



Getting the most from feeding the birds in your garden this winter

As a general rule, the more different types of feeder and food you put out, the more different species you'll attract. This is simply because all species of bird have evolved physical characteristics to exploit particular natural food sources, and therefore by using feeders and types of food which align with these you're more likely to attract a variety of species. For example, Robins are ground feeders with a relatively thin bill, so food such as husk-free mixes containing chopped peanuts, sunflower hearts and dried mealworms, and fed from a

ground tray or table, will all work well. Whereas, a Greenfinch will cling to plants, shrubs and trees to feed on seeds, so will be attracted to a hanging feeder full with black sunflower seeds which it can easily crack open, whereas the Robin definitely couldn't.

So for a good mix of feeder types and the foods to go in or on them:

Hanging seed feeder – go for one with at least 4 ports, as otherwise you're really restricting the number of birds that can use it at any one time. Fill with a suet and seed mix, black sunflower seeds or sunflower hearts. If you want to keep down the waste from husks, then a husk-free mix such as our [Won't Grow Mix](#), [Premium High Energy Mix](#) or [sunflower hearts](#) is the way to go. Species you should be able to attract include: Greenfinch, House Sparrow, Tree Sparrow (if you're lucky and in the right area), Blue, Great and Coal Tit – though all three will normally take a seed away and eat it on a branch elsewhere. Chaffinches can also be attracted but prefer round perches (Perch Rings act like a platform) rather than straight ones.

Mesh peanut feeder – this has long been the most common type of feeder and is still very popular, and indeed is the only safe way to feed whole peanuts (loose whole peanuts can lead birds to choke on them, and peanuts in plastic mesh nets can lead to birds' feet becoming entangled). Always use [peanuts](#) which are labelled as 'nil detectable aflatoxins' or similar words. Birds you can expect to attract and depending on where you live, include: Blue Tit, Great Tit, Long-Tailed Tit, Coal Tit, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Nuthatch and Siskin. Note that this type of feeder can also be used for suet pellets.

Niger seed feeder – this is a must for attracting Siskins and even Redpolls, with the tiny ports in the feeder ensuring the equally tiny niger seed doesn't flow out. Niger has also been a traditional favourite of the attractive Goldfinch.

Suet cage – there are lots of different types, but all have the same purpose of holding in place either [suet balls](#) or [suet blocks](#). All the species of tit can be attracted, plus also Starlings – which might not be everyone's favourite bird but they're great to watch and need our help given their declining numbers.

Ground feeding tray or bird table – this is important for ground feeding birds such as Blackbirds, Chaffinch, Collared Doves, Dunnocks and Robins, with ideal foods being [Ground Mix](#), sunflower hearts, [sultanas](#) (soak in water first), suet pellets and dried mealworms.

Finally, providing clean water for drinking and bathing is just as important as food.

For more information take a look at this [informative video](#).