

HUNGRY BIRDS



Fresh coconut is very useful for feeding birds. The shell can be cut in two and hung on its side, to prevent the rain getting in, and the birds can then pick away at the white flesh. The empty shells can be used as hanging containers, holding either food or water. Similarly discarded grapefruit shells can be used as containers.



A very simple bird table would be a square of wood nailed onto the top of a pole, with the pole then dug into the ground. More advanced bird tables would have little roofs in order to prevent larger birds eating all the food. If a bird table is too adventurous a large piece of wood or old door will do nicely. Some type of lip around the edges would be preferable. This will prevent food from falling off. When placing the wood on the ground try to raise it about 2 inches so that the grass underneath can breathe.



During the winter months hanging baskets for flowers become redundant. This is an ideal place to leave out chunks of stale bread and old fruit.



Winter is a hungry time for many birds. The hardened ground and snow falls make it hard for birds to find food. One way of helping birds to survive is to put out food. Another way is to plant your garden with trees, shrubs and flowers that produce berries and seeds which will supply a winter feed for birds.

When feeding birds, a table is great. It keeps the food away from the ground so that vermin cannot get at it. It also provides security for the birds as they have a better view of their surroundings and can keep out of reach from cats. This is important to keep in mind when you are positioning a table in the garden. Do not place it too near trees or shrubs where cats can hide. However, place it close enough to a window so you can see the birds and what they get up to.

Most household scraps can be thrown out to birds. These include fat, bacon rind, cheese, stale cake, biscuits, cooked potatoes, breakfast cereal, oats, cooked rice, fresh coconut, raisins, sultanas and other fruit. It is important to avoid salty and mouldy foods and particularly desiccated coconut, and dried food. When water is consumed it swells up inside the bird's stomach.

Once a bird table has been set up in the garden it is important to keep it stocked on a regular basis. Birds will begin to rely on the food and may travel great distances in order to obtain it. No food means a wasted journey, and that means wasted time and energy which cannot be spared in bad weather. If food disappeared from the table early on in the day restock the table for the evening. Water is also an important feature. During harsh winters the ground can freeze up. Water should be provided for drinking and also for bathing. Clean well-oiled feathers will help to keep a bird warm. Ideal containers would be a saucer or flowerpot holder or dustbin lid. Something shallow is important so that they can walk around in it. But keep it topped up with fresh water.

Birds should only be fed in wintertime and not from May to September. It is not wise to feed birds then, as this is the time when the young are born and unnatural foods could kill them.

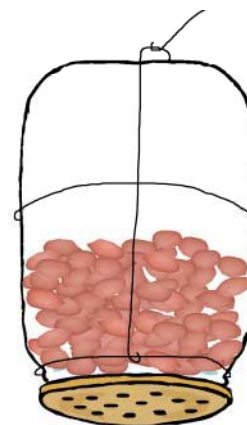
If you do decide to feed the birds in your garden this winter, it will make the birds happy and increase their chances of survival.



Thread peanuts on a string or hang a bag of peanuts on a tree or washing line, using an old red nylon mesh onion bag.



Provide water so the birds can drink and bathe.



Jars can also serve a purpose. (Plastic peanut jars would be the safest). Drill holes in the top of a jar, large enough so that a bird can pick out the nuts (make sure the holes are smooth) and the jar can then be hung on a branch. A small number of birds enjoy feeding in this way and it will discourage larger birds from eating the food.