

# Building the Nestbox

## Making a nestbox

Natural nest holes do not come in standard sizes, so use these dimensions only as a guide. Any plank or sheet of about 15 mm thick weatherproof timber is suitable.

However, do not use CCA pressure-treated timber, since the leachates may harm birds. Cut each section as per diagram (right).

The diagram gives measurements for a small and a large box. Use only the first or the second figure throughout. For starlings and great spotted woodpeckers, use the dimensions for the large box; all the others need the small one.

The bottom of the entrance hole must be at least 125 mm from the floor. If it is less, young birds might fall out or be scooped out by a cat. The inside wall below the entrance hole should be rough to help the young birds to clamber up when it is time for them to leave.

Drill drainage holes to the base of the box, and use galvanised nails or screws to assemble. It is always best to leave the box untreated. As it weathers, it will blend into its surroundings better. Softwood boxes may be treated with selected water-based preservatives, which are known to be safe for animals, such as Sadolin. Apply it only to the outside of the box, and not around the entrance hole. Make sure the box dries and airs thoroughly before putting it up.

A woodpecker box should be filled with a block of balsa wood, rotting log or wood chips - woodpeckers like to excavate their own nesting cavities.

Do not nail down the lid, since you will need to clean out the box in the autumn. Attach the lid with a brass or a plastic hinge that will not rust, or hinge it with a strip of leather or rubber (an old piece of bicycle inner tube would do). Fasten it down with a good catch.

The entrance hole size depends on the species you hope to attract:  
 25 mm for blue, coal and marsh tits,  
 28 mm for great tits, tree sparrows and pied flycatchers,  
 32 mm for house sparrows, nuthatches and lesser spotted woodpeckers,  
 45 mm for starlings,  
 50 mm for great spotted woodpeckers.

The small box with 100 mm high open front may attract robins or pied wagtails. A wren would need 140 mm high front panel, while spotted flycatchers prefer a low 60 mm front to the box.

