

[Sprouting or Germinating Seeds for Your Birds](#)

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[Bird Nutrition](#)

Sprouted or germinating seeds presents the simplest method of providing your birds with fresh greens. They are a healthy food addition for all birds, but are absolute

necessity for the feeding hen and for the newly weaned young. Sprouted or germinated seeds are usually more easily accepted by "seed addicts" than fresh fruits and vegetables.



- Sprouted seeds are more nutrient-dense as they are high in vegetable proteins, vitamins, minerals, enzymes, and chlorophyll.
- Sprouted seeds are lower in fat, as the process of sprouting utilizes the fat in the seed to start the growing process - thus reducing the fat stored in the seeds.
- It is an invaluable food at all times; however, it is especially important for breeding or molting birds. Sprouted seeds also serve as a great rearing and weaning food as the softened shell is easier to break by chicks and gets them used to the texture of seeds.
- Sprouting: Sprouting is the practice of soaking seeds overnight (1 part seeds to 5 parts water), draining them, placing them into a sprouting jar (a sieve propped up in a bowl to allow the water to drain will do just fine); and then rinsing the seeds several times a day until they start to sprout (they usually start sprouting after about 24 hours) - at which time they are ready to feed. For the next days, the seeds will continue to grow. The different stages provide different nutrients to your bird. For a few birds, a few tablespoons of seeds are sufficient. If properly attended to, the sprouted seeds will last for up to 5 days. Discard if a foul smell can be detected. If early spoiling is an issue, adding a few drops of Hydrogen Peroxide or GSE added to the rinsing water will prevent early spoiling. In most cases, this may not be necessary.

Don't want to go through the trouble of sprouting?

- Germination offers an easy, clean and safe way to provide superior nutrition to your birds. Simply soak the seeds to the point where the root tips show and feed to your birds
 - **Process:** Soak a daily portion of seeds, grains and legumes ("[Sprouts](#)") in pure, clean water overnight. If you keep the seeds at room temperature (on the counter, for example), the seeds start germinating after 12 hours. If you keep the soaking seeds in the fridge, it will take around 24 hours to germinate).

Germination is safer as the process is shorter and the seeds or grains don't have time to deteriorate - and yet, germinated seeds also offer superior "living" nutrition similar to sprouts.... Note: only germinate one portion at a time.

I always provide sprouts every day without fail -- even if I don't have time to wash and cut veggies and fruits some days -- providing a spoonful of sprouts is so easy and convenient, and I know it's good for my birds. Sprouts offer an inexpensive and convenient way to feed fresh greens to your birds daily. (Please note sprouts should be rationed in "hormonal" birds - or those suffering from kidney disease. Rather than feeding daily, feed a few times a week, or per vet's recommendation.)

Little time, effort or space is needed to make sprouts.. In addition to the regular bird seeds, many seeds for sprouting are available in health food stores.

Basics of Sprouting:

You start with a good sprouting mix. Several producers of sprouting mixes are listed on [this webpage](#). Take a small portion of it and rinse it well. Then cover it with water (1 part of seeds to 5 parts of water) and put it in the fridge overnight.

The next morning, rinse well and place in a common strainer (like the one to the right) and place the strainer in a plastic or glass container that allows any rinse water to drain into the container.



Water the mix several times a day thoroughly to remove any mold / bacteria, etc. and also to keep the sprouting mix moist -- a requirement for sprouting. Your sprouts should have an agreeable / sweetish scent. If you can detect a foul smell -- an indicator of bacteria or mold growing on it -- toss it. Don't feed to your birds. There are ways to prevent your sprouts from going off prematurely, one of which is to rinse frequently and thoroughly to rinse off mold, etc. Other tips are discussed below.

What is Needed for Sprouting:

To sprout seeds, the seeds are moistened, then left at room temperature (between 15.4 degrees and 69.8 degrees Fahrenheit or 13 and 21 degrees Celsius) in a sprouting vessel. Moisture, warmth, and in most cases, indirect sunlight are necessary for sprouting.

Many different types of vessels can be used:

- A normal kitchen sieve propped up in a plastic or glass container / bowl works perfectly fine; or
- Tiered' clear plastic sprouters. I bought several over Amazon and found the one to the right to be the easiest one to use. I



also tried the "easy sprouter" but I found it cumbersome to use. The tiered sprouter is convenient because it allows me to sprout different crops at different stages. The instructions that come with the sprouter advise you not to wash it in the dishwasher, but I have been doing so without any problems. However, I place the sprouter in the top tray of the dishwasher. Alternatively:

- Automatic Sprouter -- expensive, but if you don't have time to sufficiently rinse the sprouts -- it represents an option.

Sprouts are rinsed as little as twice a day, but possibly three or four times a day in hotter climates, to prevent them from souring. I keep my sprouts right on the window sill above my sink -- that way they get plenty of light and I can't forget to rinse them throughout the day. If your house isn't air conditioned and you live in a hot and humid area, I would recommend keeping the sprouts in the fridge. They take longer to sprout, but you have less to worry about fungi, mildew or bacteria.

Birds like sprouts when they just started to open up, which usually happens after one day or so of sprouting.

Common causes for sprouts to turn out inedible:

- Seeds are allowed to dry out
- Seeds are left in standing water
- Temperature is high or too low
- Insufficient rinsing
- Dirty equipment
- Insufficient air flow

These problems are easily solved by an automatic sprouter that mists and drains the sprouts at regular intervals. To control temperature, in the winter a warming blanket can be placed under the sprouter, and in the summer small fans in the lid if it's very hot and humid.

How much do I need?

For a few birds only a quarter cup of seeds should be sprouted at a time. Seeds increase in volume tremendously when sprouted. Place the seeds in a clean glass jar. Fill with tap water and let stand at room temperature for twenty-four hours. Rinse and drain completely. I keep the seeds in a sieve propped up in a plastic container and repeat the rinsing and draining completely daily until the seed has sprouted.

Ways to Keep Sprouted Seeds fresh longer:

If a foul odor or mold develops, discard.

Ways to prevent spoilage (choose one or a variation of the below - whatever works best for you):

Hydrogen Peroxide: Add 1 ounce **3% hydrogen peroxide** to 1 pint of water and soak the seeds overnight. Add the same amount of hydrogen peroxide each time you rinse the seeds. (It prevents bacterial growth)

GSE: Alternatively, adding a few drops of **Grapefruit Seed Extract (GSE)** in the soaking and rinsing water will also prevent pathogens from developing. As an additional benefit, GSE also has good anti-parasitic properties.

Buffered, Powdered [Vitamin C](#) (example Nutricology or other brand): A little powder added to the sprouting water should keep it fresh.

Organic Apple Cider Vinegar: ACD alters pH and so is effective in killing many pathogens.

Rinsing and draining well is very important.

After sprouting commenced - keep refrigerated. Any surplus sprouts may be refrigerated up to two weeks.

[Sprouting by T. Billings](#) - Excellent article on sprouting. If you would like to have more in-depth information on this topic, this article is likely to have it.

NEED A VET?

USA: [Find Your Local Avian Veterinarian](#)

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