

Introduction

Birds bring colour, movement and song to our gardens. Having a range of species regularly visiting your garden provides year round interest and brightens up the duller days.



Great spotted woodpecker

Did you know...?

- Many of the birds you see in your Norfolk garden during the autumn and winter months, especially finches and thrushes, will be from Scandinavia and other northern European countries.
- The familiar starling is a great mimic and regularly includes the calls of other birds in its own song as well as wolf whistles, mobile phone ringtones and even the sounds of domestic cats.
- Gardens are a key habitat in Norfolk for the rare and declining spotted flycatcher.



Starling feeding young

This leaflet will...

Give you top tips on how to manage your garden for the benefit of birds.

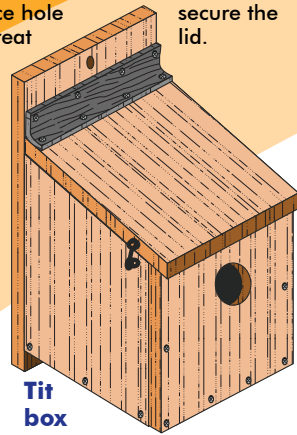
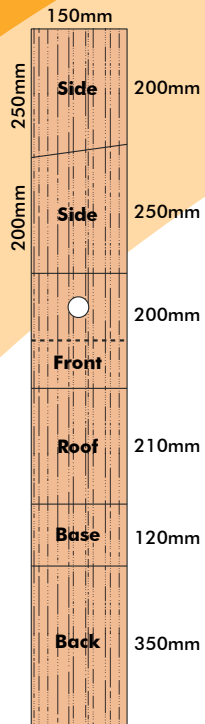
How to attract birds to your garden...

Birds use gardens for three main reasons: breeding, feeding and roosting. There are simple ways to ensure your garden provides suitable habitat to satisfy these requirements.

Make a robin or tit box.

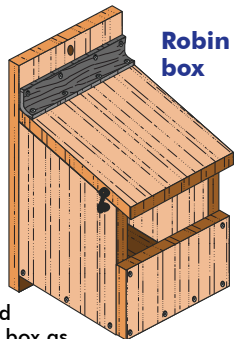
Mark out the measurements on to your plank of wood and cut to size. Entrance hole size - 28mm for great tits and 25mm blue tits.

A small catch will secure the lid.



Tit box

Cut a hinge made from rubber or old wellington boots. The hinge should be the width of the box.



Robin box

Use brass or galvanised screws to construct the box as these will not rust. When tightened the screws will help to pull the wooden sides together to form a strong seal.

Breeding

To maximise your chances of attracting birds to breed in your garden there are a number of things you can do:

- Grow a hedge of native plants such as hawthorn and blackthorn which will provide a dense, thorny habitat for birds to safely nest and shelter in.



- Plant native trees such as holly or rowan which provide food, shelter and nesting sites for a range of bird species. Holes in mature trees may provide nesting sites for tawny owls.
- Leave dead or decaying branches of existing mature trees in situ, (always considering safety issues as paramount), as these will provide invaluable nesting sites for blue and great tits, and woodpeckers.
- Place some nest boxes in sheltered, quiet spots. These should be at least 2m above the ground and away from direct sunlight and heavy rain.

Feeding

Birds will visit even the smallest garden if a regular supply of food is available. In addition to placing a range of proprietary bird feeders stocked with peanuts or specially selected seed mixes around your garden, try the following:

- Plant berry-bearing shrubs such as honeysuckle and guelder rose.
- In autumn and winter place a supply of apples on your lawn or by a hedge. This is an excellent way of attracting blackbirds and thrushes.
- Grow teasels and sunflowers. These will provide seed in late summer which will attract greenfinches and goldfinches.
- Delay clearing away seed-heads and dead stems until early spring. This will allow invertebrates to hide and will provide a useful feeding area for small birds such as wrens and robins during the winter months.
- Provide a supply of fresh, clean water so that birds can drink and bathe regularly. A garden pond with a shallow edge is ideal, but any type of birdbath will do.

Roosting

Birds need somewhere warm and safe to spend the hours of darkness, especially in winter. You can help by providing some prime roosting sites in your garden:

- Evergreen species such as yew, spruce or cypress provide dense weatherproof shelter all year round.



Roosting song thrush

- Ivy and other creepers growing over a wall or garden shed will provide very good late autumn and winter feeding for insects and birds as well as a first class roosting site.
- If you have nest boxes in your garden, remember to clean them out in September-November. Birds such as wrens may use empty boxes as a winter roost.

Frequently asked questions

Should I feed birds all year round?

Feeding in spring and early summer increases the success rate of nesting birds and winter feeding, especially during cold spells, can be a lifeline for many. It is very important that you clean feeders and bird tables regularly and thoroughly to prevent the harbouring and spread of any disease.

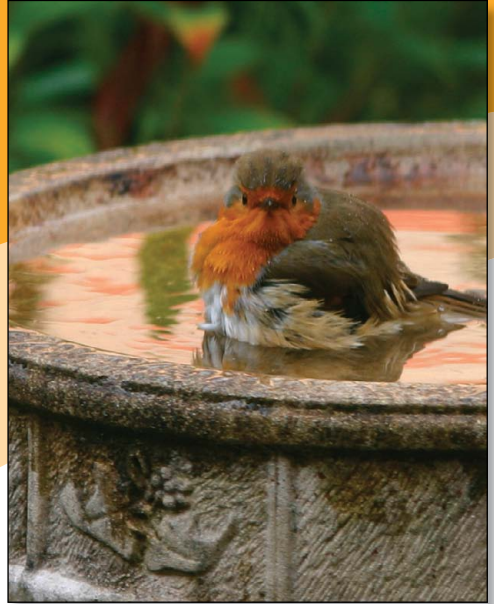
Where have all my garden birds gone?

Gardens do sometimes seem devoid of birds, especially in late summer. This is because there is an abundance of natural food available so birds are not so dependent on garden feeders. Birds may also be moulting and, being vulnerable to predation, will skulk in deep cover and avoid coming out into the open.

What do I do if I find a baby bird?

The best general advice is not to interfere. It is most likely that the parent birds are nearby and will return when you leave the area.

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Robin

To find out more about Norfolk's wildlife visit www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/naturalconnections

Alternatively call Norfolk's free wildlife information service on **01603 598333**

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