

A guide to feeding birds

Feeding birds near your house gives you a chance to see wild species close up.

When to feed them and why:

If you can you should feed birds all year round. Feeding birds in the winter and spring can help them survive when normal foods may be in short supply or hard to find because of freezing conditions. Feeding birds in the spring and summer increases breeding success.

What to feed them:

Scraps of bread, cake, biscuits, cooked potatoes, chopped bacon rind, suet cheese, seeds and dried fruit can all be popular. If you have pocket money to spend, mealworms make a treat for many species.

Where:

Bird tables, window-sills, wall tops. Try and choose somewhere safe from cats but where you can see from inside. Keep a list of visitors to your garden.

Water:

Remember to put out a shallow bowl of freshwater for birds in freezing weather or when weather has been dry.

Don't feed birds:

Salted nuts
Desiccated coconut

Don't stop feeding them:

Birds will soon rely on your supplies. Once you have started, even if you're only putting out a little bit, you should be regular with your supply. This will bring you the greatest variety and number of birds. If you cannot feed all year, then stick to harsh winter months and early springs.

Easy Feeders

Try making bird cake for your own hanging bird feeder.

Mix together bird food in a bowl- use bird seeds, dried fruits, cooked rice, breadcrumbs, grated cheese and chopped nuts.

Stick it together using hard cooking fat – like lard or dripping. It is easier if the fat is melted and carefully poured over the ingredients. Ask an adult to help with this. You could use waste fat from the bottom of a grill pan.

When you have your sticky mix of bird cake you can choose how to present it to the birds.

- You could plaster it into the crevices on a fir cone
- You could put some round the inside of an empty coconut shell
- You could put it in a mould- like a yoghurt pot and either hang the pot upside down like a bell or turn out the bird cake and put it on the bird table.

You can hang a cone up easily by using string. With a coconut shell or a yoghurt pot you may need to make a hole and put the string in before you add the bird cake.

Hang your feeder at a site where you can watch birds feeding without disturbing them.

You could try smearing a bit of bird cake in the crevices of tree bark for birds that are too shy to use a bird table or feeder close to the house.