

Build your own Nest Box!

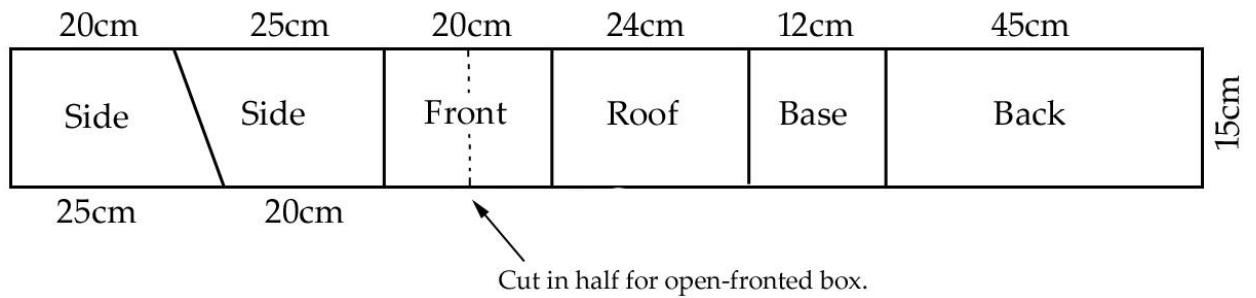
If you have mature trees or high walls or a blank gable end to your house, putting up a nest box to attract birds in summer is well worth considering. Like the bird table, you can buy one or make one. If you want to buy you have to be even more careful than with a bird table. Nest boxes, often referred to as bird houses, come in an incredible array of designs and colours and most on the market are over-priced and almost useless or even harmful to birds. There is the hybrid - half-nest box, half-bird

table - which is usually no good for either purpose. Then there are the nest boxes that are too small or so completely sealed that, if you are lucky enough to get a bird nesting in it, not only will you be unable to check the progress of your lodgers but also you will be unable to clean it out in the winter without dismantling it. Birds rarely use the same nest box twice if the old nest is not removed (usually in early October). Then if you do find what looks like a proper nest box (see illustration) it will probably be so well-crafted that there will be no drainage holes at the bottom to allow any rain which gets into the box to drain away.

The main requirements for a good nest box are that it has a lid that can be opened or removed and that it has roughly the dimensions and hole-size as one of those illustrated.

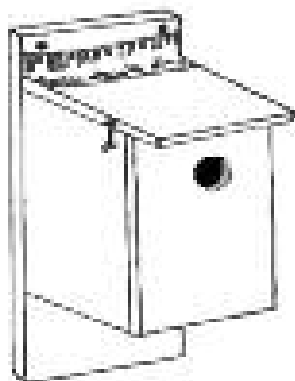
Ideally, nest boxes should be sited in a quiet place, 2.5 metres to 3.5 metres off the ground on a tree trunk or on the gable of a house. A new nest box should be put up between October and the end of January. It should not be within reach of children, who once shown it might not leave it alone. Nest boxes with an entrance hole should not be placed in a bush, as most birds that use these nest boxes like a clear open view around the entrance. Do not nail the box to a living tree; instead, use plastic-coated wire or strong string, and remember to loosen wire each year to allow for tree growth. If you do not have a suitable place, a neighbour or friend might. If at all possible put the nest box facing between the north and east, away from hot summer sun, and from Ireland's prevailing winds and the worst of our wet weather. Don't be disappointed if your new box is not occupied in the first year. It may take two or even three years for a lodger to move in, If you want to put up more than one box they should be at least 9 metres apart. In the winter your nest box might be used as a roosting site for small birds such as wrens, so after some ongoing maintenance

and repairs in early October put your nest box back in place. Sixty-four wrens were counted entering a nest box to roost for the night on one winter's evening!

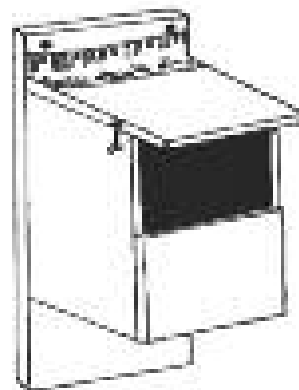


Nest box plan using approximately 15mm thick timber or exterior plywood.

	<i>Hole-fronted box hole diameter</i>	<i>Open-fronted front opening</i>	<i>Box height</i>
Blue tit	25mm		>2m
Great tit	28mm		>2m
House sparrow	32mm		>2m
Robin		60mm	<2m
Pied/grey wagtail		60mm	2-4m
Wren	25mm	60mm	< 2m
Coal tit	25mm		<2m
Starling	45mm		>4m
Spotted flycatcher		60mm	>4m



Hole-fronted box



Open-fronted box

Build your own Bird Table!

Dimensions (guideline)

Roof Panels (2) 230 x 440 mm

Central Roof support column 80x40x180mm

Table 300x415mm

Table raised Edging 20x10mm

Gap at table corners 15mm

Internal Roof Angle 125 degrees.

Table and roof material 12mm (approx) plywood

Notes

These dimensions can vary but I would recommend sticking as close as possible for it to function properly. If the roof is too high bigger birds can get onto the table and scare off all smaller birds.

Materials and ways of putting the table together are open to improvement by those, unlike me, who actually know something about carpentry!

I use available timber but marine plywood would be the best material for the table and roof. I also coat the timber with something like Bondex waterproof wood stain. Put a hook on the side to hang a peanut feeder or fat ball.

I used a piece of scrap box iron as the stand but an extended length of timber with the same width and depth as the central roof support column (80x40mm) could be used. Put eye-hooks at either end of the roof if you want to hang it somewhere sheltered.

Make sure the final height of the table is such that the table surface is roughly at eye level to the viewer. Too low and the roof obscures the view of the birds coming and going and too high and the table itself will block your view.

If the table is to be moveable and not stuck in the ground a cross-timber base support would be required or else a large container filled with sand or rocks would do.



Roof Panel

Central Roof Support Column

Table Raised Edging

Internal Roof Angle

Table

