

## Appendix 6: Seed Mixes

Commercial seed mixes are a convenient way to feed most granivorous birds in care such as parrots, finches, quail and doves. In general, use mixes with a range of small seeds (e.g. Budgie or Finch Mix), as these more closely represent the size and nutritional value of most wild seeds. Some commercial seed mixes labelled as "Wild Bird Seed" are of poorer nutritional value. Many birds only eat the sunflower and reject the wheat, sorghum (red seeds) and dried corn kernels in these mixes. This generates a lot of waste and means that the birds are mainly consuming the high-fat sunflower seeds. If parrots become reliant on this they may become unhealthy and overweight in captivity. Instead use a Small Parrot Mix, and dilute it 50/50 with Budgie Mix.

Some typical components of commercial seed mixes are as follows:

### **Budgie Mix**

White French Millet, Panorama, Canary Seed, Japanese Millet, Panicum, Shirohie Millet, Red Panicum and Hulled Oats.

### **Finch Mix**

Panorama, White French Millet, Canary Seed, Japanese Millet, Panicum, Shirohie Millet, Red Panicum and Canola.

### **Small Parrot Mix** (also called Cockatiel or Peachface Mix)

White French Millet, Canary Seed, Grey Stripe Sunflower, Hulled Oats and /or Safflower.

### **Pigeon Mix**

Wheat, Sorghum, Corn, Dun Peas and Safflower. Note, this is specifically designed for racing pigeons, and is not essential for captive feeding of native pigeons, which will take a Budgie or Small Parrot Mix.

## **Soaked Seed**

Dry seed can be soaked in water which helps soften the seed, making it more digestible, particularly for sick or weaning birds. This replicates the moistening process that occurs in the crop of adult granivorous birds.



## **Preparing Soaked Seed**

- Place dry seed in a bowl and cover with a layer of boiling water. This helps sterilise the seed.
  - Allow to soak (5-12 hours) so that the seeds swell up and soften.
  - Rinse thoroughly with tap water through a sieve and drain well before feeding.
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## Sprouted Seed

Sprouting causes the seed to germinate, which makes it more nutritionally beneficial than dry seed<sup>37</sup>. Chemical changes in the sprouted seed means there is more available protein, sugars, and vitamins. Since wild birds mainly eat green seed, buds and shoots, this better replicates the nutritional content of their natural diet.



Sprouted seed mix including white millet, canary seed, sunflower, canola, mung beans & faba beans.

## Preparing Sprouted Seed

- Prepare soaked seed as previously described on page 68.
- Rinse well with **Multi-clens** disinfectant, and drain.
- Place soaked seed in a thin layer (max 2cm) on a sieve or mesh tray, and allow it to air.
- Store in the dark at a temperature of about 25°C for optimum germination (use a heated room or heat pad in cold climates).
- Wash thoroughly with water and rinse with **Multi-clens** disinfectant every 12–24 hours.
- Continue airing until the seed has sprouted, usually after about 2 days. Feed out when sprouts are fresh and just a few millimetres long.
- Sprouted seed can be stored in the refrigerator for up to two days or frozen for 2 weeks. This slows the growth process and keeps the sprouts fresh.

**Preventing Contamination:** Sprouting seed can cause bacterial or fungal growth, particularly in warmer climates. Contaminated seed can have an off-smelling odour and appear guggy or dirty. If in doubt, do not feed it to birds.

To minimise microbial contamination when sprouting seed use **Passwell Multi-clens** to rinse through the seed at the rate of 5mL per 10 litres of water.

## Supplements to Seed Diets

For added nutritional value add **Parrot Soft Food** (Appendix 5) or **Granivore Rearing Mix** to soaked or sprouted seed:

Mix 10g Parrot Soft Food with 20g Soaked or Sprouted Seed.

