

EDUCATION

(2009)

 EDU 015

During the spring and summer months there is plenty of natural food available for parent birds to feed their hungry young, but during the colder months of the year a simply way to watch birds is to provide food and water for them. This will not only attract them to wherever you place the food, but will also help them to stay alive when food is scarce.

There are several ways of feeding birds. You can simply scatter kitchen scraps such as bacon rind and bread crumbs, or hang up half a coconut – tits love pecking at these – or a small bag of mixed seeds or nuts. Perhaps the most rewarding way of feeding birds, however, is by making a bird table.

A BIRD TABLE

WHAT YOU NEED

- A wooden post about 1 1/2 m long
- 1 piece of wood 40cms x 40cms x 1cm thick
- 4 pieces of wood 39cm long about 5mm square
- A hammer
- Nails

First of all, one end of the post must be made into a point so it can later be pushed into the ground. Nail the four strips of wood on to the outer edge of the base to stop the food blowing away when it is windy. There should be a slight gap at each corner for water to drain away if it rains. Lastly, nail the base on to the top of the post. Some kinds of wood tend to split if you hammer nails straight into them, but if you drill small holes through the wood first this will prevent splitting.

You can also grow berry-bearing trees and shrubs such as cotoneaster, pyracantha and mountain ash in your garden to attract fruit-eating birds. If you grow sunflowers and leave the heads on, finches will peck out the seeds. Goldfinches will pull the seeds out of thistle heads.

Some birds such as wagtails and wrens prefer to feed on the ground but most species can be tempted onto a bird table. Place your table close to trees or bushes so that birds can approach it in stages and feel safe when feeding. Make sure it is out of reach of cats. You can make sure that large birds do not take more than their share of food from the smaller birds by making hanging containers.

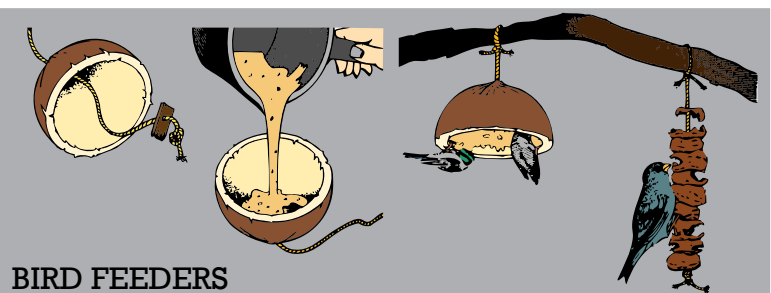
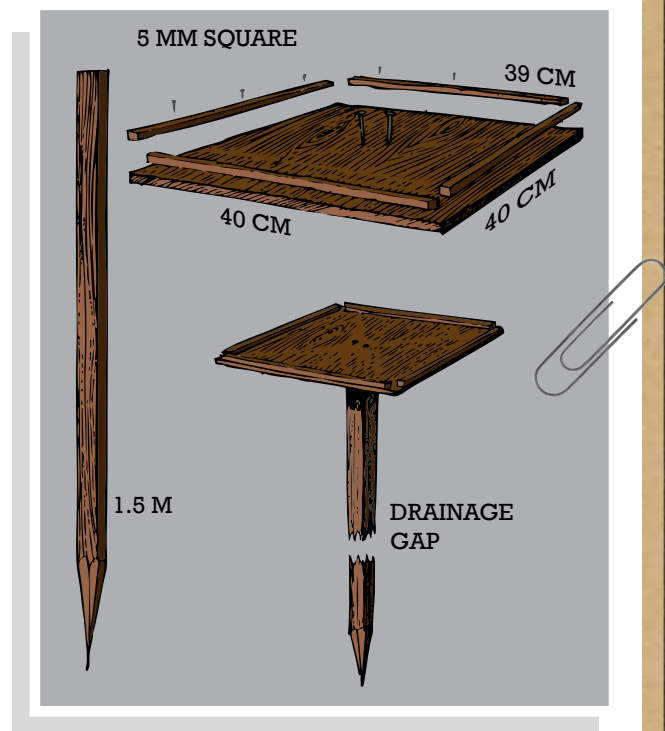
Birds need to feed first thing in the morning as they use up a lot of energy at night keeping warm.

It is very important to feed them regularly throughout the Winter as, once you have started, they come to rely on you.

HANGING FEEDERS

Make a 'tit-bell' from half a coconut shell and pour in a mixture of melted dripping and other foods. Hang it from a branch and the tits will have a good time pecking out the food.

String up some peanuts in their shells and watch the tits and finches break them open. A thin wire may be easier to use than thread.



BIRD FEEDERS