

PRODUCT REVIEW

PRESTO GALAXY SQUIRREL BAFFLE BIRD FEEDERS.

Retail price, about \$22.

Buy a better bird feeder and squirrels will beat a path to your yard. However, the Presto Galaxy BF-14C greatly reduces the chances of their feasting on your sunflower seeds. The 14-inch clear plastic dome tilts under the weight of a squirrel, cutting off access to the food hopper that swings freely beneath it. After an unsuccessful raid, the squirrel usually slides to the ground unharmed. The dome also protects food in the hopper from precipitation and discourages entry of birds larger than Purple Finches. Feeding birds drop very few seeds from the hopper to the ground. The feeder is attractive, easy to assemble (excellent instructions, no tools needed), easy to refill, and easy to clean. It can hold any type of feed normally offered to birds. The BF-14S has a special tray for suet or peanut-butter paste in addition to the regular hopper for seeds. Tube-type feeders for sunflower and thistle seeds are also available with domes.

For the first month it was hanging in my yard, the BF-14C seemed like the perfect answer to the squirrel problem. Suspended by a stout cord, the dome was about 14 inches below the horizontal limb and 3 feet from the main trunk of a large dogwood. At these distances, the squirrels' attempts to jump directly to the hopper were unsuccessful. My squirrels were on the verge of having nervous breakdowns; I was gleeful. Then one bright fellow learned to hang onto the cord with his hind feet and gnaw the rim of the dome. He never reached the seeds that way, but he severely damaged the feeder. Not to be outwitted, I suspended the feeder from a monofilament fishing line that enabled the feeder to rotate when the squirrel tried to gnaw the edge of the dome. The squirrel quickly dropped to the ground without causing further damage to the feeder. Almost immediately the squirrel countered by gnawing through the cord, dropping the feeder to the ground and spilling seeds all over the place. I promptly rehung the feeder using a metal shower-curtain hook around the tree limb and a 12-inch steel fishing leader with a swivel at both ends. The squirrel immediately attempted to gnaw through the steel leader but quickly abandoned that approach. For 4 months I have not seen a squirrel even making a serious attempt to raid the BF-14C, though several visit my other feeders daily.

If suspended from a limb or wire by a metal ring and a 12-inch steel fishing leader with swivels at both ends, and placed 3 feet or farther from any vertical post or tree trunk, the Presto Galaxy Squirrel Baffle Bird Feeder appears to come as close to being squirrel proof as one can be without keeping the birds out, too.—EFP