



Wild Bird Division

BIRD FEEDER Information, References & Tips



FIVE FEEDERS EVERY YARD SHOULD HAVE!!

Ground / Window / Platform Feeding Table

Ground and platform feeders should be placed in an open area - about 10 feet from the nearest shrub - where birds have a chance to flee in the event of a cat attack. Window feeders are a great way to view birds feeding, especially when space is limited. It may, however, take a couple days for birds to become comfortable coming up to the window, so be patient. Some ground and window feeder designs have covers to prevent snow from accumulating over the seed; others are surrounded by wire mesh to keep out squirrels and large birds such as crows and grackles. Ground and window feeders are especially favored by doves, juncos, sparrows, towhees, goldfinches, and cardinals.

Window Cafe Feeder
Aspects #051367



Sunflower-Seed Tube Feeders

If you are going to put out just one bird feeder, this is the best choice. Be sure to select a model with metal ports around the seed dispensers to protect the feeder from nibbling squirrels and house sparrows. Hang the feeder at least five feet off the ground and position it near a window, where you can enjoy the visitors. These feeders are especially attractive to small birds such as chickadees, titmice, nuthatches, goldfinches, siskins, purple and house finches.

The Big Tube
Quick Clean Seed Feeder -Antique Brass
Aspects #061505



Hopper Feeders

Hopper feeders provide dry storage for several pounds of mixed seed, which tumbles forward on demand. Position hopper feeders on a pole or hang with a rope so the feeder is about five feet off the ground. Hopper feeders attract all of the species tube feeders attract, as well as such larger birds as jay, grackles, red-winged blackbirds, and cardinals. You may want to consider a pole mounted or hanging baffle to deter squirrels from reaching the feeder.



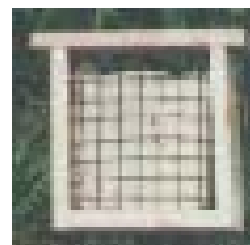
Double Hopper Feeder
Nature's Select
#NSBBW47

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Suet Feeder

Suet is readily eaten by titmice, chickadees, nuthatches, and woodpeckers. In addition to the regular suet-feeder visitors, wrens, creepers, and warblers occasionally pick at these mixes. You can hang suet chunks from a tree in an onion bag or half-inch hardware-cloth basket, or in a more durable cage feeder like the one shown here. You can also make your own suet pudding and feeder. Suet puddings are made by grinding and melting suet and adding seeds. (There is no evidence that suet puddings are more attractive to birds than chunks of suet.) Pack peanut butter-corn meal blends (when you mix the peanut butter with cornmeal it not only stretches the expensive peanut butter but also makes this sticky treat easier to swallow) and suet puddings into the crevices of large pinecones or into one-inch diameter holes drilled into logs. Hang the pinecones and the logs from poles near other feeders, from trees, or from a wire stretched between trees. Avoid feeding suet when temperatures climb into the 80 degree range; it turns rancid and drippy and may damage feathers.

Economy Suet Feeder
Nature's Select #NSBBW7



Upside Down
Thistle Feeder-Deluxe
Perky Pet #064540

Nyjer (Thistle) Feeders

Especially designed to dispense Nyjer seed, also known as thistle seed-different from the prickly garden weed - these feeders typically have tiny holes that make the seed available only to small-beaked finches such as goldfinches, redpolls, and pine siskins. Nyjer seed dispensing bags are not generally recommended, since squirrels can easily tear holes in them and waste this expensive seed. Hang your Nyjer seed feeder from a tree or place it on a five-foot pole near other feeders, taking care to protect it from squirrels with a special baffle. Finch seed mixtures are economical alternatives to feeding straight Nyjer seed and work equally well in in this type of feeder.

Source: *Audubon*, January-February 2000

HOW TO SELECT A FEEDER

When the ground is covered with snow and ice, it's hard to resist just tossing seed out the door. But it's healthier for the birds to get their "hands-outs" at a feeding station, off the ground.

Regardless of the season, food that sits on the ground for even a short time is exposed to potential contamination by dampness, mold, bacteria, animal droppings, lawn fertilizers and pesticides. It's best, for the birds' sake, to use a feeder.

You can start simply with a piece of scrap wood, elevated a few inches above the ground. Add a few holes for drainage and you've built a platform feeder. It won't be long before the birds find it.

Whether you buy one or build one, eventually you'll find yourself looking at commercially manufactured feeders. There are literally hundreds to choose from. How do you make the "right" choice? What makes a feeder "good?"

First consider placement

Where do you want to watch your bird? From a kitchen window...a sliding glass door opening on to a deck...a second story window?

Pick a location that has year-round easy access. When the weather's bad and birds are most vulnerable, you may be reluctant to fill a feeder that isn't in a convenient spot near a door or accessible window.

Also consider the "mess" factor. Pick a location where discarded seed shells and bird droppings won't be a clean-up problem.

Put your feeder where the squirrels can't reach. Those cute little rodents seem to like sunflower and peanuts as much or more than acorns. Squirrels become a problem when they take over a bird feeder, scaring the birds away, and tossing seed all over.

What's worse...frustrated squirrels have been known to entertain themselves by chewing right through plastic and wooden feeders.

If you've seen squirrels in your neighborhood, it's safe to assume they will visit your feeder. Think long and hard before you hang anything from a tree limb. Squirrels are incredibly agile, and any feeder hanging from a tree, with or without a squirrel guard or baffle, is likely to become a squirrel feeder.

In the long run, a squirrel-proof feeder or any feeder on a pole with a baffle is the least aggravating solution. The most effective squirrel-proof feeder is the pole mounted metal "house" type.

If you must hang a feeder, select tube protected with metal mesh.

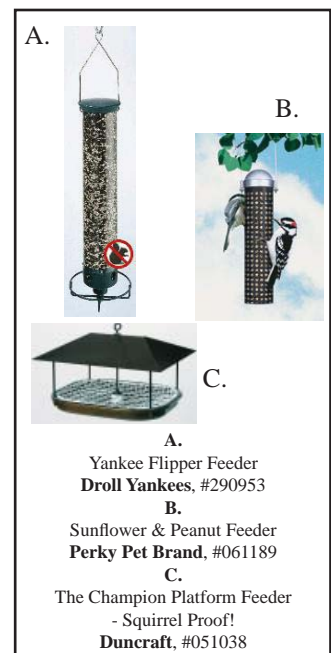
Most plastic "squirrel-proof" feeders, despite manufacturers' claims, may eventually succumb to rodent teeth.

If you have the "right" situation in your yard, a pole with a plastic feeder can be effective when mounted on a pole with a plastic or metal baffle, if the pole is at least 10 feet or more from a tree limb or trunk.

Once you've determined where you're going to put your feeder, you're ready to go shopping.

In addition to good looks, think about...

- ...how durable is it?
- ...will it keep the seeds dry?
- ...how easy is it to clean?
- ...how much seed will it hold?
- ...how many birds will it feed at one time?
- ...which species will use it?



HOW TO SELECT A FEEDER

Durability

There seems to be no end to the materials used in making bird feeders. You can buy “disposable” plastic bag feeders; feeders made of cloth, nylon, vinyl, and metal netting; clear, lexan, colored and PVC plastic tubes; ceramic and terra cotta; redwood, western cedar, birch, pine and plywood; sheet metal and aluminized steel; glass tubes and bottles.

How long a feeder lasts depends on how much effort you put into maintaining it, the effects of weather, and whether squirrels can get to it.

Dry Seeds

Water can get into any feeder regardless of how careful you are to protect it. Seeds will spoil when they get damp or wet. Cloth, vinyl, nylon and metal netting feeders are inexpensive, but they do not protect your seeds. You can improve them by adding a plastic dome.

Most wood, plastic, ceramic, and solid metal feeders will keep seeds dry, but water can get into the feeding portals. Look for feeders with drainage holes in the bottoms of both the feeder hopper and the seed tray.

Even bowl-type feeders and trays with drainage holes will clog with seed and bird droppings. Add rainwater and you will have an unhealthy broth. Look for shallow plate-like seed trays. The purpose of a tray is to catch dropped seeds while allowing spent seed shells to blow away.

Cleaning

Any zookeeper and cage bird owner will tell you, when you feed birds in a confined area, you have to expect bird droppings, feathers, an occasional insect or two leftover food mess.

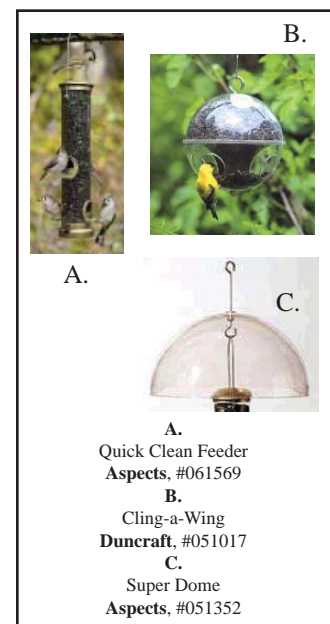
While you don't have to wash the feeder daily, you should clean it regularly.

Diseases like salmonella can grow in moldy, wet seed and bird droppings in your feeder tray and on the ground below. It's a good idea to move your feeders (just a foot or so) each season to give the ground underneath time to assimilate the seed debris and bird droppings.

Keeping your feeders clean should not become a major undertaking. The degree of maintenance required is directly related to the types of birds you want to attract.

A thistle feeder for goldfinches should be cleaned about once a month depending on how often it rains. Feeding hummingbirds requires cleaning at the very least, weekly, preferably more often—two or three times a week. Sunflower feeders made of plastic, ceramic and glass are easy to clean. Wash them in a bucket of hot, soapy water fortified with a capful or two of chlorine bleach, then give them a run through your dishwasher.

Use the same regimen with wood feeders, but substitute another disinfectant for the bleach so your wood won't fade.



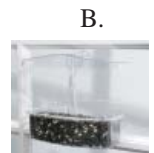
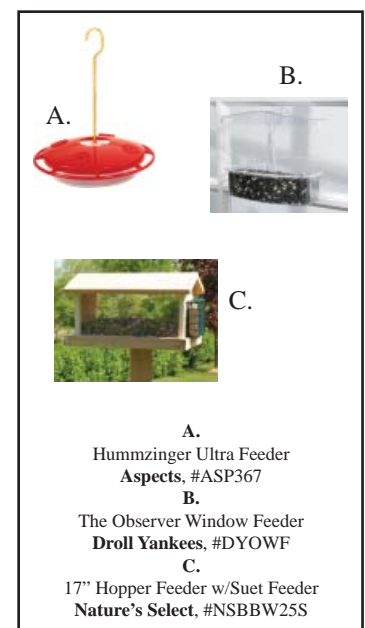
HOW TO SELECT A FEEDER

Food Capacity

- The ideal feeder capacity varies with your situation, and the types of birds you want to attract.
- If you feed hummingbirds, big feeders are not always better. One hummingbird will drink about 2 times its body weight (less than an ounce) a day. Early in the season, hummers are territorial and won't share a feeder. A sixteen ounce feeder can be wasteful, or indeed lethal, because artificial nectar (sugar water) can ferment in the hot summer sun.
- If you see only one hummer in your yard, a two ounce feeder is more than enough. On the other hand, if you live in the southwest, and have 34 hummers in your yard, a sixteen ounce feeder may not be big enough.
- If you opt for a large volume seed feeder, be sure to protect it from the weather and keep it clean. If after months of use, the birds suddenly abandon your feeder full of seed, it's time for a cleaning.

How Many Birds

- If too many birds at your feeder becomes a problem, you can control their numbers by putting out smaller amounts of seed, by using specialty seed, or by using restrictive feeders.
- If you fill your feeder only when it's empty, the birds will look for food elsewhere. They will return as long as you continue to fill it.
- You can virtually eliminate visits by birds you'd rather not see by offering seeds they won't eat. Be selective in your choice of seeds. If you use more than one type of seed, put them in separate feeders. This will reduce wasted seeds, as birds will toss unwanted seeds out of a feeder to get to their favorites.
- Birds that visit your feeder have very specific preferences. Most prefer sunflower. Some prefer millet. A few prefer peanuts. Some seem to prefer the other grains used in the mixes: corn, milo, red millet, oats, wheat and canary seed.
- If you want to feed only cardinals, doves and white-throated sparrows, switch from black oil sunflower to safflower. If you want only finches and an occasional dove and white-throated sparrow, try nyjer (thistle) seed. If you only want jays, titmice and white-throated sparrows try peanuts.
- Another way to discourage unwanted birds is to use specialty feeders that for the most part, allow only "select" birds to feed.
- The most non-selective feeders are the tray, platform or house feeders.
- You can encourage small birds with feeders that restrict access. Wood feeders with vertical bars and feeders covered with wire mesh frustrate the larger birds.
- Tube feeders without trays also restrict access to small birds. Remove the perches, and you've further selected only those birds capable of clinging—finches, chickadees, titmice and woodpeckers.
- Add vertical perches to tub thistle feeders, and you'll limit accessibility primarily to the goldfinches.
- If starlings are a problem at your suet feeder, you can discourage them by using a suet feeder with access only at the bottom. Starlings are reluctant to perch upside down. Chickadees and woodpeckers don't find that a problem.



A.
Hummingzinger Ultra Feeder
Aspects, #ASP367

B.
The Observer Window Feeder
Droll Yankees, #DYOWF

C.
17" Hopper Feeder w/Suet Feeder
Nature's Select, #NSBBW25S