

Horticulture Hints

January 2010

Keeping the birdies happy

Feeding birds is a very enjoyable past time; you can watch them for hours and never get bored. With the right combination of seed and bird feeders, you will be sure to have great populations with many varieties to admire.

To ensure you can see the birds, place your feeder where you can view them readily.

Be careful to place the feeder in an area where the birds won't risk window collisions or can't be easily hunted by the neighbor's cats. Place a feeder at least three feet from a window and remove any hiding places for cats or other predators.

Placing your feeders at varying heights is also necessary for different species of birds.

Finches prefer a tube feeder hung higher, while juncos and sparrows prefer their feed at ground level, although they will feed at a low hanging feeder.

Black oil sunflower seed is one of the best all around feeds. It provides great energy and is easy for small birds to handle and crack. You will attract many species of birds with black oil, including cardinals and blue jays.

However, to attract finches, pine siskins and occasionally woodpeckers, use sunflower bits or thistle seed. As for those juncos and sparrows, they especially like feed with milo or millet.

Peanuts will attract blue jays, woodpeckers and nuthatches, but be sure to purchase unsalted peanuts that are feed for birds only.

For attracting birds that are normally insect eaters, suet is the food of choice. Suet feeders and suet is very inexpensive and entices a whole new type of bird for your viewing.

Don't forget to provide water for the birds! This is especially important with the extreme cold temperatures we often have this time of year.

Choose a bird bath no more than three inches deep, or place a rock in the bowl to provide a shallow area for birds to stand.

A bird bath heater is essential to keep water melted in the winter months. Use a good one specially made for bird baths. Providing water

may attract birds you might not otherwise see, such as bluebirds, cedar waxwings and robins.

Squirrels can be quite a problem, gorging themselves on your bird feed. However, there are several products that can help deter them from your bird feeders.

A squirrel baffle, which looks like a large upside-down saucer placed directly under the feeder, gives squirrels a hard time maneuvering around the obstacle.

Additionally, there are different types of squirrel-proof feeders. The latest includes a small mesh cage around a tube feeder that the squirrels cannot squeeze through, but the birds can still fit through.

Also, cayenne pepper introduced in the bird feed will give a squirrel a hot mouth, but it doesn't seem to bother the birds.

Another idea is to place squirrel feeders with ears of corn around your birdfeeders so squirrels have their own source of food. Just make sure you spear those ears in place so they can't carry them off!

For more information on bird feed and feeders, please stop by the Garden Store, where we have lots of ideas to help you attract birds to your backyard. ❁

Houseplants 50% off

- Brighten up your empty house with our fantastic selection of houseplants!
- Start with a few small plants displayed in a group, or go all out with a large specimen plant and decorative pot.
- Find specialty soils for repotting, or bring in your existing plants for us to repot.
- Don't forget the water! We have a selection of watering cans and water bulbs.
- We also have a great variety of houseplant fertilizers, insecticides, cleaners and other accessories.



Nancy's Notebook

Dream a little dream of spring

This has been one of the coldest winters I can remember, and if you are an outside person like me, you get pretty stir crazy. This year the snow cover has been a blessing, providing great insulation against the frigid temperatures. The snow layer really helps plant material, providing moisture and protection from the extreme cold temperatures we experienced early this year.

To keep from going completely insane, we can dream by looking at all the seed and plant catalogs that start coming in this time of year. I get inspired by all the colors and new varieties I want to try out in my gardens or carry at the store. Looking at catalogs can give you great landscaping ideas and color combinations you might want to try.

Be careful when you are looking at your garden catalogs to pick plant material that will work for our area. In Manhattan, Kans., we are considered to be a zone 5b; meaning we need plant material that can withstand tempera-

tures dipping down to -10 to -15 degrees. Wind chill temperatures do not need to be taken into consideration when figuring planting zones.

There are a few places around that could be classified as a 6b (-5 to -0), which are considered microclimates. Microclimates are areas in your garden that are particularly protected, such as near a brick wall, near heat vents from the house, near a body of water, between two structures, in courtyards or other such areas.

Don't be afraid to try out some new varieties. It is always fun to see how they will do in your garden! I like to incorporate some tried-and-true plants with newer varieties, so if they don't work out so well, I have the others to take over.

Now is also a great time to plan out a new garden or your containers for spring. Take a few measurements and draw a plan on paper so you have proper placement according to height and width. Or bring in a 4 x 6 picture (or larger) to the store and let us to draw up a quick sketch. This time of year is a great time for us to give you undivided attention.

Have fun looking at those catalogs, and keep warm! Stop by and see us at the store; we are open all winter long. ❄️

BIRD SEMINAR

Saturday, January 23; 10:00am

Learn about attracting birds to your yard
with guest speaker Chuck Otte,
Geary County Ag extension agent and bird expert.

25% off all bird merchandise.

Be sure to sign up for this great learning event!

