

Bird Furniture

Making and installing bird tables and feeders



Birds are amongst the most common and popular wild creatures to visit the wildlife garden - especially if we encourage them with regular food. Surveys have found that bird tables and feeders in gardens help some 30 million wild birds survive and raise their nestlings each year.

Setting up a bird table is a good way to find out just who is around in your garden and enjoy observing some wildlife close at hand.

Bird tables are easy to make. Any surface may be used; it need not necessarily be flat, nor even made of wood, as long as it is of a sufficient size.

A table can be as luxurious, functional, or cheap and cheerful as you like - and the birds won't be too fussy either, as long as there is a consistent supply of food.

This factsheet gives ideas and tips on how to make bird tables and feeders using all sorts of materials, from specially bought wood to odds and ends.

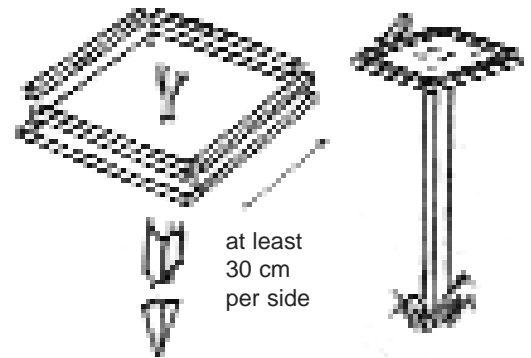
Making a wooden bird table

You will need:

- A flat piece of wood, with a surface area of at least 30 cm x 30 cm.
- A post at least 1.5 m high, 5 cm x 5 cm thick.
- Lengths of wood to make battens around the edge of the table 2 cm x 1 cm thick.
- Nails 2.5 cm (1") and 15 cm (6") long.
- Hooks, from which to hang feeders (optional).
- The following tools: saw, hammer, pencil, ruler, mallet, drill with 1-3 mm bit.

Instructions

1. Measure each side of the flat piece of wood; this will become the table top. To make the battens, cut four lengths from the 2 x 1 cm wood to these measurements so there is one for each side, except subtract 2 cm from at least two of the lengths.
2. Nail the battens on to the table top so that a 2 cm high balustrade runs around the perimeter. Arrange the shorter battens together to make 2 cm gaps in the corners.
3. Draw lines diagonally across the table top from opposite corners - where the lines cross marks the centre of the table. Nail the table top onto the post down through this point using 15 cm (6") nails.



4. To fix the table into the ground, either cut the post end into a point, or make some supporting feet. The table should tilt slightly so water will drain out of the gap in the battens. If not, drill some 1-3 mm holes in the table top.

5. Finally attach some accessories - a handy landing twig, and hooks from which to hang extra feeders and fat balls.

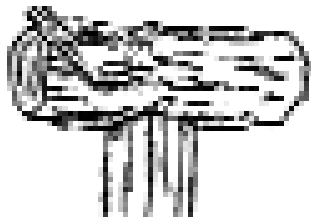
Not doing it yourself: buying a ready-made bird table

A bird table should :

- Have a surface area of 30 cm x 30 cm minimum.
- Have a standing height of at least 1.5 m
- Have battens around the edges, so that food is not blown away.
- Have gaps in the battens, for sweepings.
- Be able to stand at a very slight tilt, or if not, have drainage holes in the base so that the rain may drain away.

Some good de luxe extra features:

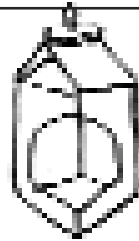
- A roof, for added protection against rain and predators (but not with a nestbox in it!)
- A water bowl
- Attachments and hooks from which to hang fatballs and feeders.



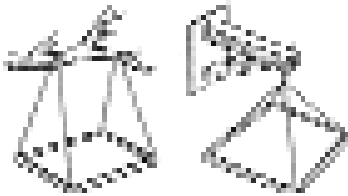
Any old wood? a rustic bird table made from two old logs



Plastic bottles cut to make seed dispensers



Pick and mix - empty milk cartons cut to make dispensers and filled with different seeds, hung on a washing line



Hanging table suspended from tree branch or hanging basket bracket in winter



Good window seat view



Fruit spike made from scrap wire for fruit



A birdbath made from an upturned dustbin lid. A nightlight underneath will prevent freezing over at night (metal lids only!)

Table Manners: Siting your bird furniture

Position your bird tables and feeders:

- Where you can see and enjoy watching your wildlife visitors
- With some perching opportunities nearby
- As far as possible from the nearest nest or nestbox
- 2 metres from cover (so as to be out of cat pouncing range)

Maintaining your bird table and feeders:

- Check bird tables and feeders daily and give them a quick clean, removing any mess and old rotten food
- Provide some clean water for drinking and bathing nearby
- Change positions of table and feeders once a year to prevent spreading of diseases
- In spring, put out nesting materials such as feathers, wool, string, pet hair, moss (but not cotton wool)
- Make sure your bird visitors have plenty of wild food to eat in the garden as well

(For more information, see our 'Feeding Birds' factsheet)



If you build it they will come ... some regular visitors to the bird table:

Blue tits and Great tits, Robins, Chaffinches, Greenfinches, Pigeons, Blackcaps, House sparrows, Dunnocks (when used to it)

In winter:

Coal tits, Woodpeckers, Nuthatches

And on the ground floor:

Dunnocks, Wrens, Robins, Blackbirds, Intrepid wood mice and bank voles

Cat and squirrel - proofing Some preventative measures are suggested below:

vs cats

- Place tables and feeders 2 m from cover.
- Raise table to 1.75 - 2 m high
- Place tables and feeders in prickly bushes or suspend from branches
- Add a protective roof to your bird table

vs grey squirrels

- Fix an inverted cone (such as an old waste bin) or metal sheath over the post of the bird table about half way up
- Move your bird table away from overhanging cover
- Try deterrents such as 'Capsicum' pepper powder
- Suspend from small branches that cannot support a squirrel's weight