

Going Wild for Garden Birds

While garden birds are more on the wild side than the domestic animals your customers usually shop for, it doesn't mean you should discount them when you're planning your stock

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Stock a selection of food to entice birds – and customers.

Y our customer base is (we'd hope!) made up of animal lovers, so it's natural that a large proportion of them will enjoy caring for wildlife as well as their own domestic pets. By stocking the products that help their customers care for wild birds in the best way possible, retailers can boost their profits with some easy-to-sell items.

Understand and educate
As anyone with even a passing interest in wildlife will know, feeding the birds that visit our gardens is more complicated than scattering a handful of 'one size fits all' bird seed on the lawn. Different products will be needed depending on the different types of bird and different types of garden, so it's important to stock a variety of products, from feed to feeders.

You and your staff will already know plenty about the different varieties of cat food and the best grooming products for dogs, but would you be able to advise a customer how to attract different garden birds, and the products they'll need to encourage them to visit regularly?

What to feed garden birds
There are many different types of wild bird

feed available for you to stock, from individual seeds and seed mixtures, to food bars or balls, and each comes with its own benefits. While shortages in natural food sources during the winter mean it's the season that springs to mind when people think of for putting food out for

garden birds, feeding them throughout the year is important for local bird populations. Spring is when adult birds will be looking for nutritious foods to feed their young, and summer is when underground food sources like worms start to bury themselves deeper. Birds naturally moult in the autumn, so need extra food, and then comes winter with a general lack of food for wildlife. So as you can see, wild bird feed will bring all year round sales.

Where to feed garden birds
Bird feeders offer another opportunity for sales, and there's something out there to suit every budget and every style. They're not just functional items, either, they're also a way for consumers to bring a bit of decorative flair to their gardens. Different feeders will suit different birds, and different spaces, anything from basic window feeders for homes with little to no garden space, to ornate feeding tables that give birds a space to feed away from all but the most dextrous of cats and squirrels. Traditional bird tables are made of wood, which many consumers like because they blend in nicely with a garden environment, but they're also available in a number of different materials and interesting designs. There are feeders designed for specific types of food, like peanut feeder cages or suet/fat ball feeders, and many have features that keep squirrels out.

Water features
Despite their name, bird baths aren't just for bathing in – though that's very important for garden birds in terms of keeping their feathers in good condition. They also provide drinking water, something as essential as food for wild birds, and something particularly important during very cold weather (when natural water reserves are likely to freeze) and during very hot, dry weather (when many natural water reserves are dried up). Just like feeders, you'll find a variety of types and designs, so stocking a selection to suit different budgets (and garden designs!) is definitely something your business will benefit from.

Offering a home to wild birds
Another way people can attract garden birds, and invite them to make themselves at home, is by putting up nesting boxes. Encourage your customers to position a box in a suitable position – not too high up, but equally not where predators like cats or squirrels have easy access – and make sure there's a feeder or two near to the box so they find it easily. Nesting boxes come in all shapes and sizes, and nest box camera systems are incredibly popular with wildlife lovers who want to be able to experience the process of nesting, from building the nest to the chicks hatching, without intruding on the birds. Selling the right products to help your customers care for the wild birds that visit their gardens benefits everyone – you'll make more sales, your customers will get more enjoyment from their local wildlife, and the birds won't have to completely fend for themselves. 📺

"Different bird feeders will suit different types of garden birds."

It's always good to stock feeders, too.



Now stock this...

- The bird seed mixes from Ark Wildlife are created to deliver the ideal natural food for the greatest number of wild birds, and in a way that's suited to their natural feeding habits. The garden wildlife specialist also offers straight seeds and nuts, fat and suet foods, live foods, accessories, feeders, and wildflower seeds. (Trade enquiries: 0800 085 4865 or office@arkwildlife.co.uk)
- Bird baths are just one of the product categories from Jacobi Jayne, they also supply a range of feeders, nest boxes, feed, and wildlife cameras. (Trade enquiries: 0800 652 4252 or darren@jacobjayne.com)
- The shabby chic hanging bird feeder is one of a number of designs available from Black Country Metalworks Ltd., where you can also get bird baths, all in a variety of metals and finishes. (Trade enquiries: www.blackcountrymetalworks.co.uk/trade)

Different types of bird feed

- Black sunflower seeds – liked by most birds.
- Sunflower hearts – liked by most birds (more expensive but easier to eat than sunflower seeds in their shells).
- Nyjer seeds – liked by goldfinches, tits, house sparrows, and siskins.
- Peanuts – liked by most birds, though only larger birds like crows and magpies would be able to tackle peanuts still in their shell.
- Mealworms – liked by blue tits, robins, starlings, and pied wagtails.
- Corn – liked by jays, magpies, crows, and ravens.