

# Useful Reusing - Windmill's Bird Friendly Features



Many of our bird-friendly features at Windmill make use of waste. This means that we can help improve the chances for local wild birds without having to spend money on fancy kits or look for special equipment. Birds will benefit from warm dry places to nest and to shelter in, in bad weather. Because we tend to be a bit too tidy, and worried about hollow trees, there are less natural holes and hollows around for birds in built-up areas, so it helps if we can provide artificial versions. Any features you install should also be placed to minimise the chances of cats being able to get into them. It also helps to think of the main wind direction in your area, so that anything you install gives shelter from the wind. Anything you put up for a nesting site will benefit from being cleaned annually in Autumn - just use boiling water if it can cope with the heat, or soapy water and then rinse it. Re-install immediately, to provide a sheltered spot for Winter roosting. And don't forget the value of feeding birds - you can use waste items for this too.

## Old teapots

An old teapot can make a good nest box for birds like robins that like a large opening for their nesting site. Place the teapot with the spout downwards, so that any moisture will drain out of the nest. Ours is tucked into a briar-rose, to provide some safety from cats.

## Plant pots

We found that one of our local robin pairs likes to nest in flowerpots last year, when they set up a nest in our pot-store. This year, we have given them a hand by adding plastic pots to some of the boundary hedges. We have wired them in to make sure they are stable, and placed them so they are not easy for cats to climb into.





### **Nesting ledge**

Birds like wrens, robins and blackbirds will appreciate a nesting ledge if it is sheltered and not easily reached by predators. Our one has proved to be a favourite of local wrens. We made it simply by knocking 4 nails into wood between 2 rafters and balancing a tile on top of them. This was our solution when the birds had been trying to nest on a narrow ledge above the sink in our outdoor kitchen, so we moved the fallen nest material onto the shelf, and they moved in straight away!



### **Nesting material**

Leaving nesting material out near areas where birds are nesting can help them. We save hair from our brushes, and then place this in the nets that oranges are sold in, and leave it around the



allotment edges for the birds to use. We also put out fluff from when we groom our pets and from tumble-driers. Birds will readily take anything useful so it can be very interesting to look for old nests to see how the materials get used.

## Bird Feeders

Bird feeders can be made from almost anything non-toxic. It helps if the material is easy to clean, as a dirty bird-feeder can cause bird-food to pass on bacteria and fungus that isn't healthy for birds. It also helps if the feeder has a roof to keep moisture out of the food, again for health reasons. Plastic bottles can make a good feeder. Our design uses a 2 litre milk bottle. We just made some holes in the base to allow water or condensation out, then cut some holes in the sides to allow birds to get access to the seed. Leaving a little flap of plastic sticking out at the top of the holes provides a bit of protection from rain getting in. The bird-feeder can then be tied to a stick or hung from a tree.



In the summer and autumn, we also help birds by leaving seed-heads for them to enjoy, and growing berry-bearing trees and bushes for them to benefit from, like sunflowers, thistles, ivy, honeysuckle, hawthorn and elder. The key thing is not to be too tidy, and to leave plenty of standing seed heads over winter, rather than tidying up and leaving everything flat to the ground in the cold weather.

