

Winter Preparations for Backyard Birds



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Basic Winter Survival Needs For Birds



FOOD – WATER - SHELTER



Food – Bird Feeders



Providing food for the birds is the best way to attract them to your backyard, but birds have different feeding requirements in the winter than they do in the summer.

To prepare your feeders for winter birds...

- Clean and repair all bird feeders, checking for broken perches, clogged feeding ports and other problems.
- Clean the ground beneath feeders and consider adding protective coverings or platforms to catch spilled seed that won't be able to be cleaned up until spring.
- Move feeders closer to a patio or door so they will be easier to refill even in the harshest weather.
- Add covers to feeders to keep seed dry and prevent snow and ice from accumulating on the feeders.
- Change the foods offered to preferred winter bird foods that offer high energy nutrition for backyard birds.



Food – Bird Seed

Black Oil Sunflower Seeds

- Black oil sunflower seeds are by far the best food to offer birds in any season.
- These seeds have slightly thinner shells and a higher oil content than other types of sunflower seeds, making them a more efficient and nutritious food.
- They will attract a wide range of hungry birds, and can be offered in platform, tube or hopper feeders.



Suet

- For high calories, suet is one of the best foods to offer birds.
- It is a superb winter food. It is also available in many blends with different ingredients to tempt different species of birds



Food – Bird Seed

Peanuts

- Peanuts are a high calorie, fat-rich nut that appeals to many backyard birds, including jays, nuthatches, cardinals and chickadees.
- Because the nuts don't freeze, they are perfect for winter feeding, whether you offer whole or shelled peanuts.
- Peanuts are also popular to mix in suet for winter feed.



Nyjer

- Nyjer or thistle seed is a favorite food of winter finches.
- This is another oily seed that offers a lot of calories, helping birds store the fat they need to keep warm through the season.
- Though it can be expensive, nyjer is readily available and is typically treated so as not to germinate if spilled on the ground.

TIP: Offer nyjer in a mesh or sock feeder that can accommodate many birds, but keep it covered with a wide upper baffle to keep the seed dry and minimize mildew.

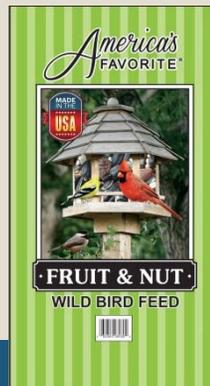


Food – Bird Seed

Fruit

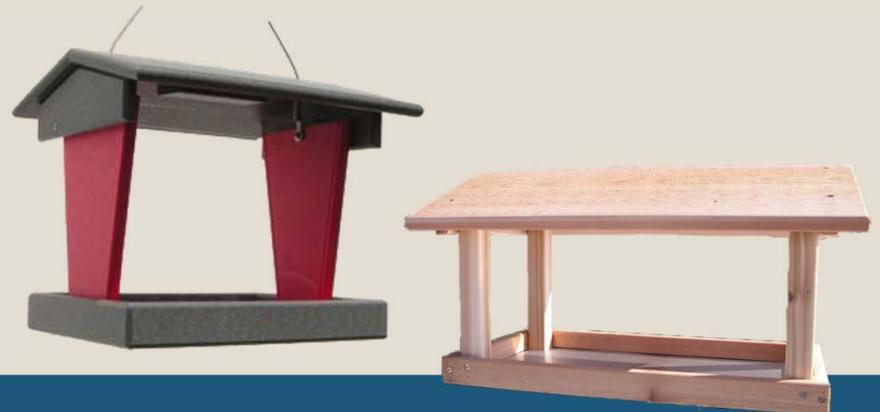
- While a lot of songbirds that prefer fruit will migrate in the winter, many other birds that stay in snowy areas year round will enjoy the treat.
- Offer chopped apples, orange wedges, banana slices, halved grapes and melon rinds on platform feeders, spikes or nailed to trees.
- Chopped or dried fruit can also be added to suet mixtures.

TIP: Plant fruit trees and leave the fruit on the bare branches to give birds a natural food source they can rely on in the winter.



Millet

- White millet is a favorite food of many small ground-feeding birds, particularly dark-eyed juncos.
- This starchy grain is inexpensive and can be easily offered in hopper, tube or platform feeders, and sprinkling it on the ground will attract even more small birds.



Food – Bird Seed

Seed Mixes

- For convenient and economical winter feeding, nothing beats a good quality birdseed mix.
- Choose a mix that features large proportions of sunflower seeds and millet, but avoid mixes with large proportions of unappetizing fillers such as wheat, milo and corn.

TIP: Plant fruit trees and leave the fruit on the bare branches to give birds a natural food source they can rely on in the winter.



Water – Bird Baths



Attracting birds with water is easy and rewarding, but if that water freezes in the winter it will be of no use to backyard birds

To prepare your bird baths for winter...

- Clean and sterilize all baths, including rims and pedestals, and check each one for leaks or damage.
- Add a heater to sturdy bird baths or swap out summer baths for winter heated models.
- Position the bird bath in a sheltered, safe area where it will still be visible to backyard birds.
- Add small stones to keep the water shallow and prevent birds from bathing when the water is too cold.
- Protect electrical cords and outlets with proper wraps or covers so they are secure for a long, wet winter.



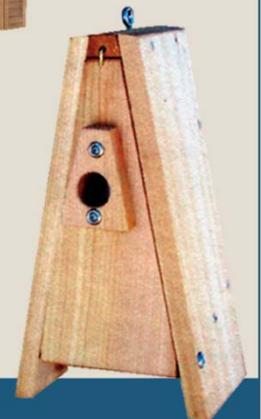
Shelter – Bird Houses



Birds need a warm, snug shelter to survive winter storms and low temperatures, and it is easy to provide that shelter in the backyard either with bird houses or specialized winter options.

To prepare your bird houses for winter...

- Clean each bird house after the nesting season ends and repair any damage.
- If the bird house is a convertible design, change the front panel to put the entrance near the bottom so it will work as a roost box.
- Put up bird roost boxes or snug baskets small birds can use to keep sheltered at night.
- Position winter bird houses and roost boxes safely to keep chilly birds safe from predators, drafts and other dangers.



Shelter – Landscaping



Birds may not need nesting materials in the winter, but carefully prepared bird-friendly landscaping can help with the other steps backyard birders take to prepare their yards for winter birds.

To make your landscaping bird friendly...

- Add dead limbs or tree pruning's to a brush pile for winter shelter.
- Leave excess fruits and berries on trees and shrubs for foraging birds to find in the winter.
- Avoid raking leaves and instead leave leaf litter in place to attract birds with its shelter and food.

