**Bird Baths and other Water Sources**

**Primetime News**

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When the weather is hot and dry, one of the most useful things you can do is provide a water source for the birds in your landscape.

The water sources can be static or running; a cardinal or Inca dove is not fussy when they are thirsty. The usual static water source is a bird bath.

Bird baths are shallow dishes on pedestals. You fill them with a hose and the birds bathe and drink from the dish on the pedestal.

They should be shallow if you want the birds to step into the water and bathe. One to 2 deep with sloped rough surfaces is ideal for bird bathing. Sometimes two or three species will be in the water together. If you have more than one bird bath in an area, you may be able to observe four or five species bathing at one time. The water will be splashing high and wide.

Bird baths can be plain and functional or incorporate works of art. The common materials used are masonry, plastic or metal.

Most pedestals are about 3 feet tall. The height makes it easier to see the birds as they splash and drink, and it probably offers some protection against predators such as cats that lurk closer to the ground.

I prefer the masonry bird baths because the water does not heat up and evaporate as quickly as metal. The masonry is also more stable than the lighter plastic; however, both materials work. When it is 95 degrees during the day, the bird baths usually need to be refilled every day whether they are metal, masonry or plastic.

When deciding where to place your bird bath, try to select a site 6 to 8 feet from shrubs and thickets. A lurking cat cannot usually leap to capture a bird from the distance, but it is close enough for the bird to seek shelter from cruising hawks.

If you can, offer running water as it is especially desirable to birds. Even high-flying migrating birds seem to notice the moving water and will make a rest stop for a drink and splash.

In San Antonio, you could expect to see orioles, painted buntings, indigo buntings and several kinds of warblers during spring and fall migration at your running water source.

Bird baths are splashed or evaporate dry every day so it does not work to hook an agitator or recirculating pump unless you have some kind of reservoir with a seven day supply of water. A barrel sunk in the ground requires some serious work but works well. A 100-gallon pond also works well. Set a prefab plastic pond in the ground, decorate it with Louisiana iris and other water plants and use a small pump placed in the pond to move the water to a short stream bed or waterfalls made of rock. The birds will love it.

Another option is to find a dripper connection for your hose. The water drips from a small goose neck pipe into the bird bath.

Bird baths, dripper connections, plastic ponds, recirculating pumps and even the rock required for a waterfall or stream bed can be found at your favorite nursery, home supply stores, lumber yards and bird supply retailers.

A bird bath is easy to set up and the extra work to provide a running source of water is worth it because of the extra birds it will attract.

Water sources will also attract squirrels and bees. Providing the squirrel a drink may reduce their inclination to girdle branches on your oak tree as they seek moisture from the Cambrian layer. The bees have been having an especially tough time surviving diseases, mites and drought. The water from your bird baths may result in more bees being available to pollinate the flowers, fruits and vegetables in your garden.

**Garden Tasks**

It is a good time to plant wildflower seeds. Obtain a mix for your area from the nursery or by mail order. Select a site in full sun with bare ground visible to spread the seed. Do not bury the seed. Raking before application helps germination rates but is not necessary.

Pre-emergent herbicide to prevent winter weeds such as bedstraw, beggar’s lice, dandelion, thistle and rescue grass should be applied now. Check the label to make sure your target weed is covered.

Green beans, summer squash, carrots, beets, lettuce, rutabaga, turnips and radishes can all be planted by seed in the garden.

To reduce the chance of brown patch, now that the nights are cooler, limit lawn watering to the morning and keep the lawn on the dry side.