

NOTES

BENEDICT'S HOME & GARDEN

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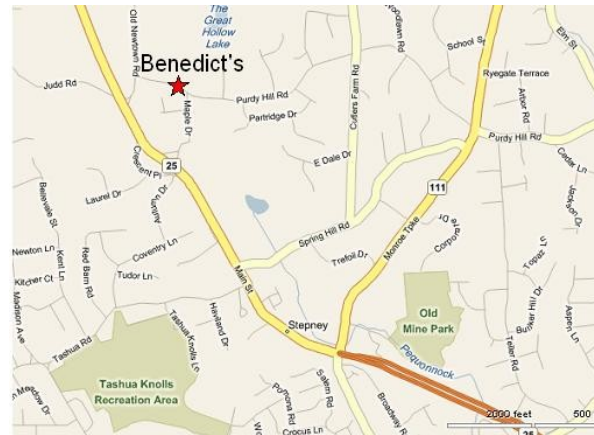
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Bluebird Houses



BENEDICT'S
HOME & GARDEN

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Pic: livingroomtunes.com/newambassador

Correct Dimensions, Placement & Maintenance

Since bluebirds cannot excavate their old homes, instead relying on old woodpecker homes or rotting trees for their home, they will readily rely upon someone provide housing for them. However, they are quite picky about how their house is designed and where it is located.

A good bluebird house should have a 5"x5" floor, a box height between 8" and 12", an entrance around 6" to 10" above the floor, and a diameter of the entrance hole approximately 1 1/2". The house should be made of a durable wood, such as cedar, and it should have ventilation holes in the top and drainage holes in the bottom.

How to Mount Your Feeder

Bluebird houses can be mounted on poles, fence posts, utility poles, or trees. Posts and poles are the best for providing protection from predators. If you use a fence post, be sure to mount the house where livestock can't get to it. When possible, face the house to the next post so that the birds can look into the entrance hole from a perch. Mounting on trees is less desirable because of the threat of climbing predators like cats, raccoons, squirrels and snakes.

The bottom of the next box should be at least 3 feet above the ground. Ideally, it should be mounted 4-5' above ground. There is no single compass direction the birds prefer to face; your main objective should be to deter climbing predators, but allow for easy monitoring.

Face the houses away from prevailing winds. The most important aspect of mounting is to face the burlap toward some tree or shrub within 100'. When they young leave the nest, they will make an initial flight to safety.

Where is the Best Place to Mount Bluebird Houses?

Whatever you do, make sure you place your nest boxes in good bluebird habitat. Not even the best bluebird house will attract bluebirds if it is in the wrong place.

During breeding, bluebirds hunt insects by scanning the ground from a perch, spotting an insect, and swooping down to the ground to get it. Scattered young trees or shrubs, fence posts and lower branches of a lone mature tree make good hunting perches.

Nest boxes should be at least 100 feet from bushy or wooded area where wrens are likely to be and preferably at least 1/4 mile from farmyards or barns where sparrows live.

Proper spacing of your houses is important. Bluebirds are territorial when breeding and will claim territories of 2-3 acres. To keep sparrows out, pair houses 5-15 feet apart. The sparrows will only nest in one, leaving the other open for bluebirds.

Providing nesting materials is a strong factor in attracting nesting bluebirds since collecting nesting materials can take

hundreds of trips. Bluebirds like soft grasses and fragrant pine needles as nesting material. Provide these nesting materials in a specially designed container, an empty suet cage, or simply gather bunches of material and situate in the bark of a tree.

Maintaining Your Bluebird Houses

Clean your house(s) after each brood has left. Remove and throw away any old nesting material and scrub with a 10% bleach solution. Old nesting material left on the ground could invite predators. Let the house dry completely before remounting. This will prevent parasites or diseases from spreading.

When Should I Put up my Bluebird Houses?

Anytime and as soon as possible! Bluebirds start looking for breeding nest boxes in mid-March here in the north. Bluebirds will use them well into August, producing 2-3 broods per year. Consider leaving your bluebird houses up all year. When the mating season is over, birds will use the houses as winter roosts.

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