

# ATTRACTING GOLDFINCHES

**1. How do I know which type of feeder will work best?** At Acorn Naturalists, we have tried just about every kind of goldfinch feeder available today, and over a five-year test period at several sites, we have consistently found that the thin tube 20-perch feeder that we offer outperforms all others. This feeder is the original thin-tube feeder, manufactured in the US by Hope Industries, which provides employment opportunities to people with disabilities.

**2. Will other species of birds be attracted to the feeder?** Your goldfinch feeder may attract several species of goldfinches, depending on where you live as well as house finches and below the feeder, mourning doves will scavenge fallen seed.

**3. I have heard of the goldfinch food referred to as "thistle." Is this the spiny plant with purple flowers that grows wild in fields and will it germinate in my garden?** No, although the word thistle is commonly used for goldfinch seed, the seed used in goldfinch feeders is nyjer seed. Nyjer seed is heat sterilized and will not germinate in your garden.

**4. I have seen thicker diameter feeders with fewer perches. Why does Acorn Naturalists carry such a thin, multi-perch goldfinch feeder?** We have experimented with all types, and have found that in side-by-side tests at various locations, goldfinches invariably seek out this thin-diameter feeder. We have also noticed a higher predation rate (by Cooper's hawks) of goldfinches feeding on the thick tubes. Goldfinches are nervous, flighty birds, and we speculate that they prefer the thin diameter tubes because it is easier for them to peer around the tube and avoid ambushes by predators. The tubes we offer also have many more perch sites than other brands, and goldfinches seem to feel "safer in numbers."

**5. What do I do if the seed gets wet?** The feeders we offer have a patented "double cap" that prevents moisture from entering through the top. During exceptionally heavy downpours some water may seep into the small holes that allow for the seed to exit. If moisture is collecting on the inside of the tube from such a rain, it is best to wait for the rain to end, and then empty and refill the feeder. In ten years of feeding finches, we have only had to do this a few times. Usually the birds peck out the moist seed which is replaced by dry seed at the opening.

**6. Do the finches eat the whole seed?** No, they "husk" the seed and eat just the kernel. As a result, under the feeder hulled nyjer seed will collect. In most areas this presents no problem, but you can also scoop up the hulls every few weeks and use it as mulch for other garden or house plants.

**7. I placed my feeder out and no goldfinches seem to be coming to it. What am I doing wrong?** First of all, it sometimes takes several weeks (even months) for goldfinches to locate your feeder. You will know they are feeding when the food level in the tube drops. Also, make sure the feeder is at the right height (with the bottom of the feeder at least five feet off the ground) and preferably close to a canopy of branches of some other form of "cover" for the birds to retreat into when threatened by Cooper's hawks or other predators. Placing two or more feeders in different locations sometimes speeds up the process - once one of the feeders is located, the other is usually soon occupied as well.

**8. Is all nyjer seed the same?** In purchasing nyjer seed at various retail stores over the years, we have noticed that most brands contain considerable amounts of non-seed materials and sometimes other types of bird seed. Not only is this wasteful, but it also results in clogged feeders, often frustrating the birds (they can't get to the seed) who will soon abandon the feeder. The seed we offer in our store is pure and triple-cleaned, thus minimizing these problems.

**9. Once I start feeding, what happens to the birds if I stop?** There have been many studies done on this, and the bottom line is that birds are smarter than we think. They quickly seek alternate sources. If you stop for a week or two, they will come right back when you refill the feeder. If you stop for a longer period of time (more than a month) you may have to start all over, with possibly a week or more lag time until the goldfinches rediscover your feeder. Good luck with your goldfinch adventures!

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