

# FEEDING BIRDS IN WINTER TIME

## TASTY ENOUGH FOR A WHOLE FLOCK OF BIRDS

Each winter, millions of people look forward to digging the bird house out of the cellar or garden shed to give a little help to those songsters who have remained here at home with us. Despite this, there are a few things to kept in mind with the winter feeding of birds otherwise we could even do harm to the little creatures, say the experts from the specialist retail chain Maxi Zoo.

Correct feeding begins at the right time. In general, you should only feed them during frost or when there's a complete covering of snow. During milder temperatures, the feeding point will not be visited frequently – the food can decay and germs could spread. But... if you've already made a start with feeding, you will have to stick with it consistently and top up regularly when necessary. Birds get used to the extra food on offer really quickly and shouldn't suddenly come across an empty bird house.

## IT ALL DEPENDS ON THE LOCATION

To safeguard against the neighbour's cat taking the eagerly picking birds by surprise, the feeding point should be laid out in an open and clear position, i.e. not next to a thick bush and at a height of at least 1.50 to 1.80 metres off the ground. The distance to the nearest window pane should be at least 2 metres. Silo-type feeding equipment which you can find in specialist shops has proven to be particularly hygienic and practical. The food is discharged only as the birds remove it, so it doesn't get wet, and cannot contaminate. On the other hand with decorative bird houses, you will regularly have to remove dirt and droppings to keep the danger of disease transmission from germs to the absolute

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minimum. An easily washable plastic sheet on which to lay the grain will simplify this work. Open feeding houses must be provided with wind and weather protection so that the food doesn't get wet through, ice up or go bad. It is better to have several small feeding points rather than one big one. That way, fewer birds will be attracted to each feeding point which again decreases the danger of disease transmission – an advantage not to be underestimated in times when bird flu is an issue.

## WHICH FOOD FOR WHICH BIRD?

The best food for grain eaters – recognisable by their short, powerful beaks, e.g. finches, sparrows or buntings – is sunflower seeds, hemp or meadow seed food mixes. Soft food and insect eaters such as blackbirds, robins, hedge sparrows and wrens prefer oat flakes, poppy seed, bran and finely chopped fruit which they like to take from the ground. However, because many of them also eat fine seeds in the winter, packs of mixed or so-called soft-beaked bird food which additionally contain dried insects and other protein are also suitable. And "tit" dumplings or rings don't necessarily have to be hung up. Crumbled and strewn on the ground, these mixtures of fat and grain will be devoured by soft-beaked birds and omnivores alike. The more varied the menu, the more species of birds will be helped. However, salted or spiced leftovers from the table or meals have no place on the bird feeding station – and no bread, as it swells in the stomach. And never carry on feeding them late into springtime once their chicks have been born because virtually all young birds feed off insects and cannot tolerate sunflower seeds.



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