

BUILDING ATTACHED AVIARIES

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Appearance

Probably the most overlooked aspect of building an aviary, especially one that is attached to the house, is to make it fit the design of your home.

People tend to buy or build aviaries because they look nice or are easy to buy or build. Once built and attached, they often stick out as an add-on rather than become an enhancement to the main building. So, before you start, look at your house and consider such points as: type and slant of roof, composition of the building, overall design of the building. For example, if you have a ranch style home with long lines, consider making the aviary also of long slim lines that parallel the house rather than jutting out from it.

If you have a basic rectangular home consider an extension at one end that gives you a finished L shape. If you have a fancy structure with archways, columns and large windows, consider an aviary of great height with arched design as well. If you plan to convert a patio, screen enclosure, or garage consider how the interior design of the aviary will fit with the interior of your home. If you have a second story consider building in front of windows on both levels. Consider

how placement extending from specific rooms or windows will affect the view and the entry into the aviary. If you place an aviary on an upper deck you should consider both exterior design and interior compatibility. Plan the shape and overall size on graph paper attaching it in various ways to the outline of your home and consider the overall effect this addition will have on the total finished appearance. Consideration of location and design compatibility with your existing facility is a prime factor in planning an attached aviary.

Another consideration is the type of birds you plan to place in the aviary.

Know your birds' needs; do they need long flight space vs. tall climbing or perching space? Are they ground birds that need a natural substrate or do they hang in branches and need a tall tree? Do they need seclusion or prefer to be where life is busy and active?

Exposure and Weather Considerations

Facing south or southwest is the best exposure for weather. However, there are other considerations. Probably one of the most important is where you will get the

most enjoyment from watching the birds. Placement in front of a window where you can sit and watch is most desirable for pets while a secluded solid wall would be better for breeders. Other placement considerations are: location in relation to your neighbors and to traffic and the privacy needs of the species you are keeping vs. their need to be near you and be the center of attention.

A balance of shade vs. filtered sun must be considered. Draft must be prevented and can be done by natural placement against the house and aided by the addition of Plexiglas panels that can be hooked to the aviary and removed if not needed. Placement also is selected by whether you wish to enter the aviary from the house or from the outside.

If you live in a climate that does not permit birds to be outdoors all year round, build partially into a room and have the rest outside through a doorway or window. That way, in cold weather the birds can be completely sheltered and warm. Remember that birds can take cold as long as there is no draft and as long as they are acclimated by being out all year around.

Construction

Most people and many companies build aviaries with a wood frame. We are very opposed to this practice for several important reasons: wood can harbor bugs and bacteria, it will eventually rot and it can be chewed by all of the larger birds. There are two easy alternatives to wood. Most expensive but a strong building material is aluminum framing put up by a screen enclosure company. The aluminum frame can then have screening placed as the top layer and appropriate wire cloth or heavy duty wire screwed to the underside of the frame. This layered effect gives good protection to your birds.

However, if you live in raccoon country, the raccoons may tear the screening in an attempt to get to the aviary. If you are planning to build the aviary for macaws or cock-

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An attached flight made of aluminum construction. The frame was built by a screen enclosure company. They added aluminum panels at the top that function as perfect windbreakers where the sleeping perched are placed. Floor is wired then covered with sand that rakes clean easily. There is an identical entrance a both ends of the aviary. Perches are made from dead cypress trees and are replaced about once a month. Natural foliage protects and beautifies the outside. A section of roof is covered, the rest is open.

atoos, the wire must be screwed to the top of the frame so that the birds cannot get to the screws.

Wire used should be galvanized after weld. Gauge depends upon the birds and will range from 16 for smaller birds to 10-gauge for strong birds. A Hyacinth Macaw will need 4 gauge. Hog rings or ferrules should be stainless steel so that they do not rust. Screws and washers should be stainless for the same reason. This costs more initially but will pay off in the end in a better and more long lasting product.

Wire spacing should not be larger than 1/2 inch x 1 inch, or for larger birds, 1/2 inch x 3 inch to prevent predators from gaining entry with body or hand. In some cases where raccoons are prevalent, a finer wire covering the bottom wire may be needed to prevent predators from pulling birds through at night. Even if you build your aviary on the ground, place wire on the bottom and securely fasten it to all sides to prevent intrusion from animals that can dig under the aviary.

The simple way to build an aviary is wire without a frame. A

14-gauge or stronger wire can be used without any framing and is strong, easy to put together, and can be expanded easily at a future date.

Hog ring all sides and top and bottom together. The method of attachment to the house will depend upon where you are attaching. If entry is to the inside, attachment to the wall of your main structure is done directly to the wall of the house. If entry is from the outside, a safety door should be added to the aviary. Cut your doorway out after the cage is set up. Then cut a piece of wire that is at least three inches larger on all sides. If you do not have a safety section, it is preferable to make the doorway low so that you must duck to get inside. A simple safety feature would be an extra piece of wire that hangs down in front of the door on the inside of the cage. With an inside-the-house entry, this type safety can be made of attractive wire or mesh wire. The idea is to prevent a startled bird from flying past you to the outside as you enter.

Doors should have closers that cannot be opened by the birds and that hold the door tightly to the cage.

A latch inside is also needed so that when you are in the aviary you can latch it behind you. A spring inside to force the door to close behind you would be another safety feature.

To improve the finished looks, plastic trim can be fastened on the outside and made to look like a frame. Fake trim to match your home can often be found in building supply stores. Plantings to match the rest of the landscape should be placed around the aviary. But be sure they are not dangerous to the birds.

In snake-infested areas, if you have finches or other small birds, aluminum panels should be placed around the bottom two feet of the aviary to prevent the snake from climbing onto it and gaining entry. If the aviary is on legs, place pie pans around the legs to prevent the snake from climbing up. Do not let tree branches fall over the aviary. This advise goes for raccoon areas as well. If ants are a problem, place a dish of water at the base of each leg.

Placing your aviary on the

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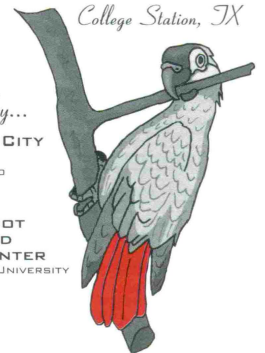
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ground vs. on legs should depend primarily on your birds' needs and secondly on appearance. Legs can be built with aluminum poles attached at the four corners and elsewhere if needed. Use hose clamps to attach them. Height can be adjusted and the poles can be driven into the ground for stability. Be high enough to be able to rake underneath.

The roof is the hardest part especially to make it fit the main house design.

Therefore, if possible, make the roof of the same material and color as the roof on your home. Make it separately and then place it on top of the aviary either directly or suspended on poles depending upon how you make the structure.

This way, the aviary is totally wired for safety and even if the roof blew off or animals climbed on it, the birds would be safe. Have the roof slanted to prevent rain or leaves from piling up. Have a part of the aviary open without roofing. This opening can be done artistically such as building a skylight roof and/or be placed where the sun and rain will give the birds the best change from the sheltered area.

If you feel you must use wood or have a frame, consider building in sections that you can then screw together. This gives the greatest flexibility in designing a pleasing shape and later for expanding the aviary. Though a wire-only cage can be built in long sections, it can just as easily be done in small sections that will allow a variety of shapes. Aviaries need not be square or rectangular. They can just as easily be octagonal, round, or free form. Let your imagination go.

The substrate should be easily cleanable and safe for the birds. Sand over wire for an aviary on the ground can be raked daily

Photos by Norma Banas



A sample of an under the cage feeder system. It opens from the front to allow bowls to be removed, water and food is separated by a center bowl for fruit/vegies, when not in use this center bowl is turned upside down to prevent birds from escaping.

and kept clean and healthy. Many people use cement for the floor but it is our experience that this is harder to clean, not as attractive, and not as nice for the birds. If you use a cemented floor you should install a drain and would want some degree of slant so that the floor will drain and dry as quickly as possible.

If plants are desired either inside or just outside the aviary be sure that they are bird safe. For birds that chew up everything consider placing cut down trees and branches in a holder and replacing them as often as needed.

Placement of foliage should be away from perches so that the birds do not defecate on the leaves.



This 40 x 16 foot long aviary houses toucans. It lines up against the house. Low door enters to an inner space with a secondary door to the bird enclosure. Two types of plastic panel are used as weather protection, inexpensive panel for top and heavier acrylic bung with S books for removable side protection.

Other Considerations

Misters can be installed and set on an automatic timer. Materials for them can be purchased from the garden department of most home builder supply stores.

Automatic waterers can be installed but must be carefully monitored for build up of algae and bacteria and checked that they are working. We find it easier to use two sets of dishes and put a cleaned and disinfected set in daily. For aviaries built off the ground, feed and water dishes should be placed under the cage so that the main door does not need to be opened. This is a big safety factor

as well as preventing the birds from dumping the dishes. Even an on-the-ground walk-in cage can have special doors built in the side for dishes.

A low wattage yellow night light should be placed outside the aviary. It should be able to give enough light to let you see in if you hear noises and for birds to see if they should be frightened by outside movement at night.

A baby monitor can be placed near the aviary with the other end in your bedroom. That way you can hear if there is any night commotion. A baby monitor is probably one of the must features for safety at night.

Whatever you do, think safety first. Next, make the aviary fun for the birds. Last but not least think of everything you can to make the work of cleaning and feeding easier for yourself. The easier and more efficient you make your aviary, the more you will enjoy your birds. The safer and more fun; the happier for the birds.

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