



Give the Birds a Splash...

Adding Water to Your Backyard

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Summer is just around the corner, and if you have not already done so, now is a good time to add water to your backyard garden for wildlife – especially birds! Providing water can significantly increase the number of birds you see visiting your backyard. So how do you do it? The most commonly used way is to add a birdbath. These are easy to find and come in many styles and are constructed from a variety of materials. The traditional concrete birdbath has been around for hundreds of years. Today, birdbaths can be selected to suit your needs as well as that of the birds. A simple shallow dish, ornamental pond or water garden, or even an up-turned trash can lid can provide water needs.

There are a few points and tips to consider when adding water to your backyard. If you have an outdoor cat, for example, an elevated birdbath will be a necessity. It will also need to be located away from nearby garden shrubs and trees and placed in an open area to prevent predation. If you don't have a cat, placing the bath near trees and shrubs will allow the birds a place to wait and to preen their feathers after bathing. If you opt for the traditional concrete or a similar birdbath design, placing a flagstone in the bowl off to one side will give small birds easier access. Don't place your birdbath too near the bird feeder. You do not want seed and bird waste to fall into the birdbath.

The use of drippers and misters give an added dimension to your backyard water plan. The sound of dripping water is irresistible to birds. It is best to use a specially-designed dripper for birds versus devising one from a hose. A dripper is usually constructed in the form of an arch, which can be attached to an existing birdbath. Or it can be found with



Typical birdbath.

a catch basin already attached below the dripping arch, therefore being an additional bathing area all its own. A mister is similar to the dripper only it is smaller in design, and sprays a fine mist. It is usually hung from a tree or shrub. Bird drippers and misters can be found at specialty nature/bird stores like Wild Birds Unlimited.

It is most important to keep birdbaths clean. Since birds use them daily for drinking as well as bathing, cleanliness is a must. Clean the birdbath weekly with a brush and a solution of one part bleach to ten parts water. This solution will help prevent diseases and algal growth. During extremely hot weather, replace the water daily. If you had to drink your bath water, you would want it replaced daily, too.

Food, water, cover and space make up the habitat of any wildlife species. Water is just one of the four elements needed to create a suitable backyard wildlife habitat... and it is easy to do!



Robins enjoying a birdbath.



Bluebird in birdbath.