



# Feed the birds

## Advice on feeders and maintenance



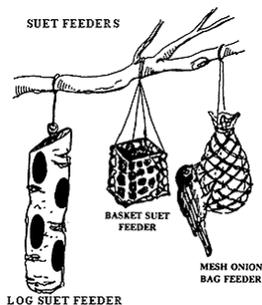
### TYPES of FEEDERS

A good bird feeder should be dry, clean, and sturdy. There are a number of feeders that you can consider:

**Tray feeders** attract many kinds of bird. The best have good drainage, a baffle to block squirrels, and a roof to keep food dry. A ground or platform feeder with a low screen bottom keeps food and droppings separate. Place them in open areas away from potential predators like cats.

A **hopper feeder** has walls, a roof, and platform. They store several pounds of seeds which they release when a bird hops on the feeder. These feeders need to be watched for mold or dampness. Set the feeder about five feet above the ground.

**Tube feeders**, hung at least five feet from the ground, have multiple ports and perches. It's a good idea to get a squirrel-resistant feeder such as one with metal ports.



Some feeders are specialized for specific foods. Suet feeders, which appeal to chickadees, woodpeckers, and jays, are small cages that can be filled with chunks of suet or commercial suet blocks. You can create a peanut butter feeder by smearing short (12" ) birch logs with peanut butter and seeds. Or drill shallow 1" holes in the log and fill with peanut butter. Overwintering residents will appreciate the extra calories. A thistle (nyjer) feeder is designed with small holes to dispense nyjer seeds for birds like redpolls.

### MAINTENANCE NOTES

**Location, location, location!** Feeders should be close to natural cover like thick foliage to shelter against the elements but not so close that squirrels find it readily accessible. By locating feeders at different levels, you can attract a greater variety of species. Keep your feeders away from your windows or make use of techniques like silhouettes, wind chimes, or textured glass to increase the visibility of window panes to birds.

**Keep them clean!** Rinse your feeder in a 10% bleach solution once or twice a month to kill microorganisms found in bird feces and be sure to keep seeds fresh. Check for mold and do not use seeds that have been stored for extended periods of time. Old seeds and hulls should be swept up to avoid the build up of pathogen communities and water should be changed regularly.

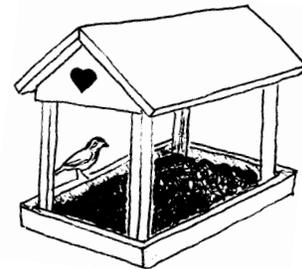
## More Maintenance Notes and a Feeder Menu

### Unwanted Visitors

Keep your feeders from cats, which kill many birds each year. Squirrels can be deterred with a squirrel baffle such as an inverted sheet metal cone attached to the pole on which your feeder is mounted. If your feeder is suspended from a wire, threading obstacles like soda bottles or CDs can discourage squirrels. Keeping the area around your feeder clean can help prevent rodents from visiting. If an unwanted hawk, owl, or other predator is coming to visit, consider taking your feeder down for a few days until they become hungry and move on.

### TYPES of FOOD

**Black-oil sunflower seeds** are among the best offerings. These are common seeds, eaten by a wide range of birds because they are thin-shelled and packed with energy.



**Sunflower seed chip** is a favorite of redpolls. It is produced from shelled black-oil sunflower seeds that are milled into a fine or medium chip.

**Peanuts**, whole or crushed, appeal to jays and chickadees. **Peanut butter** can also be used in feeders. **Suet**, made from beef fat, attracts insect-eating birds. It should be used with caution in hot weather, lest it become rancid. These are all high energy foods that are very attractive to wintering birds.

**Nyjer** or thistle seed also attracts redpolls. You may need a special feeder to hold these tiny seeds.

**Fruit** attracts birds who do not eat seeds. Soak raisins and currants in water, serve dried fruit mix, or skewer halved oranges to attract fruit specialists like robins and waxwings.

**Corn** is a great choice for ducks. Cracked corn appeals to sparrows and grouse. Monitor fine or medium cracked corn for dampness.

**Millet** is popular with small, ground foragers and can be sprinkled on the ground to attract juncos and sparrows. Do not offer millet during the winter, it is a low-energy food that is scorned by winter residents.

“**Grit**” is a food supplement made of sand, ground pebbles, and shells that helps a bird digest food. **Eggshells** can provide valuable calcium. They should be baked at 350° for 10-15 minutes to kill potential pathogens and dry the egg membrane.

