

# Feathered friends will love a bird bath

Clean, accessible water is a sure-fire attraction to bring your feathered friends right into the garden. Fountains, pools, birdbaths are all irresistible to birds who need water to drink and to bathe in, just as people do.

A birdbath is the simplest installation for most homeowners but the birdbath must meet some basic requirements if it is to work for you and for your feathered guests.

The most important requirement is to be sure the birdbath is stocked with fresh, clean, abundant water. Don't let it "go dry" or let the water become contaminated or frozen, you'll just disappoint the birds you want to attract.

When selecting or building a birdbath, remember that you are actually creating an artificial rain puddle. The surface where birds enter the water should be rough to provide a sure footing.

If your birdbath is to be made of plastic or metal, rough up the edges with coarse sandpaper or attach a textured material such as the strips used on the bottom of bathtubs.

Garden birds tend to fear water which is more than two or three inches deep, so don't buy or build a birdbath which is deeper than three inches and try for one which has a gradual slope to the deepest spot.



Whether they are homemade or store-bought, a birdbath can be an attractive addition to a backyard setting, as well as welcome relief to your local aviary friends. Provide fresh water daily to make your birdbath a more attractive rest stop.

BIRDS ENJOY group baths, so look for a birdbath which is 24 to 36 inches in diameter. This size seems to be perfect

for community bathing and splashing.

You can fashion "do-it-yourself" baths by placing a big ceramic saucer on a tree stump, by rigging a garbage can lid on top of a tile drainage pipe, or by chiseling out a stump or log. According to Ortho's "How to Attract Birds," your little friends don't care about the style as long as you provide clean, fresh water faithfully.

Garden centers stock commercial birdbaths made from a wide variety of materials: concrete, cement, terra cotta, glazed ceramic, wood, plastic and metal.

Terra cotta and glazed ceramic are attractive materials but the birdbaths tend to crack when the water freezes.

Concrete withstands freezing and provides the rough footing the little creatures need to enjoy a drink and a splash.

Wood birdbaths are also available and birds like them, but they are difficult to keep clean and will not last as long as the concrete versions.

When installing the birdbath, remember that when several birds bathe at one time, they splash around joyously and lots of water lands on the ground.

The energetic bathers can create a soggy, muddy area around the birdbath so set the bath on a pad of gravel or sand.

FOR A 30-inch birdbath, dig out the soil to a depth of about four inches in an area approximately four-feet square. Then fill the depression with sand or decorative gravel.

Now, where do you place a birdbath? Locate the birdbath where you can watch the antics of the birds you attract.

Select a site near the house or patio or a quiet sitting area in the garden and you'll have the fun of watching the little bathing beauties.

The birdbath should also be placed near a faucet so you can refill it without dragging heavy coils of hose all over the place.

Finally, remember that neighborhood cats pose a real threat to your feathered visitors. A wet bird, preoccupied with preening after a bath and hampered by soggy feathers, is a potential victim for a prowling cat.

Put the birdbath out in the open, away from shrubs and bushes where a cat can hide and away from low, overhanging limbs.

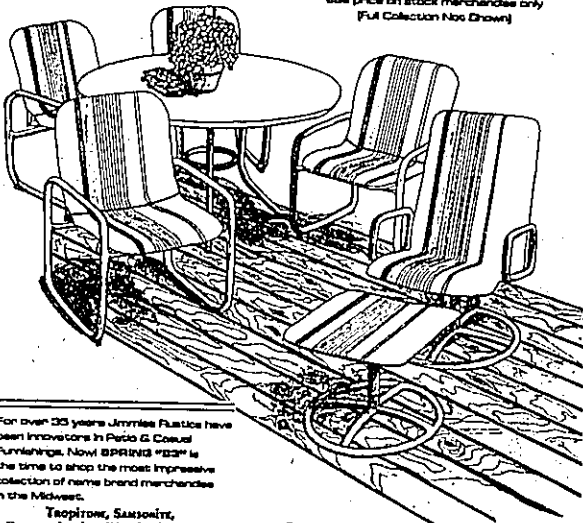
Height gives the birds protection, so raise the birdbath about three feet off the ground.

Ground-level pools and baths can be safe if they are out in the open, for a cat that is visible rarely gets close enough to kill a bird.

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