



Winter feed is for the birds

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Although our annual flowers have finished blooming, the old flower heads may still have seeds left in them as a food source for many of our winter birds. However, wind and autumn rains may deplete this supply. If we want to continue to see beautiful over-wintering birds in our landscapes, we will have to supplement their winter diets by hanging bird feeders. Feeding birds in winter is a big responsibility because once you start feeding them, you should continue until warm weather returns and birds can find food themselves in your neighborhood.

The following tips will be a guide for bird feeders and watchers this winter:

- Place your bird feeder or feeders near, but not in trees or shrubs. A cat may use this area to hide in while waiting for a tasty bird on which to snack or dine.

- Place in a sheltered area or south side of the home out of harsh winter winds. Strong winds will cause the feeder to move back and forth scattering and wasting the food.

- Place the bird feeder where it is easiest for you to see the birds. Keep in mind that if it's too close to your house, birds may never come to it.

- Choose a bird feeder designed specifically for the food



Submitted photo/
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A woodpecker and purple finch share a bird feeder.

you plan to put in it.

- Fill the feeder with only enough feed for several days' use. Seeds tend to spoil in certain conditions and may be harmful to the birds.

- Use a feeder that is constructed to protect the feed in any weather.

- Rake the ground under the feeder every week or two to prevent accumulation of spilled seed that may become moldy.

- Position the feeder to prevent food raids from unwanted animals like mice and rats.

- Place the feeder away from low-hanging branches that squirrels may use in order to have access to the bird feed. Keep in mind, there are commercial squir-

rel-proof hoods for bird feeders.

- Look around your landscape — you may have many natural platforms for feeders, for example, a tree stump, top of a fence post or slat-top rocks.

The following chart is a guide for the kinds of feed eaten by specific birds:

Cracked corn — Cowbirds, red-winged blackbirds, starlings, tree sparrows, song sparrows, purple finch, and pine siskins.

Sunflower seed — Cardinals, goldfinches, chickadees, nuthatches, blue jays and purple finches.

Suet — Downy and hairy woodpeckers, red-bellied woodpeckers, blue jays, brown creepers, starlings and mocking wrens.

Cut-up apples, bananas, grapes, oranges, raisins and wild fruit — Catbirds, bluebirds and wild brown thrashers.

Breads, cereals and peanut butter — Woodpeckers, nuthatches and chickadees.

During this cold weather season, why not purchase a feeder or refill your present one with food so you can enjoy the variety of feathered friends that will come and feast in your backyard?

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