



Aylett Nurseries
The Complete Garden Centre

Nest Boxes

Information Leaflet No. 80



Don't forget!



**14th - 21st
February**

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CHOOSING AND SITING A BIRD BOX

You can put a nest box up at any time of year. Autumn is the ideal time, as some birds will use nest boxes as roosting sites over winter and then breed in the same box in the spring. Those installed over winter or in early spring stand a good chance of being used in the same year.

Bird species vary in their nesting preferences and not all bird boxes or locations are suitable for all species. As a general rule, unless the nest box is shaded by trees or buildings you should face it between north and east, to avoid the worst of the weather and the warmest of the sunlight.

If you have an open-fronted box and want to attract robins or wrens then place your box low, below 2m and hidden in vegetation. Boxes for most other birds should be higher, at around 3m from the ground and with a clear flight path to and from the box.

Birds like a quiet spot when nesting and it's therefore a good idea to avoid putting them near bird feeders. House sparrows nest in groups and boxes designed for them can therefore be clustered, or spaced out under the eaves of one side of your house. Other species, however, are territorial and so most boxes need to be sited alone. It's also sensible to avoid areas to which cats have access.

Although smaller birds may sometimes use boxes with larger openings, they are more vulnerable to predation and to being evicted by their larger cousins, so choose your box carefully. All the nest boxes we sell list the species for which they are suitable on the packaging, but please ask if you are unsure.

Slightly larger boxes and particularly those with greater depth, tend to be more successful nest sites. For small birds try and choose boxes where the distance from the entrance hole to the box floor is more than 125mm to reduce the chance of nestlings falling out, or of being removed by a cat.

Once your box is occupied it's best to leave it alone and watch from a distance as disturbance makes it more likely that parent birds will desert their young. The BTO are the experts on nest box recording, should you be interested in nestling trends see www.bto.org.

MAINTENANCE

Boxes made from softwood will benefit from preservative, and a water-based product should be chosen to avoid harm to the birds. A cedar box will age gracefully and not require any additional care.

It is inadvisable to fill the nest box with bedding material, but those provided with a handful of clean hay or wood shavings (not straw) are more likely to be used by birds for roosting over the winter, or even by hibernating mammals. Birds will search for materials when nest building, and if you leave something suitable out, like wool or hair from dog grooming, you can enjoy watching them gather what they need. We stock boxes of lovely soft Scottish wool alongside our nest boxes, which is ideal for the purpose.

CLEANING

At the end of the breeding season it's a good idea to clean out the nest box and remove any old nesting material.

Birds and their nests are protected by law. It is however, legal to remove old nests outside of the breeding season, between the 1st of August and the 31st of January. October or November is the best time to do this as some species have multiple broods over the course of the year.

Any eggs found during cleaning cannot be legally kept or sold, and must be destroyed. Once the nest box is empty, boiling water can be used to kill off any parasites that remain.

NEST BOXES FOR OTHER SPECIES

If you are puzzling over nest boxes for types of bird not mentioned in this leaflet, do ask as we may have something suitable, or be able to order it from one of our suppliers.

NATIONAL NEST BOX WEEK



During February, starting on St Valentine's Day every year, National Nest Box Week exists to encourage us all to put up nest boxes in our local areas.

The British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) with support from Jacobi Jayne run the week and provide lots of great information about nest boxes, to tie in with this yearly event. Visit their website www.bto.org for more information.

As well as the BTO, the RSPB also publish excellent resources on helping birds in your garden. Their website www.rspb.org.uk is a great place to start.

**This leaflet is available in
alternative formats.**

Please ask a member of staff or
Tel: 01727 822255
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