Consider these factors when choosing a bird feeder

Backyard bird feeding is an enjoyable, entertaining and educational activity, and one that can be shared by the entire family. Attracting a wide variety of feathered friends to your backyard is easy and can brighten even the dreariest day, provided you select the right type of feeder.

While that may seem to be a bewildering task, considering the hundreds of different designs and styles available, following some basic rules can make your choice easier.

To attract several types of

birds rather than just one type, select a general feeder rather than one designed to attract only one species. Look for a well-made feeder, no matter what material it's made of. The feeder should be easy to clean, have a large seed capacity to reduce the need for filling in cold weather, and should keep seed dry. And, although this is often difficult, it should be designed to discourage squirrels as much as possible.

General feeders are made of wood, plastic and metal, and come in a variety of types, such as hanging feeders, or those that mount on a post, fence or pole.

While wood is attractive, it has several disadvantages. It is easily chewed by squirrels, is difficult to clean, allows large birds to crowd out smaller birds, and the hanging type is virtually impossible to squirrel-proof. This is also true of metal.

However, plastic feeders are easy to fill and clean, are usually squirrel-proof, and allow all birds at the feeder to be seen. When selecting a plastic feeder, be sure it has a large seed capacity, is made of an impact grade of plastic, and has moisture ports for drainage. Otherwise, moisture can be

trapped inside, which causes seed to mold.

Where you mount a feeder dictates the type of birds it will attract. Hanging feeders attract birds such as chickadees, nuthatches, finches and titmice that cling or perch while eating. Post, fence or pole mounted feeders attract cardinals, chickadees, wrens, sparrows and grosbeaks. If seed spills onto the ground, don't worry. Ground feeding birds, such as blue jays, sparrows, juncos, towhees and mourning doves not to mention squirrels — will clean it up.

Finally, when selecting a feeder, be sure form does not interfere with function. The purpose of a feeder is to attract birds, the experts point out, not to mimic barns or covered bridges. Be sure the feeder is attractive and easy to use by birds. Too many feeders discourage birds because they are beautiful to behold, but impossible to use.

Now, position your feeder where you can see it, fill it with seed, sit back and enjoy year-round fun and excitement watching the antics of your new backyard guests.



