round, especially in harsh winter climates that make natural food sources hard to find. Birds typically burn more calories in winter to stay warm. For example, chickadees have to eat 20 times more in winter than in summer.

01 **Select the appropriate food for the birds you want to attract.**

- **Colorful songbirds include finches, jays, chickadees, cardinals and buntings.**
  They typically prefer food selections with black oil sunflower seeds, safflower seeds and peanuts offered in a birdhouse or hopper.
- **Woodpeckers, nuthatches and even buntings prefer a seed mixture with fruits and nuts offered on a platform feeder.**
- **Finches, including American goldfinch, purple finch, house finch and the pine siskin, also prefer thistle (niger) seeds to eat. Thistle feeders are special tube feeders with extra-small openings that dispense the tiny thistle seeds.**

02 **Many bird watchers prefer the simplicity of seed mixes available in a tube that they can simply hang up on a patio or other outdoor location to attract a wide variety of smaller birds. Select a quality mix that includes black oil sunflower seeds, safflower seeds and thistle, and/or other nutritious ingredients like millet and cracked corn. Some birds prefer fruit or peanuts, or seed suspended in suet (blocks of animal fat). The seed mixes are popular because different blends are available to attract a wide variety of birds. Look for ones without a lot of filler (oats, cereals, mixed grains) that birds won’t eat.**

- **TIP:** Store bird seed and mixes in a cool and dry location in a plastic container. In areas where mice or squirrels might be attracted to the food, use a metal container.

03 **Select the appropriate feeder type and location for the variety of birds being fed. Some birds feed on the ground. Others feed in shrubs, and still others higher up in trees. Watch the birds you want to attract and determine where they prefer to eat. If you want to attract a variety of birds, locate feeders with different foods at several levels.**

- **Tray or platform feeders can be placed near the ground or higher up.**
  They’re very good for efficiently feeding many common species. Food placed on a platform doesn’t spoil as fast as food on the ground, and a platform with a roof can also help keep food dry. Make sure the selected platform feeder has holes for drainage.
  - Mounted several inches from the ground, platform feeders attract sparrows, juncos, towhees and others.
  - Mounted higher, platform feeders are a safe place for a lot of birds to feed. When filled with a fruit and nut blend they can attract woodpeckers, nuthatches and buntings. Place high platform feeders in open areas at least 10’ away from trees and shrubs. This gives the birds a chance to flee from predators.
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SELECTING FOOD AND FEEDERS (cont.)

- **Tube feeders** are very popular for easy bird feeding. Filled with black oil sunflower seeds or a no-mess blend, they’ll attract many species like titmice, sparrows and chickadees. Hang them at least 5’ from the ground.

- **House or hopper feeders** can hold several pounds of mixed seed and typically are mounted high, at least 5’ from the ground. However, don’t install them so high that they’re difficult to easily maintain, as they require frequent attention to ensure that the seed doesn’t go bad. House or hopper feeders with a blend of black oil sunflower seeds, safflower seeds and peanuts often draw finches, chickadees, cardinals and buntings.

- **Thistle feeders** are especially designed for thistle seeds or small bird blends. They can be hung from a tree or 5’ pole to draw small-beaked finches like goldfinch, purple finch, house finch and pine siskin.

- **Suet feeders** are preferred for feeding in colder months as suet can spoil in 70°F weather (unless summer suet mixes are used). Suet feeders can be placed in trees for birds that feed higher off the ground. Suet feeders can offer important winter food for titmice, chickadees, nuthatches and woodpeckers.

- **Hummingbird feeders** are popular feeding units that offer nectar to the bird through a simulated flower. Hummingbirds migrate to North America in warmer months. Before they migrate back to warmer regions in the fall, they must double their body mass.

  - **TIP:** Change hummingbird nectar once a week to keep the food fresh. Mount hummingbird feeders in the shade to help prevent the food from spoiling, and within 3’ of a window for best viewing. The birds will quickly get comfortable enough to feed and be watched up close. Keeping a feeder near your house also reduces injuries to birds caused by flying into the reflective window since they can’t build up enough speed to hurt themselves.

04 Protect feeders from squirrels that will eat the bird food.

- Mount bird feeders on poles at least 5’ off the ground, and more than 6’ from trees. Install baffles to keep squirrels from climbing the poles.

- Consider installing a squirrel feeder in a distant location to distract squirrels from the bird feeders.

05 Maintain the feeders. Regularly clean out old and spoiled seed. Sanitize the feeder once or twice a month with a 9:1 water-to-bleach solution and a thorough rinse. Let dry completely before refilling with fresh bird food.

Creating a bird-friendly environment in your yard is easy and enjoyable. When you do, your yard will be a more delightful place for you, and a more nurturing place for them. For other ideas to make your yard the best it can be see our other videos and printable instructions at Lowe’s.com/Videos.

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