house of birds

Jacob Leaf makes a home for the birds out of a $5 fence pail.

You will need

- 1.5m x (150mm x 25mm) radiata fence pail
- 12 x (8g X 50mm) galvanised screws
- 4 x (60mm X 2.8mm) flat-head nails
- Resene Quick Dry Waterborne Primer Undercoat

Tools
- Tape measure
- Pencil
- Speed square and hand saw, or a mitre saw
- Drill and 4mm drill bit
- Speed clamps to hold the door while drilling
- 32mm hole saw for a sparrow birdhouse
- 42mm hole saw for a starling birdhouse
- Vice
- Hammer

Paint colours
- Resene Feijoa
- Resene Japanese Laurel
- Resene Energy yellow
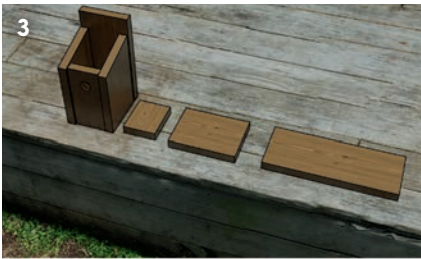- Resene Trojan

Cutting list
- Back: 1 x 300mm x 150mm (150mm x 25mm) radiata timber fence pail
- Sides: 2 x 250mm X 150mm (150mm x 25mm) radiata timber fence pail
- Front: 1 x 210mm x 100mm (150mm x 25mm) radiata timber fence pail
- Floor 1 x 125mm x 100mm (150mm x 25mm) radiata timber fence pail
- Roof 1 x 200mm x 150mm (150mm x 25mm) radiata timber fence pail

Cost: $5 excluding Resene products.

JACOB LEAF (Ngāpuhi) is *NZ Gardener*'s DIY expert. When not constructing projects for the magazine in his west Auckland garden, he works as a visual effects artist for film and TV.

Step 1: Back & sides

Cut a 300mm piece off the fence pail for the back board, then cut two 250mm pieces off the fence pail for the sides of the birdhouse. (Use the first cut side piece as a template for the second.)

If you don't have a mitre saw, mark a 15-degree angle up to the top corner on one side piece with a speed square, then cut. Using this cut side piece as a template, mark and cut that angle onto the other side piece for a matching 15-degree cut. (The 15-degree angle will allow water to run off the roof.)

Step 2: Door & floor

For the door, match the height to the shorter edge of a side piece, about 210mm. The door needs to fit between the two side pieces, so cut the width down to 100mm.

To make an entrance for a sparrow, use a 32mm hole saw. Clamp the door down onto a scrap piece of wood to secure it, drill the hole about 100mm down from the top.

For a starling, cut a 42mm hole.

For a blackbird, thrush, silvereye or warbler, build an open-front birdhouse (this is a good option if you don't have a hole saw).

For the floor, cut a 125mm piece of fence pail (this is the depth measurement for the floor). The floor will also need to fit between the sides, so cut the width down to 100mm.

Step 3: Roof

For the roof, cut a 200mm-long piece of fence pail (this will create a good overhang of about 40mm and will help protect the entrance from rain going into the birdhouse).

Using one of the side pieces as a template, mark the rear edge of the roof where it meets the back board for a 15-degree cut, so when you assemble, the back of the roof will sit flush against the back board.

Step 4: Airflow & drainage

To aid airflow, trim about 10mm off the tall end of both side pieces. For drainage, trim about 10mm off each corner of the floor piece.

Step 5: Assembly

To assemble, screw the back piece into the rear edge of the side pieces with four screws (drill pilot holes to stop the wood splitting). Attach the floor by drilling pilot holes through the sides and screwing it in place with another four screws. Screw the roof down into the top edges of the side pieces with another four screws. Fit the door, leaving a 10mm gap at the top. Mark a drill hole 40mm from the top near the front edge of both side pieces for the nail hinges. Drill pilot holes, then fix the door in place with a nail on each side. The 10mm gap at the top is to aid with airflow inside the birdhouse and to allow the door to open all the way without catching on the roof.

Step 6: Door latch & perch

The hinged door will make it easy to clean out between seasons. But to stop it accidentally opening during use, bend a nail at a 90-degree angle to make a door latch. Drill a pilot hole in the lower edge of one of the side pieces and hammer it in. Hammer the last nail into the door just below the hole entrance to create a place for the bird to perch. Sand, prime and paint.

Watch the video

Search for "birdhouse" on play.stuff. co.nz/page/diygardenprojects. ■