

## Build A Nestbox

Bird nestboxes can be expensive and elaborate so here is an economical alternative.

The best time to make and place a nestbox is in the autumn. However as nests sometimes get destroyed or raided, birds can look for replacement sites in spring and early summer. In poor weather birds may roost in the box or just visit to collect flies

### **Making your box**

Any sort of wood will do. Exterior grade plywood is the best but plank wood makes cutting easier. Remember to adjust the dimensions of the floor to suit the thickness of the wood you use. The dimensions shown are for 15mm thickness.

Galvanised nails will last longer than ordinary nails. Seal the sides with sealant as you build, to make the box both windproof and waterproof. A small drainage hole in the base is essential to let liquid waste drain away or in open front boxes to let any rainwater drain away.

Do not be tempted to add a perch as this allows predators to intimidate the nestlings and may force the adult birds to leave. The hole should be at the top of the box to keep the young out of the reach of cats or squirrels. Hole size is important as great tits will oust blue tits if they can get in the box. Blue tit and coal tit 25mm hole, great tit 28mm hole, house sparrow 32mm hole.

The birds may be seen pecking at the hole. This does not mean that the hole is too small. If you increase the hole you may lose the birds.

Painting the box is not necessary. Indeed some colours have been proved to put birds off. A coat of linseed oil will keep the wood from drying out, though is not essential. Some wood preservatives can be poisonous to animals so they are best avoided.

### **Where to fix your nestbox**

The nestbox should be shaded from the hot sun and sheltered from prevailing winds. In the United Kingdom this means facing north-east, east or south east. If necessary place the hole in the side of the box. A little early morning sun will do no harm. Between 2m and 3m above ground level is best. Most birds like a clear flight path into the nestbox so avoid any obvious obstructions.

Boxes too close together or near a bird table will invite competition, so allow birds a bit of their own territory.

A little piece of dried moss placed in the bottom of your nestbox may be just enough to attract a family.

Clean out the box every year. Rinse with boiling water to kill parasites or use a short lived insecticide such as pyrethrum powder. Good luck!

# Basic Tit Box

