

## FOOD AND WATER FOR BIRDS

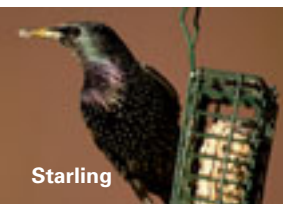
**FOOD SHORTAGES CAN OCCUR** in any season. Feeding throughout the year will attract birds to your garden and give them a better chance to survive periods of food shortage. Although beneficial, feeding does not replace the important natural foods birds can find in a well-managed garden, particularly through the breeding season.



### WHAT TO PROVIDE



House sparrow



Starling



Blackbirds

- A variety of seed and nut mixes are available. Sunflower seeds or hearts, nyjer seed (liked by goldfinches) and peanuts are sold separately. Sunflowers are also used as a base to various combination mixes that can include millet, maize, peanut granules, husk-free oats and dried fruits.
- Fat balls and bars are excellent as a winter food supplement. Always remove any mesh bag before putting the fat out.
- Mealworms can be offered throughout the year.
- Tinned pet foods, cooked rice (without salt added), breadcrumbs, grated cheese and fruits such as apples may all be used.
- Avoid using dry biscuits and salty foods, including salted or dry roasted peanuts. Peanuts can be high in aflatoxin, a natural toxin that can kill birds, so buy from a reputable dealer who can guarantee that they are aflatoxin-free.
- Never put out loose peanuts, dry hard foods or large chunks of bread during spring or summer, as these pose a choking hazard if they are fed to chicks.
- Provide a shallow birdbath for the birds to drink and bathe in.

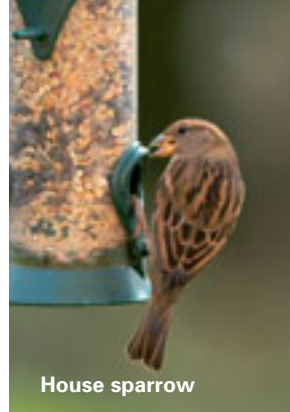
★ denotes priority action

For more ideas please visit:

[www.rspb.org.uk/hfw/advice/23](http://www.rspb.org.uk/hfw/advice/23)

## HOW TO FEED AND PROVIDE WATER FOR BIRDS

- Birdtables may be secured to a post, hung from a tree or placed near the ground. Designs should be simple to facilitate easy cleaning. They need a low rim to retain food, but with a gap in each corner to allow rainwater to drain.
- Hanging feeders can be either clear plastic tubes to hold seed mixes, special nyjer feeders or mesh tubes for peanuts.
- Other feeding methods include scattering food on the ground or using a ground feeding table, hanging stringed fat-filled pots on branches or smearing fat into the bark of trees or onto posts.



House sparrow

### HYGIENE

- ★ Wild birds can suffer from diseases, especially where large numbers gather. Keeping your feeding station clean is the best thing you can do to protect the birds in your garden and yourself.
  - Choose feeders and water baths that are easy to keep clean.
  - Move feeders around to prevent the build-up of droppings and food. Any debris should be swept up and burned, or sealed in a plastic bag and put in an outside bin.
  - Clean your feeders and water baths regularly using a special disinfectant such as Arklen's or a 1 in 20 household bleach solution, rinse thoroughly and air-dry completely. Do this outdoors, preferably wearing gloves. Keep a bucket and brushes just for this purpose.
  - Always wash your hands afterwards, and keep cleaning equipment outside. Wash soiled clothes in a normal wash. For more information, visit: [www.rspb.org.uk/advice/helpingbirds/feeding/hygiene.asp](http://www.rspb.org.uk/advice/helpingbirds/feeding/hygiene.asp)



Illustration by Chris Shields (RSPB); photos by David Norton (rspb-images.com), Ray Kennedy (rspb-images.com) and Tony Hamblin (rspb-images.com). Back: photo by David Norton (rspb-images.com).  
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