



Hanging Your Wild Bird Feeder

Ideally a sheltered southeastern exposure location is best for hanging a bird feeder since birds like to feed in the sun and out of the wind. Birds also prefer not to have any obstructions over their feeding area so they can see any predators.

If this is the first time you have a bird feeder in your yard, you may have to wait several weeks for birds to discover it. It may help if you put a shiny pie pan with some seed in it underneath the bird feeder to attract birds flying through your yard. Black oil sunflower seeds are a favorite among most birds. Water is also a natural attractant.

Hang your bird feeder away from trees, bushes, fences or buildings. Squirrels and other predators may climb or jump onto the bird feeder. If you must hang the bird feeder on a tree, keep it at least 6 feet from the trunk or tree limbs.

Wild Bird Feeder Care

Keeping your bird feeder clean and full of fresh seed is very important to the health of visiting birds. It is recommended that you clean your seed feeder every 2 weeks. Clean your bird feeder more often in warmer weather.

A mild soap and water solution can be used; however, if the bird feeder needs additional cleaning, you can use diluted vinegar. Be sure to rinse completely. It is not recommended that you put any bird feeder into your dishwasher for cleaning.

Protecting Wild Birds

Deterring Aggressive Birds

There are some large, aggressive and greedy birds you may not want at your bird feeder. Grackles, pigeons, starlings and house sparrows are just a few examples. There are several ways to deter these un-neighborly birds.

Use feeders designed for smaller birds, such as tube feeders or feeders with short perches. You can also purchase feeders that don't have perches. One benefit to not using a perch is that it helps to discourage many of the larger birds, such as Crows, Grackles, Starlings, Mourning Doves, Blue Jays, etc. from overwhelming your feeder.

If your unwelcome guest is actually a predatory bird, such as a hawk, that threatens harm to others, understand that this is a part of nature. However, you can take down your bird feeder for a few days, until the predatory bird realizes there will be no meal and moves on.

Squirrel-Proofing Your Feeder

Reaching Feeders

Squirrels are acrobatic, persistent and a menace to bird feeders everywhere!

Squirrels can jump several feet to reach a feeder, so the first step is making sure you place your feeders away from all “launching” points, including trees, houses, laundry lines, telephone and cable wires.

If you are hanging your feeder from a tree branch, try and locate it at least 12 feet from any tree trunk or limb and at least 4 feet up from the ground. This will prevent squirrels from either jumping from the tree or up from the ground onto the feeder.

If you are hanging the feeder off a line, make sure the length of line is at least 8 feet long with the feeder suspended at least 4 feet above the ground or snow. Use monofilament fishing wire or piano wire to hang the feeder.

If you choose to pole mount your feeder; make sure the pole is at least 5 ½ feet in length. This will allow you to place the pole approximately one foot into the ground and still keep the bottom of the feeder 4 feet off the ground. You may also want to add a squirrel baffle.

Squirrel Baffles

A squirrel baffle, a clear or colored dome, is a good start to deterring squirrels from reaching your feeders. The sloped, slick surface gives the squirrel nothing to cling to and he will often slide right off. Baffles can either be placed above your feeder or below your feeder on the mounting pole.

Other ideas

Another excellent idea for combating the little critters is to use a squirrel repellent which repulses squirrels but will not deter birds from the feeders. These are usually

available in granular, spray or concentrate formulas. Since birds do not have a sense of smell, the repellent will not dissuade them from using the feeder.

Finally, you can try “making friends” with the squirrels by offering them their own treats, such as peanuts, cracked corn or dried corncobs in an area that is out of the way of your bird feeder.

Protection from Animals

Cats

Cats that are left outside to roam kill millions of birds each year.

Birds that feed or nest on the ground are especially vulnerable. These needless deaths could be prevented if cats were kept indoors, this is also extremely beneficial to the cat as well, since studies show cats kept indoors live longer and healthier lives than those who are allowed outdoors. If keeping the cat indoors is not an option for you, we recommend you to use a cat repellent.

Rodents

Seeds that fall to the ground from a feeder will sometimes attract rats and other rodents. You will need to remove the feeder for several weeks so the rodents will leave the feeder area.

You will probably want to consider purchasing a large enough catch tray or building one to catch the falling seeds; just be sure to keep the tray clean so diseases from bird droppings don't infect the birds.

Bears

Believe it or not, bears can be a problem for bird feeders in quite a few of the states.

Sometimes simple solutions such as bringing feeders in at night, keeping your seed supply inside, and cleaning up any spilled bird seed are your best preventative weapons against these large predators. Motion Activated Repellents can also be used.

Deer, Moose, and Raccoons

Some solutions include making the area off-limits with fencing, animal repellents or trapping the animal.

Averting Window Collisions

A bird can collide into a window for a number of reasons:

- It may see the reflection of the sky and landscape and think it's heading for open space
- It may also see its own reflection, but mistake it for an enemy bird and attack the window to defend its territory

Here are a few tips you can try to deter birds from colliding with or attacking your windows:

1. Move your feeders further away from your windows
2. Break up the reflection with stickers or plastic wrap
3. Attach branches in front of your window
4. Cover windows with netting or screens

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What can I do about the cat that keeps visiting my feeder?

A: If it is your neighbor's precious Fluffy, you may want to suggest that they tie a bell around the cats around the cat's neck to alert the birds when the cat is near.

If the cat is a stray cat, you may want to try live trapping. Check with your local Humane Society or Wildlife Management first. In some states it is illegal to relocate animals that have been live trapped.

Q: What can I do to prevent undesirable birds from using my feeder?

A: To discourage House Finches, remove the perches from your feeders.

For Blue Jays and large aggressive birds, use bird feeders with a wire mesh surrounding the seed reservoir that prohibits larger birds from flying through the mesh openings and eating the seed.

Blackbirds and Sparrows love cracked corn, refrain from offering the seed.

Do not put mixed seed in your feeder to prevent Doves and Sparrows from feeding.

Q: Will your squirrel repellents harm the birds in my yard?

A: Raccoon & Squirrel Repellents will not harm wild birds. The main ingredient is usually capsaicin pepper which is annoying to squirrels and raccoons. Birds cannot smell it; therefore they will not be harmed.

Q: How can I stop birds from flying into my window?

A: The key is to make your windows less transparent. A few ideas would be to shut the blinds, pull the shade down, hanging a mobile or colored ribbon outside the window, place stickers on the window.

If the previous suggestions do not work, you may want to relocate the feeder to another place in your yard.

Q: What are the most popular bird seeds to use?

A: Black Oil Sunflower Seed is the most popular bird seed. It is much smaller than the traditional sunflower seed. It is best for those birds with smaller bills, such as the sparrow, junco and goldfinch. It is accepted by the greatest variety of birds.

Mixed Seed is also popular. It is best to buy the mixes that contain white proso millet, a tiny cream colored seed with a shiny shell. Mixes containing finely cracked corn and black oil sunflower.

Niger (Thistle Seed) is imported from Africa and Asia. Niger won't germinate; however, it has a tendency to become moldy due to lack of air circulation. If you notice mold on the seed, it must be removed from the feeder and the feeder must be cleaned thoroughly.

Q: How do I prevent seeds from sprouting under my feeder?

A: You will need to sterilize your seed to prevent it from germinating. This will not alter the attractiveness or the nutritional value of the seed in any way.

Here are two methods:

1. Conventional Oven: Place the seed on a baking sheet and cook for 30 minutes at 300°F
2. Microwave Oven: Place seed in a paper bag. Cook on high power for 5 minutes.

Q: Why does the seed in my feeder get moldy?

A: Mold is caused by a heavy rain, sleet or snow plugging the feeding ports and allowing water to dampen the seed. Always clean, dry and refill your feeders after heavy weather.

You may also want to try placing ¼" of cat litter in the bottom of the feeder to absorb excess moisture.

Q: Birds at my feeder look sick, what should I do?

A: The best thing to do is to stop feeding the birds temporarily. Remove the feeder and throw out all of the seed. Thoroughly wash your feeder and remove all debris from under your feeder. Do not touch the sick birds. Refill your entire feeder and resume feeding.

Q: How do I clean my bird feeder?

A: Before filling your feeder with fresh seed, it is recommended that the following precautions are taken:

1. Remove all old seed.
2. Soak feeder in a light water/bleach solution - 9 parts water to 1 part bleach.
3. Scrub feeder and allow to air dry.
4. Rake and remove accumulated hulls and droppings from underneath the feeder.
5. Spread mulch (bark or wood) under the feeder, replace mulch when soiled.
6. Thoroughly wash hands after handling and cleaning feeders.