

Sprouting Seeds for Birds

(what works for me)

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I feed about 1/3 of my bird's daily ration as sprouts (germinating seeds) and have tried most methods. I don't buy the expensive mixes any more, not when I can mix my own at around \$1.25 per pound (depending on the seed ratios and where bought). I buy bulk seed from human grade sources; I use the raw sunflower "hearts" without shells (also called 'bakery kernels' when bought in bulk); and depending on availability, I include a variety of other seeds/grains that are quick sprouting, e.g., mung beans, lentils, oats, hulled buckwheat, barley, hard wheat berries, soft red wheat berries, quinoa, etc. (approx. 2/3 sunflower hearts, 1/3 other seeds). I have fed these to birds as small as the bourkes parakeets and parrotlets, and any hookbill can likely eat them.

Following is my methodology with a 36-hour germinating cycle.

DAY 1 (evening):

1. In the evening, in a stainless steel bowl, put about a few drops of bleach in 2 cups of cool water, add 1 cup of seeds and stir. [Makes enough for 10 conure/ringneck-sized birds for 2 days, depending on what else you feed. Increase or decrease amounts proportionately for more or less birds.]



2. Cover with saucer and leave on kitchen counter overnight.

DAY 2 (morning and evening):

3. In the morning, pour into a plastic or stainless steel mesh (preferred) colander, rinse very well under faucet, drain and then set colander on saucer (for further drainage), and cover top with a towel, so there's air circulation around and under. Bleach breaks down very quickly when it comes in contact with organic materials (confirmed by an avian vet), and the rinses are sufficient to remove residuals from seeds.



4. In the evening, rinse well, and leave on counter to drain during the night. Some seeds will be germinating at this point.

DAY 3 (morning):

5. Rinse the next morning, at which time the seeds are germinating—tiny tips beginning to emerge from the seed. This is when I begin feeding them. (My birds will usually nip off and discard long sprouted tips—they prefer the germinating kernel—and this is the most nutritious part anyway.)



Note: If a bit more "tail" on the seeds is desired, this cycle can be started in the morning, with the first rinse in the evening (for a 48-hour cycle).

I make 2 days worth at a time, and after the first feeding (about 36 hours from first putting them in to soak), I put them in the refrigerator, still in the colander, on the plate, with a towel over. I rinse before I feed the next morning, then mix with other soft foods, e.g., fresh chopped veggies. Time can be adjusted somewhat if the house is cooler or hotter. If temperate and humid (with windows open), I will be more watchful for mold. Misting with apple cider vinegar at steps 3 to 5 can be done, and that will discourage bacterial and fungal growth.



I've had no problems with mold or spoilage (using sunflower kernels, not in-shell sunflowers). My house is air conditioned, and it is on the dry side (my thermostat is set to 78 in the summer, and 72 in the winter). I have two stainless steel colanders, which I rotate with batches of germinating seed. I wash each in the dishwasher between usages.

*Note: In outside aviaries, where temperatures and humidity may be higher, use of sprouted sunflower *in-shell* can result in almost overnight furry mold, which is a primary reason I don't use them (even though birds typically eat all of those offered and the shells fall through the wire to tray below).*

Soak in stainless steel bowl with a few drops of bleach in water, covering bowl with saucer while soaking.



Set stainless steel mesh colander in sink, pour soaked seed into colander, and rinse well. Drain, set colander on plate, and cover top with clean, dry towel. Leave on countertop.



Rinse and re-cover, leave overnight. Rinse next morning, feed part, re-cover and put in refrigerator. Next morning, rinse, feed part (or rest). Re-cover any left and put in refrigerator for next morning. Rinse, feed rest, wash colander in dishwasher.

NOTE: BEGIN second rotation of seeds sprouting the evening before you feed the last of the sprouts. This way, you will always have sprouts ready to feed in the morning mix.

