

Birds appreciate varied menu

Many of us enjoying our home base, are interested in feeding the birds. It is never too late to extend this hospitality.

Be sure to have a permanent central location because birds will get accustomed to the same restaurant. To begin this program be sure to plan to be at your home for an extended period of time. The food should be in constant supply so the birds are fed regularly to maintain their body heat during cold weather.

There are two factors to consider in locating a feeder. It should have easy access for filling and be within

viewing distance from a window so that you can enjoy the action.

Here are some menu suggestions — suet, from your local butcher, is a favorite meal of many birds. It can be hung from a tree in mesh bags (be sure the mesh is small), wire mesh suet feeders can be purchased from bird equipment dealers. A note of caution, be sure the wire feeder is not made of collapsible wire mesh.

MANY BIRDS like peanut butter and it provides some salt, which is necessary for their good health. To guard against plain peanut butter

caking to the birds' mouths, mix it with equal parts of corn meal, cereal or other grains.

An easy way to get started on a bird feeding program is to purchase mixed seed. You will soon find which seeds the birds in your area prefer.

From your kitchen cupboard you can readily find mixtures to please our feathered friends. Stale baked goods, such as bread, cake, doughnuts, cookies and crackers are popular. Be sure these items are broken into small pieces. Grains such as rice and corn are good alternates. You will get a bonus of enjoyment if

the birds remain at the feeder station to enjoy their meal.

Small pieces of cheese, bacon scraps, dried, raw meat and dog food are good choices for insect eating birds. If these bits of food are small enough, the parents can carry some to their baby birds in a nearby nest when spring arrives and the chicks are hatched.

Other choices from your kitchen may be dried fruit such as raisins and currants and other dried fruit cut into small pieces. Fresh fruits, cut in manageable pieces, will also be a welcome treat. Nuts are also



down to earth

Alice Burlingame

good — peanuts and walnuts for example.

YOU CAN make or purchase a feeding station for the birds, but you can improvise by spreading the peanut butter or suet directly on a tree that has rough bark (the birds will need a toe-hold), or spreading either of these foods on a pine cone that can be wedged or hung from a branch of a nearby tree.

As mentioned before, mesh bags used for fruits and vegetables from

the supermarket can hold suet. Another idea is to drill holes in a small log and stuff the hole with a goodie. A dowel inserted about an inch below each feeder hole makes a fine perch for the bird.

Other feeding station ideas are a platform secured to a fence post, a tray placed on a table, even a window sill with a level ledge. As you decide where to place the feeder, keep in mind not to place it close to an area where cats can hide and interrupt the feeding.

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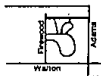
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