



# Best bird seed for backyard birds

## SUNFLOWER SEEDS

Black-oil sunflower seed is preferred by many small feeder birds, especially in northern latitudes. Striped sunflower seed is also readily eaten, especially by large-beaked birds. Hulled sunflower seed is eaten by the greatest variety of birds; it attracts jays, Red-Bellied Woodpeckers, goldfinches, Northern Cardinals, Pine Grosbeaks, titmice, nuthatches, and grackles.

## MILLET

White millet is the favorite food of most small-beaked ground-feeding birds; red millet is also readily eaten. Millet attracts quail, doves, juncos, sparrows, towhees, cowbirds, and Red-winged Blackbirds.

## CRACKED CORN

Medium cracked corn attracts many kinds of ground-feeding birds, but it is prone to rot, since the interior of the kernel readily soaks up moisture. Feed small amounts, mixed with millet, on feeding tables or from watertight hopper feeders. Avoid fine cracked corn, since it quickly turns to mush; coarse cracked corn is too large for small-beaked birds. Cracked corn attracts quail, doves, jays, juncos, and towhees.

## SAFFLOWER SEEDS

Safflower seed is readily eaten by cardinals, grosbeaks, sparrows, and doves; starlings, House Sparrows, and squirrels usually find it less appealing than sunflower seed.

## NYJER® (THISTLE)

A preferred food of American Goldfinches, Lesser Goldfinches, House Finches, and Common Redpolls, Nyjer® is sometimes called “black gold,” because it can be expensive compared with other birdseed. Do not confuse it with prickly thistle, a pink-flowered weed used by goldfinches to line their nests.

## SUET AND BIRD PUDDINGS (BEEF FAT AND SEED)

This mixture attracts insect-eating birds such as woodpeckers, wrens, chickadees, nuthatches, and titmice. Place the suet in special feeders or net onion bags at least five feet above the ground to keep it out of the reach of animals. Although suet is particularly helpful during cold weather and migration, when birds need extra fat reserves, “no melt” suet cakes are now available for use in warmer weather.

## PEANUTS

Whole and crushed peanuts attract woodpeckers, jays, chickadees, titmice, bushtits, nuthatches, Brown Creepers, wrens, kinglets, Northern Mockingbirds, Brown Thrashers, starlings, and Yellow-rumped and Pine Warblers. Provide these in tube-shaped, metal mesh feeders.

## MILO, WHEAT, OATS

These agricultural products are frequently mixed into low-priced birdseed blends. Most birds discard the uneaten seed in favor of other food, which leaves it to accumulate under feeders, where they may attract rodents. In the Southwest, however, milo attracts pheasants, quail, and doves.

# Homemade recipes to add to your bird feeders

## PEANUT BUTTER PUDDING

Peanut butter is a good substitute for suet in the summer. Mix one part peanut butter with five parts cornmeal and stuff the mixture into holes drilled in a hanging log or into the crevices of a large pine cone. This all-season mixture attracts woodpeckers, chickadees, titmice, and occasionally warblers.

## FRUIT FOR BERRY-EATING BIRDS

Fruit specialists such as robins, waxwings, bluebirds, and mockingbirds rarely eat birdseed. To attract these birds, soak raisins and currants in water overnight, then place them on a table feeder, or purchase seed blends with a dried fruit mixture. To attract orioles and tanagers, skewer halved oranges onto a spike near other feeders, or provide nectar feeders.

## NECTAR FOR HUMMINGBIRDS

Make a sugar solution of one part white sugar to four parts water. Boil briefly to sterilize the mixture and dissolve the sugar crystals (there’s no need to add red food coloring). Feeders must be washed every few days with very hot water and kept scrupulously clean to prevent the growth of mold.

# Quick reference seed and food chart

| SPECIES        | PREFERRED SEED/FOOD |                   |                  |                 |         |           |       |        |           |      |              |            |
|----------------|---------------------|-------------------|------------------|-----------------|---------|-----------|-------|--------|-----------|------|--------------|------------|
|                | Black-oil Sunflower | Striped Sunflower | Sunflower Hearts | Nyjer (Thistle) | Peanuts | Tree Nuts | Fruit | Millet | Safflower | Milo | Cracked Corn | Suet Cakes |
| Bluebirds      |                     |                   | ●                |                 |         |           | ●     |        |           |      |              | ●          |
| Buntings       |                     |                   | ●                |                 |         |           | ●     | ●      |           |      |              |            |
| Cardinals      | ●                   | ●                 | ●                |                 | ●       | ●         | ●     | ●      | ●         | ●    | ●            | ●          |
| Chickadees     | ●                   | ●                 | ●                | ●               | ●       | ●         |       |        |           |      |              | ●          |
| Doves          |                     |                   | ●                | ●               |         |           |       | ●      | ●         | ●    | ●            |            |
| Goldfinches    | ●                   |                   | ●                | ●               |         |           |       | ●      |           |      |              | ●          |
| Grosbeaks      | ●                   | ●                 | ●                |                 |         |           |       |        | ●         |      | ●            |            |
| House Finches  | ●                   |                   | ●                | ●               | ●       |           |       | ●      | ●         |      |              |            |
| Jays           | ●                   | ●                 | ●                |                 | ●       | ●         | ●     | ●      | ●         | ●    | ●            | ●          |
| Juncos         |                     |                   | ●                | ●               | ●       |           |       | ●      |           | ●    | ●            |            |
| Mockingbirds   |                     |                   |                  |                 |         |           | ●     |        |           |      |              | ●          |
| Nuthatches     | ●                   | ●                 | ●                |                 | ●       | ●         | ●     |        | ●         |      |              | ●          |
| Purple Finches | ●                   |                   | ●                | ●               |         |           |       | ●      |           |      |              |            |
| Quail          |                     |                   |                  |                 |         |           |       | ●      |           | ●    | ●            |            |
| Siskins        | ●                   |                   | ●                | ●               |         |           |       |        |           |      |              | ●          |
| Sparrows       | ●                   |                   | ●                | ●               |         |           |       | ●      |           | ●    | ●            |            |
| Tanagers       |                     |                   | ●                |                 |         |           | ●     |        |           |      |              |            |
| Titmice        | ●                   | ●                 | ●                | ●               | ●       | ●         |       |        |           |      | ●            | ●          |
| Towhees        |                     |                   |                  |                 |         |           |       | ●      |           | ●    |              |            |
| Woodpeckers    | ●                   |                   | ●                |                 | ●       | ●         | ●     |        |           |      |              | ●          |
| Squirrels      | ●                   | ●                 | ●                |                 | ●       | ●         | ●     |        |           |      |              | ●          |



SUNFLOWER SEEDS



MILLET



CRACKED CORN



SAFFLOWER SEEDS



NYJER (THISTLE)



SUET



PEANUTS



MILO, WHEAT, OATS