

THE GRAPEVINE

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Feeding our Feathered Friends

While Facebook has many negative associations, I love the “Memories” feature that shows you pictures and posts you did on that date over the years. This morning I was greeted with a memory from seven years ago of all the birds that I had on my feeders that morning. My husband grew up in Michigan feeding the birds and it has become a family tradition in our house, one I’m hoping to pass on to our toddler as he grows up. As cooler weather has set in for a bit many of us are looking forward to feeding the birds and watching them throughout the winter months. There is little as cheerful in the winter as a brilliant red Cardinal on a feeder, even on a snowy dreary day. Here are some tips to bring birds to your yard and feeders over the winter.



Picking the food- As you stand in the bird food aisle it can be an overwhelming display of different types of seed, mixes and even different forms of bird food. It’s no wonder it can be overwhelming with over 20 different types of bird seed on the market at any time and no one seed is attractive to all birds. The best all-around seed option is Black oil sunflower seed. While it might be more expensive, it is preferred by many small birds with its thinner seed coat and high oil content that is important nutritionally for birds in winter. Other popular options include thistle seed that attracts goldfinches and purple finches, millet seed that attracts a variety of birds including sparrows and peanuts (either whole or the “hearts”) that attract Blue jays, woodpeckers and others. Your best bet is to use a mix of seeds and use a variety of different feeders to attract the widest variety of species. A reminder with bird seed, you get what you pay for. Some of the cheaper mixes have less desirable seeds that the birds won’t eat. Another option is Suet which is attractive to a variety of birds. Suet is a high-quality animal fat that is highly sought-after in winter. It is particularly attractive to woodpeckers, chickadees, nuthatches, and titmice, although some atypical feeder birds like Carolina wrens and brown creepers also like it.

Location, Location, Location- When placing your feeders consider them from your perspective but also from the birds prospective. My best luck feeding the birds has been in a house where I had protective cover within 10 feet of my feeders (shrubs, trees, etc) for the birds to hide from predators in and in view of my living room windows for my enjoyment. If you don’t have much for cover in your yard, my new house has very little in the way of cover at this point, you can create it especially after Christmas using discarded trees. If you have the option consider developing cover using trees and shrubs over the next growing season. Don’t forget to have a place for the birds to get water along with food in your yard. Winter months can mean a time of drought for birds but a bird bath with a heater can solve that issue. Water will be very attractive to your birds in the winter. Place your water underneath or near branches so the birds have places to preen after bathing.

Upcoming Events:

Garden Hour- Wednesday, November 3rd: Winter Interest in the Landscape

Many gardens can become dreary, drab, and colorless over the winter months, as they lose the excitement of summer. Beat this winter boredom in your garden through the texture, color, and movement of plants that will bring year round beauty to your landscape. Join Lynn Loughary, Wyandotte County Extension Horticulture Agent, as she shares a few of the must have plants that provide year-round interest in the landscape.

Turf Conference

The 71st Annual Kansas Turf & Landscape Conference will be held in-person this year on December 1 & 2 at the Hilton Garden Inn, Manhattan. The conference is an excellent way to learn about turf and landscape management, visit with old friends, network with new ones, and see all the latest products and supplies from local and national vendors.

Kansas Orchid Society Fall Show and Sale, November 6, 2021