

HORTICULTURE NEWSLETTER

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Feeding Birds

I have had a few questions on feeding birds during these winter months so here are a few thoughts on bird feeding throughout the winter period.

Winter weather can be difficult on birds. Usually it is lack of a food source that has birds in quite a predicament.

There are many types of bird food mixes that are available. Regardless of which type you purchase make sure it contains a high percentage of black oil sunflower seeds. The black oil sunflower seeds are one of most well liked by birds. White proso millet is another popular seed that sparrows and blackbirds like. It is best to avoid feeding foods like bread to birds, especially old or moldy bread. Birds need very energy packed foods to function, and breads don't meet this requirement nearly as well as seeds. Too much bread has been shown to actually be harmful to birds and in many cases may attract unwanted species (mice, squirrels, and rats) to the area.

If you use more than one feeder, you may actually be able to attract several different species of birds to your property. Here is a list to consider.

- Cardinal, Evening Grosbeak and most Finch species -- sunflower seeds, all types
- Rufous-Sided Towhee -- white proso millet
- Dark-Eyed Junco -- white and red proso millet, canary seed, fine cracked corn
- Many Sparrow species -- white and red proso millet
- Bluejay -- peanut kernels and sunflower seeds of all types.
- Chickadee and Tufted Titmouse -- peanut kernels, oil (black) and black-striped sunflower seeds.
- Red-Breasted Nuthatch -- oil (black) and black-striped sunflower seeds
- Brown Thrasher -- hulled and black-striped sunflower seeds.
- Red-Winged Blackbird -- white and red proso millet plus German (golden) millet
- Mourning Dove -- oil (black) sunflower seeds, white and red proso plus German (golden) millet.

Cold periods can also make water unavailable. A heated birdbath can be a tremendous draw for birds during times when all other water is frozen. Energy use is usually less than what most people expect IF the heater has a built-in thermostat.



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