

# BIRD STORE

## WAKE TO THE SOUND OF BIRDS - GIVE THEM A HOME

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**Hummer-hum:** To attract hummingbirds, make a fresh solution of nectar from four parts water and one part sugar, then boil.

**S**pring is the season when birds begin returning to Michigan yards. Feeding birds and watching them send their young ranks as one of the most enjoyable spring spectator sports next to baseball.

Did you know cardinals feed each other seed as part of their courtship ritual? Watching this rite of spring as well as other behavioral manners are yours for the asking when you invite birds into your yard. Whether you live in a house, apartment, condominium or even within an urban setting, a small oasis of food, water and greenery has the potential of becoming home to a number of feathered friends.

Attracting birds to your yard takes time and planning to provide the necessary elements for survival. The ongoing destruction of habitats forces birds to spend much of their time searching for food, water, housing and shelter in a comfortable and protected environment. The rewards of supplementing these requirements are many.

"Watching the birds is relaxing, entertaining and educational. The kids love it too but whatever location you choose make sure there's no place around the bird feeder and bird baths, a cat can hide and pounce," said Chris Gardner, owner of Wild Birds Unlimited in Rochester Hills. Gardner loves watching the chickadees, goldfinches, hummingbirds, and red-bellied woodpeckers that visit her Bloomfield Township backyard. To encourage nesting she has placed a couple of small chickadee/ Titmouse houses as well as several well-stocked feeders around her yard. Leave the decorative bird houses inside. Birds prefer a natural looking home of rustic wood.

"Houses should be well-ventilated with the right size cavity so they don't waste energy filling it with materials. Birds spend a lot of time looking for nesting materials. To help them out take dryer lint and dog hair and place it on a branch. Also, place of yarn and mud for robins."

"Nothing is more attractive to birds than a safe, shallow and clean supply of water. Develop a water source such as a garden pond or bird bath, preferably with moving water. These focal points not only look good but provide the necessities of life for drinking and bathing."

"Bird baths should not be deeper than two inches with a gradual slope, and slightly deeper for robins. Robins with all their splashing will empty out a bird bath in no time. It's also important to move the water. The sound of moving water brings them in. Use a dripper attached to a garden hose."

Plant preferred flowering and seed producing food plants as well as shrubs and trees for shelter.

### Attracting a Diversity of Birds

Backyard Birds in Plymouth stocks more than 40 styles of bird houses and nesting boxes for every type of bird from purple martins, who live in colonies, to wood ducks and owls. Most nesting boxes don't have perches because sparrows will dominate the boxes. Because birds are so busy building nests in spring, their main desire is to find a dependable food source. Food supplies have dwindled by March and birds need seeds until sometime in June, and many not until later in fall and winter. The guests attracted to your feeder depends on the type of seed with which it's filled.

Learn who's visiting your yard by reading one of the popular guides like "Peterson's Field Guide to Eastern Birds." Educational tours for children after hours at Backyard Birds in Plymouth helps children learn about birds and avoid misconceptions.

"Corn attracts grackles who eat baby chickadees," said Gary Phillips, owner of Backyard Birds in Plymouth, a retailer of more than 25 different types of seed.

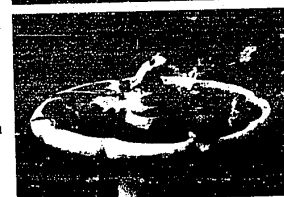
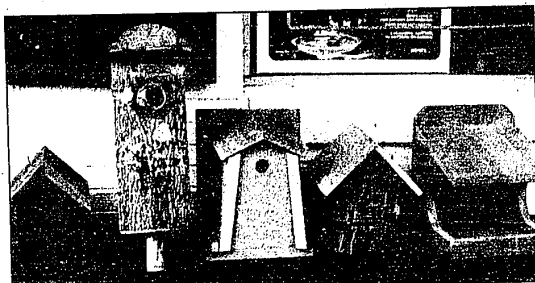
"Pure sunflower hearts are for people living in condos or apartments because there's less mess. Ollies are for song birds like goldfinch. Blue jays look for sunflower. Avoid seed with fillers. To attract birds, you need fresh bird seed without fillers. Birds don't like fillers like milo. Milo like milo." Phillips offers the birds and 10 squirrels visiting his Farmington yard a variety of feeders as well as a bird bath. Because he has been feeding birds for more than 20 years, Phillips is a wealth of information.

"Birds do everything by sight and smell. When a cardinal spots a feeder filled with oilers and striped sunflower seed it's old or hasn't been cleaned so sometimes he's out of there," he said.

"The favorite style of feeder in the Livonia and Plymouth area is made of cedar," Phillips said. Chap's Feed Store in Livonia sells more than 100 different styles of feeders in season.

"There's everything from platform feeders to giant feeders which hold up to 25 pounds of seed. There are even peanut feeders that discourage starlings because they bring their 30 boddies with them, and squirrels feeders to discourage the furry critters from riding the bird feeder. It's what meets your needs whether it's something for your child's first feeder or sand blasted etchings on an art glass hummingbird feeder by Scherel, there's something for everyone," Phillips said.

"We are the only place these birds have. If there are no more forests, then this is where they live in our yards. I've found that this is a consumer driven business for nature



**For the birds:** Don't forget to add a bird bath or garden pond. Birds need water not only to drink, but to keep their feathers clean.

**On the cover:** Birdhouses come in a variety of shapes and sizes, depending on the species. It's up to you what birds you want to attract to your yard.

