

GREEN FEED, HOW THEY PREFER IT

Part of the daily chores is to provide some form of greens for the birds, and one that is used extensively is silver beet. The tender leaves of this are usually thrown on to the ground and immediately this is done the birds flock down to feed on it, and enjoy it. This also applies to grasses and comfrey; the latter is eaten in a manner similar to silver beet, and in relation to grasses what is left of that is usually carried away for nest building. Queries have been raised why the birds become disinterested when the same greens are grown in the aviary (the main purpose for this being that by doing so they can have access to fresh greens whenever they feel like it instead of the daily supply, which if left too long wilts, and can become a danger to the birds). Probably the reason they accept greens that are supplied daily and are thrown on the ground is that this is natural to them, as they do most of their feeding on the ground when in the wild, and relish this if given the opportunity in captivity. This not only applies to greens, they much prefer seed in this manner. When this is grown in the aviary the birds rarely show any interest until the plants produce seed heads; again this is the natural procedure. In the wild they depend on plant life to provide their daily diet and the seeds they bear constitute a greater portion of it. Apart from a little nibble they have occasionally, very few birds will make it a habit to feed on the leaves of plants of silver beet, comfrey, or even grass when grown in the aviary fully exposed, but place a wire netting frame over the same plants for protection, then the birds will show an interest as soon as the plants reach the top of the frame and will keep it down to that level always. This applies to silver beet, comfrey and even grass. With a wire frame over the plants these appear to become an attraction to the birds and it certainly is one way to induce them to feed on them and derive the benefit from them. Not all birds will allow plants to grow in an aviary; they prefer to pick them off as soon as they break through the ground and in such circumstances it is essential that the plants are covered with a wire netting frame, constructed with 12 mm wire netting and of sufficient height to allow the plants to grow as near as possible to their natural height. This is when the birds will show their interest and feed on them as mentioned, it rarely fails and is one way of ensuring the birds feed on a suitable green.

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