

Sprout Seeds for Pet Birds

Looking for a new bird food to serve to your pet bird? Try sprouting seeds for your parrot by following these tips.

from BIRD TALK Magazine

and some things that work for us

Sprouts for pet birds? Absolutely! Sprouting is one of the best ways to ensure your bird gets some of the best nutrition available, made fresh by Mother Nature. There are so many advantages to sprouting, it's unbelievable.

Seeds have been supplied with all of the nutrients, energy and information needed to become a plant. Thus, when sprouted, seed has the nutritional value of the plant but in a more concentrated form. Considering the fact that parrots are much smaller than people, this packs a huge wallop of nourishment for your bird in the sprout's tiny package.

Meyer's parrot

By Gina Cioli/BowTie

Serve seeds in a new way by sprouting them.

From Seed To Sprout

Seeds are shells containing the potential for a living plant; a wonderful invention in Mother Nature's cupboard. But Nature has allowed for many possibilities and installs defense mechanisms in numerous life forms including the little seed. Seeds not only contain the blueprints for plant building, they contain toxins, including enzyme inhibitors that protect them until tip-top conditions make themselves available to start the growth process. Seeds also contain fat, the fuel used to provide energy to produce a plant. Sprouting the seed gets rid of the toxins, burns unwanted fat and transforms this life form from one type of food into a more nutritious one.

Sprouts are essentially live bundles of pure nutrition, all in one tiny purse. They contain digestible energy, vitamins A, C, E, B, minerals, amino acids, proteins, antioxidants and phytochemicals, which have protective and disease preventative properties. Sprouts are also stuffed with digestive enzymes. These enzymes break down the food consumed, making it absorbable. If your pet bird eats and doesn't absorb the nutrition food contains, it doesn't do your parrot much good. The digestive enzymes in sprouts make the delivery of the nutrition more efficient. They are comparable to a "package delivery system" of the digestive world.

Research suggests that the period of time when there are the most enzymes in a sprout is between germination and seven days. It has been estimated that there could be up to 100 times more digestive enzymes in sprouts than in a full-grown plant, depending on the type of sprout.

Ann Brooks, Founder of Phoenix Landing, a nonprofit parrot welfare organization, is one of many sprouting advocates. "When you think of bird seed, think sprouts. These are live plants, packed with growing nutrition, the very food stuff of parrots in the wild. If there is one whole food you can encourage your parrot to eat, from budgies to macaws, this would be my choice!"

You don't have to be a horticulturist or even have a green thumb to succeed at sprouting. You can sprout easily, efficiently and safely using basic equipment that is readily available. You can purchase a good quality sprouting mix or buy individual seed and make your own personal mix and begin sprouting almost immediately.

The Power of Sprouts

Sprouts should be a major component of your birds' diet all year round. As a living food, sprouts offer more than 700 times the nutritional value of fruits, veggies, and greens, making them an indispensable part of a complete diet. While they do not replace these other foods, sprouts complement them, contributing to a balanced and nutritious feeding regimen.

Health Benefits of Sprouting

Feeding birds a natural diet rich in a blend of sprouted legumes, seeds, and grains has numerous health benefits. These include:

- **Healthier Birds:** Birds on a natural diet tend to be healthier and exhibit fewer health issues and illnesses.
- **Excellent Healing Properties:** The nutrients in sprouts help birds with excellent healing properties, reducing the risk of complications.
- **Improved Egg Production:** Birds experience fewer problems associated with egg production, resulting in higher quality and viable eggs for breeding.
- **Enhanced Feather Colour:** A deeper saturation of feather colour is observed in birds fed a diet rich in sprouts.
- **Healthy Weight Maintenance:** Birds maintain a healthier weight level with no obesity problems.

- Behavioral Improvements: Birds who have developed feather destruction behaviors respond well to a diet rich in sprouted foods.

What You'll Need

- good quality sprouting mix or buy individual seed and make your own personal mix
- Glass jars, bridal netting and a rubber band or a commercial sprouting kit
- Water

Sprouting Tips

1) Place the desired amount of sprouting mix in a clean, glass canning jar and fill with water. If you are using a sprouting kit, place the rubber netting over the mouth of the jar, fit the ring over the net, and screw the ring on to hold the netting in place. The ring has no top allowing the jar to breathe through the netting.

2) Rinse the sprout mix several times; drain and refill until the water rinses clear and clean. Refill the jar until it covers the mix with lukewarm water and let sit overnight.

3) The next morning, drain the water and rinse until the water is clear and rinses clean. Place the jar upside-down at a 45-degree angle in a dish rack or in a bowl so that any excess water drains and the mix is allowed to breathe. Make sure that air can circulate around the sprout mix.

4) At least two to three times a day, rinse the sprouts and place at a 45-degree angle to allow drainage. Keep the jar out of direct sunlight but in a place where it is at least room temperature.

Within two to three days, you will have little protrusions emerging from the seeds of your sprout mix. These are plants emerging out of the seed shell, alive and growing. The plants look like little tails that keep lengthening. You now have a sprout; a viable living plant packed with nutrition waiting to benefit your pet bird!

Storing Sprouts

Sprouts are a living organism, so you can refrigerate them after they have sprouted to the desired length drain excess water off before you refrigerate. Wet sprouts tend to decay.

Leslie Moran author of *The Complete Guide to Successful Sprouting for Parrots and Everyone Else in the Family* and host of moranscritterconnection.com, recommends the sniff test to determine if the sprouts are fresh. "Sprouts are living foods. They should look vibrant and alive, and smell fresh and inviting. If sprouts develop a 'slimy' appearance or their smell repels you, throw them out and begin again."

After you are done growing your sprouts, ensure they are dry to the touch, and store them inverted in their growing jar or in one of the special commercially available produce bags. After the final rinse, dry them by letting them stand inverted in the jar for a few hours or use a salad spinner to dry them before placing them in the storage bag.

Parrot Meets Sprout

Learning to sprout is one thing; getting your pet birds to eat them is another matter entirely. But there was probably a time when your pet birds weren't familiar with other foods until they tried them. You have many options for introducing your birds to fresh sprouts:

Our birds are waiting for their sprouts every morning and don't mix with anything else.

- Add to scrambled eggs.
- Add to a cooked bean mash by adding just before serving.
- Add to a vegetable mix.
- Offer as treats or rewards
- Have your birds observe you eating sprouts.
- Hide them in some of the food you share with them.
- Chop finely and serve mixed in with your bird's regular wet food.

Most pet birds eagerly gobble them up, but if your pet bird is suspicious, just keep trying!

Sometimes it may take up to a few months but the persistence is well worth it for your birds health.

An Ongoing Cycle

Start the soaking process about two days before your first sprouts are eaten and, in a day or two, you will have a fresh crop ready to feed your pet birds. As you become more comfortable with this process, you can estimate the rhythm of your sprouting with the correct amount and have several cycles of fresh sprouts in an ongoing process. This ensures that fresh sprouts are available every day.

Sprouting is a very easy process. Once you get the basics down, you can begin sprouting on a regular basis. Fresh sprouts add an entire spectrum of nutrition to your pet bird's diet, as well as your family's.