

GARDENING

Attract birds to your garden

BY JACQUILINE NAKANDI

Birds are natural ornaments, they help in pollinating plants and control pests. With birds, a gardener may not have to use pesticides on their plants. Birds add beauty to the garden or balcony, their sight and sound is satisfying to bird lovers.

According to David Nkwanga, a gardener, the presence of birds indicates the naturalness and health of a garden, although some birds can be irritating.

He says birds such as the African weaver bird make a lot of noise and use leaves of palms and bananas to build their nests. However, most birds are pleasant and every gardener would love to see some in their garden.

"There are a number of factors that determine the presence of resident or migratory birds in a garden. The key thing is to ensure that you meet the needs of the birds all year round if you want them to stay," Nkwanga explains.

Five ways to attract birds

Nkwanga says the first thing is to have a place that is conducive for the birds to nest or stay. He adds that some birds are happy staying in small trees, while others prefer mature ones that provide a more natural environment.

David Mwesige, a landscaper at Golden Herbs, adds that a homeowner can install already built nests into their gardens. However, they should be put in safe locations, far from the reach of animals like cats and dogs.

Mwesige says birds usually nest or visit a place in search for food. So when planting trees and flowers, it is important to know that some will provide food for the birds.

However, he adds that one can put some feeders in the garden to attract birds. Some small birds love nectar, so they will be attracted to small flowering plants that produce nectar like gardenia.

Mwesige says avoid using pesticides as these will chase away the birds. Instead, use natural repellents to deter pests. He says plants such as sunflower, crabapples and dogwood are a source of food for the birds. Also trees like pines, oak, spruces and dead trees among others, act as a shield for birds from predators.

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