

Feeding Birds



Image by: Julian Thomas

School grounds can attract a wide variety of birds. Natural features such as fruit or seed bearing plants and minibeast havens may attract birds. Feeding birds in a variety of ways with different foodstuffs will attract the greatest variety. Although winter feeding benefits birds most, food shortages can occur at any time of the year. By feeding all year round, we are giving birds a better chance of surviving periods of food shortage whenever they may occur.

Autumn and Winter

Put food and water out on a regular basis. Birds require high energy foods such as nuts, seeds and fats during the cold winter weather. Fats should not be polyunsaturated as these do not provide the high energy levels that birds require.

Spring and Summer

Only selected foods should be fed at this time. Good hygiene is vital, or feeding may do more harm than good. During the summer months birds require high protein foods, especially while they are moulting: black sunflower seeds; soaked sultanas; raisins; currants; grated mild cheese; good seed mixes without loose peanuts and chopped fresh fruit can all be used. Avoid using whole peanuts, fat and bread at this time as these foods can be harmful if brought to nestlings.

Hygiene – Vital Precautions

The danger of disease increases when large numbers of birds are attracted to an area. It is therefore essential that feeding areas are checked and cleaned regularly to ensure there is no build-up of old food particles or droppings. It also helps to move the feeding site several times a year.

Supplementary Food Sources

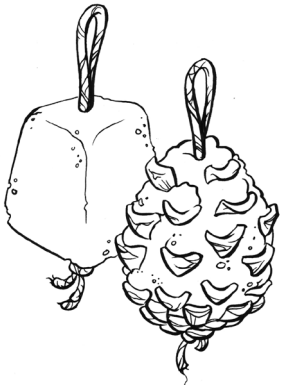
FOOD TYPE	Tits	Sparrow	Robin	Duncock	Wren	Blackbird	Collared Dove	Nuthatch	Siskin	Starling	Woodpecker	Pied Wagtail	Song Thrush	Other Thrushes	House Martin	Goldfinch	Other Finches
Millet				●			●								●		●
Flaked Maize						●											
Peanuts	●	●						●	●		●						●
Nyjer seed									●							●	
Crushed peanuts			●	●	●												
Mealworms	●		●									●					
Fat cakes	●				●						●			●			
Cheese			●	●		●							●				
Dried fruit			●			●							●				
Fresh fruit	●									●				●			

Easy to Make Bird Feeders

Fat Cakes

VERY SIMPLE AND VERY MESSY!

- Mix some wild birdseed, raisins, peanuts and grated cheese with melted lard or suet.
- Pack firmly into an old yoghurt pot, with a loop of string fixed to the base.
- When the fat has set, turn out the 'cake'.
- Hang in a tree or off a bird table.
- Alternatively, pack the mix into pinecones or pieces of wood with holes cut out.



Milk Carton Seed Feeder

A SIMPLE WAY TO RE-USE EMPTY MILK CARTONS

- Take a carton and cut away a window from the centre, leaving the top and bottom intact.
- Make a small hole in the front of the carton just below the window.
- Push a twig or straw through the hole to make a perch.
- Attach a loop of string or wire through the top of the carton.
- Fill the window with wild birdseed.
- Hang in a tree or off a bird table.



Fruit Garlands

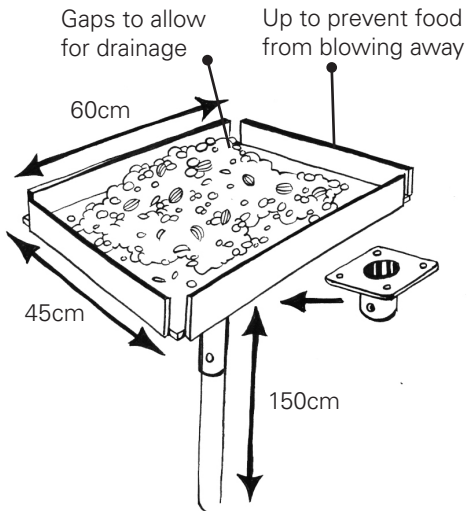
A GOOD WAY TO USE OVER-RIPE OR BRUISED FRUIT

- Chop a variety of fresh and dried fruit: apples, pears, bananas, grapes, raisins, apricots and dates are all suitable.
- Using a piece of cord (knotted at one end) and a darning needle, carefully thread the fruits onto the cord.
- Hang from a tree or bird table.



Bird Table

- You can construct a simple bird table from exterior grade plywood attached to a pole with metal brackets (see diagram).
- Make sure that the table is sited away from shrubs or trees if squirrels or cats are a problem.



Fact

Whole peanuts can choke birds, so ensure that peanuts are encased in a metal mesh (around 6mm is best). Never feed dry roasted or salted peanuts to birds. Buy your peanuts from reputable suppliers.

