

Flora & Fauna

Feed the Birds!

Winter is not an easy time for birds. Imagine if you had to stay outside in freezing weather the entire winter! A bird-friendly habitat may make the difference to their survival.

Many of the birds we see in winter are seed eaters. By setting up a bird feeding station, you provide a generous, reliable source of food. And the birds gladly come and help themselves, up close, where it's convenient for you to watch them.

Where to feed them?

Locate your feeders where you can see them, perhaps from your living room or dining room (or from the kitchen sink). Put several feeders at varying heights to accommodate the preferences of different birds. Sparrows, juncos, doves, and bobwhites prefer to feed on the ground, and all you have to do is scatter the seed there. A tree stump or a knee-high table will do as well.

Other birds, such as purple finches and evening grosbeaks, will flock to a raised feeder. And small hanging feeders that swing in the breeze are attractive to many small agile birds. One advantage of such feeders is that they discourage (though they can not entirely defeat) the squirrels that will otherwise carry off the food, leaving none for the birds.

Which foods to provide?

Black sunflower seeds, sometimes called oil seeds are the hands-down favorite. This birdseed attracts cardinals, woodpeckers, blue jays, goldfinches, purple finches, chickadees, titmice and nuthatches.

Another essential birdseed is **niger** which attracts Goldfinches. Niger is a black seed, so tiny and light you can blow away a handful with a gentle breath. Buy a hanging tube, with tiny holes designed especially for niger, and hang it where you can see it from your best viewing window.

Safflower is a white seed, slightly smaller than a black sunflower seed. Squirrels don't like it and neither do grackles, blue jays or starlings. It is extremely bitter, although cardinals, titmice, chickadees and downy woodpeckers munch it like candy.

Stay away from bags of mixed birdseed. These mixes usually contain a lot of filler, such as red millet. Most birds won't eat it. They rummage through the seeds in the feeder and kick the red millet onto the ground. Buy the seeds you know your birds want.

Plants for birds

If you want to do something even more significant to help the birds, then you can enhance the natural habitat in your yard. Plant bushes and trees that provide berries and shelter.

This kind of landscaping can add greatly to the value and enjoyment of your home. And if you ever want to sell, there's nothing like a yard full of singing birds to give a house curb appeal!

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Household Tip:

Get the Most from Your Panty Hose!

These tricks will save you around \$25 per pair of panty hose!

The next time you buy a pair of panty hose, try this trick to **extend their life**. Place your panty hose in a zip lock plastic bag, fill with water and freeze until it's frozen solid. Thaw the bag at room temperature. Freezing hardens the fibers, extending their life tenfold.

If your panty hose should run, don't toss them in the trash. Cut off the thigh section, just under the panty line and just above the knee. Slide it over your dust mop for extra **dust-grabbing power**. The panty hose can be washed for reuse!

For another idea, slide your **soap slivers** down into the toe part and tie that end around an outdoor faucet. This trick allows you to always have an easy way to wash your hands outside!

If you've **lost something small and valuable**, find it by wrapping a piece of pantyhose over the nozzle of your vacuum-cleaner hose, turning on the vacuum and sweeping very carefully over your floor. Your lost item should stick to the ad-hoc filter you just made.

January

- 1535 Henry VIII declares himself head of the Church of England
- 1790 President George Washington delivers the first State of the Union Address
- 1852 The first US public bath opens in New York City
- 1907 President Theodore Roosevelt shakes a record 8,513 hands in one day
- 1914 Henry Ford introduces the assembly line system for producing Model-T Ford cars
- 1959 Walt Disney's "Sleeping Beauty" is released
- 1975 "Wheel of Fortune" debuts on NBC
- 1993 Michael Jordan, basketball legend, scores his 20,000th career point

Health Tips: Get a Partner and Get Healthy Together!

By now, you know that exercise does your body good. It keeps you fit, reduces stress, alleviates depression, prevents disease and builds muscle. In fact, the most common New Year's resolution by Americans is to develop a regular exercise plan. Unfortunately, this is also the resolution that most Americans don't keep.

So to make sure that you keep your resolution this year, enlist the help of a friend! Working out with a friend, co-worker or family member often brings a new level of motivation to your workouts. In fact, a 2007 study published in the peer-reviewed journal *Health Services Research* found that when married individuals improve their health habits, their spouses are much more likely to do so, too. Making the decision to hit the gym more often will not only improve your life, but that of your partner, too!

Knowing that someone is waiting for you to show up at the gym or the park can be a powerful incentive. Your partners can help you get to the gym on those days when you were looking for a free pass. They can also help you push to the next level when working out, and be there to spot for you if you incorporate strength training into your routine. Don't forget you'll have to do the same for them!

Picking a workout partner is very important. While a good partner can really ramp up your routine, a poor partner can pull you back into your slothful habits. So keep these points in mind before you choose your workout buddy:

1. **Choose a friend** who you enjoy spending time with and who you know will push you to the next level (and for whom you can do the same!). If you aren't comfortable telling your friend to do an extra five reps or jog an extra two minutes, choose another partner.
2. **Choose someone who is at your workout level or higher.** Working out with someone who can run faster or lift more can really inspire you. However, avoid choosing someone who is WAY above or WAY below your level. If you're just starting to work out, you probably don't want to work out with a professional athlete.
3. **Choose someone who shares your goals**, whether it's weight loss or participating in charity 5K walks. Avoid someone who sets ridiculous goals, like losing 50 pounds in two weeks. Together, decide on goals that are a happy medium between reasonable and ambitious.
4. **Choose someone who can keep you motivated.** Attitude is contagious. Someone who is excited about working towards a goal will keep your momentum going. People who are weak in their resolve to get to the gym and have bad attitudes once they're there can really drag you down.

Remember, working out with someone is a relationship that has to work for both people to get the most out of it. If it's not working out, then make a change. Find someone new or re-evaluate your goals together. Most likely, you'll develop a rewarding relationship with your workout buddy and finally be able to keep that New Year's resolution!

Kid Corner: What to Do with a Biting Child

If you have a child or a grandchild in their toddler years (age 2-4), you may have experienced a problem with biting behavior. You and the child, or the child and other children seem to be playing well together when all of a sudden – CHOMP!

Biting is a common toddler behavior, though it's something that tends to happen more often in daycare facilities. While daycare provides a benefit to working parents who can't afford a sitter or nanny, daycare also creates a day-long social situation for toddlers, which can become stressful. In addition, children in daycare aren't always closely monitored when they're with other children, so it's harder to stop a biting situation before it starts.

Trying to make sense of this behavior and figure out how to deal with it can be challenging. Sometimes toddlers bite when they're playing and sometimes out of frustration, usually because they lack the verbal skills to communicate their emotions. At this age, children aren't aware of how their behavior impacts others, and they certainly aren't aware of the strength behind their own teeth. So it's best not to interpret a young child's biting as a purposeful, mean act.

With that in mind, here are some tips for taking the "bite" out of toddlers:

Preventative Measures:

- Never leave children this age unattended. An adult must always be present and ready to spring into action.
- Make sure your toddler is rested before he plays with other children. A tired toddler is cranky and irritable, making biting more likely.
- Be mindful that toddlers have practically no social skills, so don't push your toddler to interact with others. At this age children play alongside each other with only an occasional interaction. Pushing young children to interact only increases the likelihood that there will be a conflict.

Disciplinary Action:

- Separate the biter and the victim immediately. If the child who has been bitten is crying, attend to him or her while ignoring the biter. After you have comforted the crying child, focus on the other child.
- Don't overreact, yell or lecture.
- Keep a designated area, such as a crib or playpen as "Time Out." When your child bites immediately put him in "Time Out" and explain that biting is unacceptable. (Ex: "You are in Time Out because you bit Susie. We do not bite. Stay here until I tell you that you can come out.") After a couple of minutes (one minute per year of age is a good gauge), reunite the children, and tell the biter to apologize for hurting the victim.
- It should go without saying, but never bite back.

Lastly, be patient! Don't expect a child to learn immediately that he should not bite. Teaching a toddler not to bite is a process.

This is a very simple recipe that makes a perfect side dish to any main course. You can also enjoy it as a healthy snack. At only 64 calories per serving, this dish fits well into any dieter's plan.

Ingredients:

- 2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 4 medium zucchini, thinly sliced (so you have thin, little circles)
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 tbsp fresh marjoram or oregano, chopped
- ½ tsp Kosher salt
- ¼ tsp pepper

1. Heat half the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat.
2. Add half the zucchini and cook, stirring occasionally until golden brown, 10-12 min.
3. Transfer the cooked zucchini to a plate. Repeat with the remaining oil and zucchini.
4. Return the first batch to the skillet. Stir in the garlic, marjoram, salt and pepper and cook, stirring, for 2 min. Toss and mix with 2nd batch. Serve.

Tip: To easily remove a garlic clove from its papery casing, place it on a cutting board and then place the flat side of your chopping knife against it. With your free hand, give your knife a good whack. This will cause the garlic to break from the casing so you can easily remove it and start chopping!

What is Zucchini?

Zucchini, *Cucurbita pepo*, is a member of the cucumber and melon family. Inhabitants of Central and South America have been eating zucchini for several thousand years, but the zucchini we know today is a variety of summer squash developed in Italy. Less than thirty years ago, the zucchini was hardly recognized in the United States. Today, it is not only widely recognized, but it's a fast-growing favorite of home gardeners.

The word *zucchini* comes from the Italian *zucchini*, meaning a small squash. The term *squash* comes from the Indian *skutasquash* meaning "green thing eaten green."

Dry Foam or Encapsulate Cleaning

The goal of carpet cleaners everywhere is to get carpet as clean and as dry as possible. One of the biggest problems in that cleaning quest is recurring spots – spots that came back a day or two later. Another problem is the dullness or "ugliness" of traffic lanes.

Although regular cleaning using hot water extraction, absorbent pad, foam or compound often works, encapsulation is a method of cleaning that utilizes advanced chemistry and can solve many of your cleaning challenges – especially for commercial carpet.

This is the era of cleaning innovation. Encapsulation is growing in popularity. If you are not currently using it in your home or company, give it some serious consideration.

For those not familiar with encapsulation cleaning, here is a brief description. Encapsulation chemicals have detergency just like the typical chemicals that are used right now. The main difference is the crystal polymers. These polymers in this detergent mixture are like the "second wave" in an army attack. After the detergents have done their work (attacking, separating soils from fibers, etc.) the crystallizing polymers surround or encapsulate the detergent in solution and the soils are now suspended or emulsified. As the entire mixture dries, the encapsulation polymers dry to a crystal. This crystal is not sticky; instead, it allows easy removal with subsequent vacuuming. After the encapsulant is added and worked into the carpet, the carpet looks clean. It's not. The soil is still there, but it is "encapsulated" and waiting for someone to follow up with a vacuum cleaner.

Experts say that encapsulation technology shortens dry times after cleaning carpet. The reason is that when encapsulation polymers are in solution form, the surfactants bond with them instead of with the water, allowing the water better evaporation – and shorter dry times. You can start using your room again sooner!

Give Guarantee System a call at 616-451-0787 to help give you a cleaner living environment.

Guarantee System provides high-quality cleaning and restoration services for homes or businesses at an affordable price. When disaster strikes, we can help restore damage from fire, flood, mold, vandalism or pest eradication (wild or domesticated animals) to get your life back to normal as quickly as possible. Learn more about what we can do for you! Call (616) 451-0787 or visit www.GuaranteeSystem.com.

Carpet Cleaning Basics

Like all textile materials, the beauty and life of a carpet depends largely on the care that it is given. Proper maintenance can add years of attractive life. And for carpeting, proper maintenance includes regular vacuuming and periodic cleaning by professional methods.

Regular vacuuming should be done at least once every two weeks, preferably once each week and even twice per week in soiled or heavily trafficked areas. It is important to use a well-maintained, good quality vacuum.

Periodic Professional Cleanings

It has been said that ignorance is bliss. Sometimes, maybe, but not always. Before having a carpet cleaned, you may find it helpful to understand a few of the carpet cleaning methods.

Hot Water Extraction or "Steam" Cleaning. In this method, hot water and cleaning solution is sprayed on the carpet and immediately extracted (along with the dissolved soil) by an extractor. Hot water extraction is often referred to as "steam" cleaning. In actuality this is a misnomer as the temperature of the heated solution never reaches the point to generate steam.

Shampooing. In this process, a cleaning detergent is whipped into a foam against the carpet by a floor machine. This suspends the soil, and the wet/dry vacuum removes it.

Bonnet Cleaning. A special detergent is applied to the carpet, then agitated and absorbed, along with the soil, into the padding of the machine.

Dry (Absorbent Compound) Cleaning. An absorbent dry compound (containing solvents and detergents) is sprinkled on the carpet and worked in by a machine. It is vacuumed off after about half an hour, removing the soil, too.

How often should carpet be cleaned?

Usually, residential carpet should be cleaned every year. Don't miss your next appointment!



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