Selecting Seeds from www.Audubon.org

Different birds are attracted by different kinds of seed, so try offering a variety in separate feeders. Just make sure that the seed is compatible with both the feeder and the birds you hope to attract. Check out the home-made recipes below for even more options.

**Sunflower seed**
Black-oil seed is the preferred seed of many small feeder birds, especially in northern latitudes. Striped sunflower seed is also readily eaten, especially by large-beaked birds. Hulled sunflower seed is consumed by the greatest variety of birds; it attracts jays, red-bellied woodpeckers, finches, goldfinches, northern cardinals, evening grosbeaks, pine grosbeaks, chickadees, titmice, nuthatches, and grackles.

**Millet**
White millet is the favorite food of most small-beaked ground-feeding birds; red millet is also readily eaten. Millet attracts quail, doves, juncos, sparrows, towhees, cowbirds, and red-winged blackbirds.

**Cracked corn**
Medium cracked corn is about as popular with ground-feeding birds as millet, but it is vulnerable to rot, since the interior of the kernel readily soaks up moisture. Feed small amounts, mixed with millet, on feeding tables or from watertight hopper feeders. Avoid fine cracked corn, since it quickly turns to mush; coarse cracked corn is too large for small-beaked birds. Cracked corn attracts pheasants, quail, doves, crows, jays, sparrows, juncos, and towhees.

**Milo, wheat, oats**
These agricultural products are frequently mixed into low-priced birdseed blends. Most birds discard them in favor of other food, which leaves them to accumulate under feeders, where they may attract rodents. Milo is more often eaten by ground-feeding birds in the Southwest. It attracts pheasants, quail, and doves.

**Thistle (nyjer)**
A preferred food of American goldfinches, lesser goldfinches, house finches, and common redpolls, nyjer is sometimes called "black gold," because it costs about $1.50 per pound. Do not confuse it with prickly thistle, a pink-flowered weed used by goldfinches to line their nests.

**Suet and bird puddings (beef fat and seed)**
This mixture attracts insect-eating birds such as woodpeckers, wrens, chickadees, nuthatches, and titmice. Place the suet in special feeders or net onion bags at least five feet from the ground to keep it out of the reach of dogs. Do not put out suet during hot weather as it can turn rancid; also, dripping fat can damage natural waterproofing on bird feathers. Peanut butter pudding (recipe below) is a good substitute for suet in the summer.

**Peanuts**
Whole and crushed peanuts attract woodpeckers, jays, chickadees, titmice, bushtits, nuthatches, brown creepers, wrens, kinglets, northern mockingbirds, brown thrashers, starlings, and yellow-rumped and pine warblers. Provide these in tube-shaped, metal mesh feeders.

Follow these tips and recipes below for a home-made addition to bird seeds.

**Peanut butter pudding:** Peanut butter is a good substitute for suet in the summer. Mix one part peanut butter with five parts corn meal and stuff the mixture into holes drilled in a hanging log or into the crevices of a large pinecone. This all-season mixture attracts woodpeckers, chickadees, titmice, and occasionally warblers.

**Fruit for berry-eating birds:** Fruit specialists such as robins, waxwings, bluebirds, and mockingbirds rarely eat birdseed. To attract these birds, soak raisins and currants in water overnight, then place them on a table feeder, or purchase blends with a dried fruit mixture. To attract orioles and tanagers, skewer halved oranges onto a spike near other feeders, or provide nectar feeders.

**Nectar for hummingbirds:** Make a sugar solution of one part white sugar to four parts water. Boil briefly to sterilize and dissolve sugar crystals; no need to add red food coloring. Feeders must be washed every few days with very hot water and kept scrupulously clean to prevent the growth of mold.