

decision are well understood. Some members may wish to argue that we should leave the streams to evolve naturally. If that is your choice, what if anything should be done with the excessive soil erosion which has turned our streams red for over a hundred years?

When you decide to plant a tree near your house, how do you establish which species is best? While slightly less complex in nature, many of the considerations are similar.

A SECOND STOREY BACKYARD FEEDER

by Doug Murray

Some years ago someone told me that our house was upside down. They were referring to the fact that we built into the side of a hill and the bedrooms are downstairs with the living area up above. This configuration, our proximity to mixed woods on two sides and the trees we have planted in the last decade contribute to the setting for our bird feeder. The house is designed with three foot wide eaves on the south side over the sunscreen which is between floors. Both are intended to protect us from summer heat. The sunscreen offers an ideal opportunity for feeding and watching birds from our dining room.

Our feeder is actually several feeders which are changed with the seasons since we feed the birds all year. The main one is an inverted garbage can lid (plastic) mounted far enough above the sunscreen so we can see it from the dining table. Holes are drilled in it to drain any water. A flat lid is preferable to a domed type. Centered directly above the lid hanging from the eaves is a standard six perch feeder for smaller birds. Mounted above the sunscreen over the lid is a six foot wide rail made from a quarter inch by inch piece of wood that is used for a perch. In addition, a log for suet is hung from the eaves about two feet to one side and a screw eye in the bottom of it accommodates a hummingbird feeder or suet net in season. A second six perch feeder is used at times depending on numbers and species visiting and is hung below the other one. All of course are adjacent to the dining room window and are within reach of the opening section for daily filling. We use sunflower seed and thistle primarily. The hanging feeder is directly above the lid to preserve some seed when a picky nuthatch can't find what he likes. Also, although the thistle is only placed in the upper feeder, a great deal is dropped by siskins and finches and is recycled in the lid. What gets to the ground below of course is not wasted. In busy times, twelve perches and the lid have been occupied momentarily with the log serving as a waiting area.

Proximity to the house and our movements in the house may inhibit a few shy species from visiting. We do enjoy the more gregarious species like chickadees, nuthatches, Blue Jays, Evening Grosbeaks, Purple Finches, siskins and hummers. Added to that we have irregular visits from Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers, White-throated Sparrow, Cowbirds, Northern Juncos, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks and American Goldfinches but we are always watching for the surprise newcomer. There are at least twenty regular species in our yard in summer and a dozen in winter and about 80 % use the feeder. Of the added trees, the silver maple, butternut, and snowberry bush are their favorites. Perhaps the most interesting time is mid-summer when the fledglings appear and are fed by their parents on the perch. Jays and Evening Grosbeaks have been the most regular families to appear. May and October are the hardest months on the feed budget, the latter because the jays insist on planting them all over the lawn rather than eating them. In the spring it is the sheer numbers and three species will be together in the lid with the tiny siskins giving very little ground to the scrappy Evening Grosbeaks. Perhaps the aspect that we enjoy most is that things are always changing out there in this extension to our dining room.

