

Attracting Backyard Birds



As the weather starts to change and we get closer to the warmer months of summer, you may be hearing a few chirps outside your window. Brenda Holloway, from The Mill, gives Harford Style Magazine great advice on how to attract those beautiful birds into your very own backyard! Attracting birds is also a great way to introduce young people to nature, and it's something the whole family can share.

Robins, goldfinches, bluebirds, mockingbirds, and wrens are just a few of the prevalent birds that can be seen around Harford County. "Along the waterways you can find blue herons, eagles, and even osprey," states Holloway, "if you are lucky, sometimes you get to see some of the unique migratory water birds as they pass through our area on their journey to the North." To increase the variety of birds that stop by your backyard on their flights, one should offer what they need most: food, water, shelter and nesting sites.

Nesting:

Birds will remain in your habitat during the breeding season if they have places to nest and raise young. Different species have different requirements. Some nest in cavities, many others in open nests found on ledges or in a tree crotch, and others nest on the ground. Get to know which species are likely to nest in your area and provide the appropriate habitat or structure.

Birdfeed:

The type of bird food you put out will determine the variety of birds you will attract to your backyard, such as:

- Black Oil Sunflower: *Rich in fats and proteins*
- Safflower: *Attracts cardinals, titmice, doves, and purple finches*
- Corn: *Black birds and starlings love this*
- Meal Worms (*dried or live*): *Bluebirds love the movement of a worm*
- Fruit & Orange Nectar: *Get into the O's spirit and draw in some Orioles*

"It is important that we do not feed the birds things like bread and table scraps, as they have no real nutritional value, and the salts and sugars can be harmful to them," warns Holloway, "it is a good idea to use only unsalted, natural peanut butter when making homemade feeders with the kids or seed balls."

Fresh Water:

By providing a clean, fresh source, you will attract more species than will visit bird feeders. Moving water will attract more birds because the motion catches their eye and they can hear any dripping, sprinkles or splashes. Adding a juggler accessory to a standing birdbath adds motion easily. A hose dripping into a dish or pond can have a similar effect and will attract more birds.

Shelter:

Leave dead trees and limbs, brush piles and grass clippings around your backyard. Birds use these for homes and nest materials. With few exceptions, bird houses should be made from wood. Your bird house should have drainage holes drilled into the bottom to keep rainwater from collecting inside. The top of the birdhouse should also have a few small holes to help with ventilation. It's tempting to choose a bird house based on its aesthetic value, but it's worth the investment to buy a house that will actually attract birds.

If you are interested in backyard birding, but don't know where to start, the experts at the Mill can help. They carry a full line of bird feeders, seeds, mixes, houses and baths that attract many local birds. "It is important that all feeders and baths are kept clean and are placed near shrubs to keep your backyard birds safe," says Holloway, "To keep the largest variety of birds around your home, I recommend feeding your birds year round!"

Keep your backyard birds happy this spring, and stop into The Mill to stock up on your bird supplies. Tweet Tweet!

Make At Home Wild Bird Treats

An Easy Spring Project for Kids!

There are some easy recipes that can be made in your own home to attract the wild birds in your backyard. If you are looking to save some money when feeding your birds, this is a great idea! It is especially smart since feeders usually need to be replenished every 3-4 days.

The preparation time to make your very own Wild Bird Seed Cake will only take you about 5 minutes.

Supplies

- 1.4 liter plastic containers
- plastic wrap
- ¾ cup flour
- ½ cup water
- 3 tbs corn syrup
- 1 envelope plain gelatin
- 4 cups of birdseed mixed with dry fruit or walnuts

Instructions:

- Line containers with plastic wrap across the top of the container and stick in the freezer so it hardens.
- Whisk flour, water and corn syrup together. Add the packet of gelatin last, whisk it together, and dump the birdseeds, fruit and nuts into the bowl.
- Take the container out of the freezer, and begin to scoop the mix into the container. Pat down the mix firmly.
- Put the container in the fridge for about an hour until firm.
- Once the mix is hardened, take out the cake out of the container and place it in your feeder.