

Audubon Guide to Bird Feeders



Bird feeders are an excellent way to attract a bevy of birds to your property. There are a variety of feeders to accommodate specific types of birds and their diets. Birds usually feed at different heights, and having multiple feeders will not only attract a variety of species, it will also help avoid feeder congestion. When placing feeders close to windows so that you can enjoy the action, be aware that large picture windows may result in collisions. Here are Audubon's picks for six feeders, and a little advice on where to hang them.

About Audubon

The National Audubon Society saves birds and their habitats throughout the Americas using science, advocacy, education, and on-the-ground conservation. Audubon's state programs, nature centers, chapters, and partners have an unparalleled wingspan that reaches millions of people each year to inform, inspire, and unite diverse communities in conservation action. Since 1905, Audubon's vision has been a world in which people and wildlife thrive.

Visit Audubon online for more information and tips on creating a bird-friendly yard.

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Six bird feeders every home should have



GROUND FEEDERS

These simple screen-bottomed trays typically sit several inches off the ground or your deck and help to keep grain or seeds and bird droppings from coming in contact with each other. Some feeders have covers to keep out snow; others have wire mesh to keep out squirrels and large birds like crows. Ground feeding tables should be placed in open areas at least 10 feet from the nearest tree or shrub to give birds a chance to flee predators. Doves, juncos, sparrows, towhees, goldfinches, and cardinals are all likely to visit ground feeders. Avoid using ground feeders if cats are apt to pounce from nearby shrubs.



SUNFLOWER SEED TUBE FEEDERS

If you are going to put out just one feeder, this is your best choice. Be sure to select a model with metal ports around the seed dispensers to protect the feeder from House Sparrows and nibbling squirrels. Hang the feeder at least five feet off the ground and try to position it near a window where you can enjoy the visitors, which are likely to include chickadees, titmice, nuthatches, goldfinches, siskins, and Purple and House Finches. Reduce the risk of bird collisions by placing the feeder less than three feet from a window or more than 30 feet away.



SUET FEEDERS

Suet is popular with titmice, chickadees, nuthatches, and woodpeckers. Wrens, creepers, and warblers will also occasionally peck at suet. While you can hang suet chunks in a mesh onion bag, you can also purchase cage feeders. Some people like to make their own suet "puddings" by grinding the suet and adding seeds, and create homemade suet feeders by packing the mixture into the crevices of large pine cones. Suet feeders can be hung from trees, from poles near other feeders, or from a wire stretched between trees. Also available for warm weather suet feeding are "no melt" suet cakes.



HOPPER FEEDERS

Hopper feeders will keep several pounds of mixed seed dry and ready for hungry birds. Birds hopping on the feeder trigger the release of the seeds. Hopper feeders should be positioned on a pole about five feet off the ground, or hung from a tree branch. They will draw all the species that tube feeders attract, along with larger birds like jays, grackles, Red-winged Blackbirds, and cardinals.



NYJER® (THISTLE) FEEDERS

Especially designed to dispense Nyjer® seed, also known as thistle seed, these feeders have tiny holes that make the seed available only to small-beaked finches such as goldfinches, redpolls, and Pine Siskins. Thistle-seed-dispensing bags are not recommended, since squirrels can easily tear holes in them and waste this expensive seed. Hang your thistle feeder from a tree or place it on a five-foot pole near other feeders, taking care to protect it from squirrels with a special baffle.



NECTAR AND FRUIT FEEDERS

Nectar feeders will help attract hummingbirds, orioles, and other nectar-eating birds to your garden until your garden flowers are flourishing. To prepare a sugar water solution, mix one part white sugar with four parts water. Bring the mixture to a boil to sterilize it and dissolve all of the sugar. Clean feeders every two or three days under hot running tap water, scrubbing them with a bottlebrush to eliminate molds or fungus. Tie a cluster of plastic red flowers over the feeder entrance to help attract hummingbirds to new feeders. Lure orioles and tanagers by skewering halved oranges onto a spike.