

FEEDING BIRDS

What food can you leave out for birds and how can you keep your feeding station hygienic and pest-free?

Here you'll find the answers to all your bird feeding questions.

Feeding birds in the garden is a popular activity - over half of adults in the UK feed birds in their garden. That's a lot of extra help for the birds! Providing birds with supplementary food will bring them closer for you to marvel at their fascinating behaviour and wonderful colours. It will also reward them for sharing their lives with you. Feeding birds is also an ideal way to enthuse children about wildlife.

Supplementary feeding can't provide all the natural proteins and vitamins that adult and young birds need, so it's important to create and manage your garden to provide a source of natural foods as well, through well-managed lawns, shrub and flowerbeds. If you provide both natural and supplementary food, your garden will be visited year-round by a host of different birds.

It is important to feed your garden birds responsibly and safely. By following a few simple guidelines, you can play a valuable role in helping your local birds overcome periods of natural food shortage, survive periods of severe winter weather and come into good breeding condition in the spring.

Bird Tables

A bird table will be at its most popular and valuable when natural food is in short supply; usually from October to April. At the end of the winter there are natural signs that tell you when you can stop feeding: the appearance of large numbers of insects and the buds on the trees starting to open are good guides.

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The bird table can be left in position all year round, but bringing it in out of the weather during the summer will prolong its life.

If you wish to continue feeding birds during the spring and summer, current thinking is that this will cause no harm as long as hard foods are avoided.

If you enjoy watching birds, consider providing more varied feeding stations to attract more species. Unfortunately, tidier gardens and the changes in farming methods have reduced the natural food supply of species such as finches, buntings and sparrows.

Providing sunflower seeds will help them. They are eagerly taken and unlikely to be harmful if given to young in the nest.