



Johnson's Garden Talk

Lawn and garden information for the friends and customers of Johnson's Garden Centers

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It's "Gardener's Choice" ... And The Birds Love It, Too!

Carolyn Utter, Johnson's Marketing Director

Whether you're an avid gardener who enjoys attracting birds to your landscape ... or you just enjoy feeding the birds on your patio ... the downside to this rewarding pastime is the mess it can make.

In the garden, seeds of all kinds sprout and start to take over. It's a never ending chore to keep them cleaned out. If your feeder hangs over the lawn, the grass eventually gets taken over by sprouts. Even on the patio or deck, shells and less desirable seeds are left behind by the birds, leaving an unsightly mess for you to clean up.

There are lots of "no mess" blends on the market, but they aren't truly "no mess" according to Mike Hargrove, Johnson's Ridge Rd. Greenhouse Manager. Mike is our resident bird expert, having spent over 14 years in the wild bird feeding industry before coming to Johnson's. Mike warns us that "many 'no mess' blends actually have shells or they're all millet, which the birds don't readily eat."

So Mike set out to create a premium "no mess" blend exclusively for Johnson's. "What I wanted for Johnson's was a blend the birds WOULD eat readily. One that has no filler seed, just seed that is highly attractive to the birds." Mike knew that meant no seeds with shells, no cracked corn, no nyjer and no filler seed. "Just a good premium mix that the birds won't leave behind and that won't grow in the garden" he explained.

The mix that Mike developed is getting rave reviews from gardener's and their feathered friends. Johnson's "Gardener's Choice" can be put out on your patio or deck and all the seed will be eaten. There are no shells or undesirable seeds to leave behind. And all ingredients are chopped so you can put your feeder in the garden and nothing will sprout underneath.

Gardener's Choice contains 35% sunflower chips, 30% roasted peanut parts, 25% hulled proso millet and 10% peanut pieces. Mike selected roasted peanuts because they are a little more attractive to birds. "More visual, too" he added. Compared to other "no mess" blends on the market, Gardener's Choice has more sunflower meats, more roasted peanuts and less millet. According to Mike, peanuts make a bulkier blend which works better in tube feeders. The different sizes of seeds and nuts helps prevent the seed from matting together and clogging the feeder.

Mike added "Peanuts are underrated in America. In Europe, they don't even use Black Oil Sunflower Seed. Their mixes are all nuts. Nuts are high in calories and high in fat which is what the birds need."

At Johnson's, our staff had a contest to name this new seed mix and "Gardener's Choice" was selected as the best name for this premium "no mess" blend. Despite some internal grumbling when it was discovered that the Marketing Department submitted the winning name ... the name says it all! Gardeners really do prefer this "no mess" blend from Johnson's ... and the birds love it, too! We're still working on dressing up the bag, but for now you'll find this great new seed mix—developed by Mike Hargrove and produced for Johnson's by the good folks at Audubon Park—in a plain white bag. It's every gardener's choice and preferred by birds everywhere! ■