How to Attract Birds Told

Feed on Seeds of Sunflower

By RACHEL DANIEL

Want to attract birds to your garden? Then plan on food, water and shelter for them and freedom from cats, if possible, or small boys with sling shots or air rifles.

A quite easy way to raise seeds they like to eat is to plant sunflower seed preferably in March, in open ground, in a sunny place, or else plant in April or May. Cardinals, especially, like sunflower seeds but do the blue jays and sparrows. The blue jays have a cute way of burying the seeds and then forgetting where they put them so you have sunflower seeds popping up in your lawn as I did.

Mr. and Mrs. Harry Roberts, 3252 Baudin, can testify to the ease of growing sunflowers, which are annuals. They bought seed from a dime store and planted "giant" and "super giant" types in a 56-foot strip of ground next to their bird fence. The super giants grew nine feet tall or more with as many as 15 flowers on one plant. Some sunflowers were 10-12 inches across. Mrs. Roberts says people come from afar to see the sunflowers which matured in June.

Ordinary Soil

Roberts says the sunflower plants grew in ordinary garden soil to which he added fertilizer of an E-g formula when the plants were "about half way up," and again before they flowered. He says they needed good watering. The plants grew so tall they had to be staked and tied, Roberts adds.

The birds ate some of the seeds on the plants and Roberts cracked open some of the other seeds and placed them on the concrete driveway to attract the wrens and other birds. Thinning the plants is a very necessary practice, Roberts advises. He thinned them two feet apart but says the big ones should be three feet apart.

The couple saved some of the seeds to plant again this spring.

Other annuals which can be planted and allowed to go to seed for bird food include zinnia, poppy, portulaca and amaranthus, according to Wise’s Garden Encyclopedia. Annuals adapted to local conditions may be added to this list by observing birds as they feed on plants.

Cedar, pine and ash trees also afford food for the seed-eating birds.

Berries also appeal to birds as anywhere in New Orleans with a pyracantha shrub can tell you. The pyracantha has a profusion of orange or red berries in late fall and winter. Mrs. B. X. Chauvin, of 3489 New York st., put a Christmas wreath containing pyracantha berries on her front door one year and the birds pecked the berries from the wreath so often she had to keep replacing them. Mulberries and blackberries are much liked by birds, and the wild cherry which grows on trees in some New Orleans homes is just their dish.

Love Figs

Birds seem to share the human’s love of Celeste Figs. The fruit of the flowering dogwood is also attractive to birds.

Bread crumbs and small grains are good bird food for home gardens. A feeder with the roof is preferred to one unprotected. Nut meats are liked too. Hummingbirds are attracted by tubular shaped flowers, especially red ones.

Water for drinking should be supplied in shallow pans or basins deepening in the center. I have found that a bird bath with a glazed finish is much easier to clean than one with a rough finish. I never tire of watching birds in the bath, especially the blue jays.

Bird houses can be seen now and then in city gardens. Purple martins arrive in New Orleans usually in March and move in the multiple housing units which are usually erected atop a tall pole. They raise their young and leave usually in midsummer.

Many shrubs and trees can still be planted in March and April. So keep the birds in mind when planting.