



Bringing Wildlife Home

# Bird Feeders

Bird feeders offer a fun and entertaining way to observe birds up close and connect with nature. They also supplement the natural food sources available for birds in your yard or garden. Different species of birds prefer varying types of feeder foods.

Nourishment for wildlife should come primarily from natural food sources such as native plants. Feeders should only be supplied to complement birds' natural diets.



Bird feeders come in many shapes and sizes, and are often designed for specific bird species. This one is designed for hummingbirds.

## Bird Feeding Tips

- Provide multiple feeding stations in different areas of your yard to disperse bird activity. Feed in moderation, with only a few feeders per acre.
- Clean your feeders regularly with hot water, and let them air dry completely. Also keep areas under and around the feeders clean.
- Keep seed clean and dry, and watch for mold.
- Use a seed blend designed for your feeder and the types of birds you feed. Blends that contain filler seeds and grains (milo, sorghum, and red or golden millet) are not typically eaten by birds, and will often end up on the ground.
- If you find a dead bird near the feeder that has not been killed by a predator, disinfect the feeders with a solution of one part bleach to nine parts water.

**Bird feeders are great for providing food during times of scarcity, but food for wildlife should come primarily from natural sources such as native plants.**



- Place bird feeders in locations that do not provide hiding places for cats and other predators. Place feeders ten to twelve feet from low shrubs or brush piles.
- Many bird species will not eat from a feeder. Some species eat only fruits or insects. Provide for these species also by planting native plants and not using pesticides in your yard or garden.
- Black oil sunflower seed is a favorite of just about every seed-eating species.
- Suet feeders are a favorite of woodpeckers and other insect-eating birds. You can make your own suet or buy blocks of suet from a wild bird store. Typically suet blocks are placed in a wire cage that hangs on the side of a tree. Do not put suet out in warm weather or it will go rancid.

## Feeding Hummingbirds

Hummingbirds will not eat seeds or suet, but there are special feeders designed just for these tiny flying jewels.

- Hummingbirds feed on nectar from flowers. Providing native plants with red, tubular flowers is best.
- Feeders designed to hold sugar water “nectar” will be used by hummingbirds too. Most models are colored red to mimic flowers.
- Mix your own feeder nectar by dissolving one part white sugar in four parts hot water. Boil the water if you plan to store the nectar in the refrigerator. Never use honey, which ferments easily, or artificial sweeteners, which have no food value for birds. Red food coloring is not recommended as it may be harmful to birds. Let the solution cool to room temperature before putting it in your feeder. You can store homemade nectar for up to a week in the refrigerator.
- Empty, rinse, and refill your feeder every two to three days, especially in warm weather, to prevent spoiling (which can make hummingbirds sick).
- Discourage ants by using a feeder with an ant guard. You can also add an ant guard as an accessory to an existing feeder.



Visit [www.nwf.org/gardenforwildlife](http://www.nwf.org/gardenforwildlife) for more information.

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