

Nest Box

This handmade nest box will welcome robins and wrens to your backyard.

One year a pair of Carolina wrens showed interest in making a home outside our sunroom. After witnessing days of indecision and debate, I thought I might help them along by installing a nesting box. (Wrens, robins and mourning doves are some of the many birds that use them.)

I chose a small galvanized bucket that I'd been using for years. It was perfect—not too big or too small, with sweet angled sides and a wire handle. Here's how I did it:

Materials:

- Old bucket
- Hammer and nails
- Screwdriver and wood screw
- Wire
- Needle-nose pliers
- Spray paint



1. Paint the bucket. Painting is often the easiest way to transform the ordinary into something snazzy. I chose a pumpkin-orange spray paint for the outside of my bucket and metallic silver for the inside. If this bucket were in newer condition, I would have left the inside unpainted.

2. Plan the attachment. I knew I was going to screw this bucket directly onto our porch column (made out of a tree trunk, courtesy of Hurricane Isabel in 2003), so all I needed to do was drill a hole in the center of the bucket. But if you think you might attach your nesting box differently, make sure it's ready to hang before accessorizing it with delicate objects.

3. Adorn the bucket. The shape of this little bucket reminded me of a head, which made me want to add a hat. I didn't want this topper to overwhelm the bucket, so I decided to use wire. I

also like the way wire bends, and the fact that birds (unlike bigger critters) have no problem perching on it. The bucket's wire handle gave me an easy way to attach the hat.

4. Find a site and hang. When choosing a location, keep in mind that Carolina wrens and robins are the most likely birds to take up residence in a nest box. Carolina wren nests are frequently found near homes, usually 3 to 6 feet off the ground, and in odd places. Robins' nests tend to be in the lower halves of trees, as well as in gutters or eaves, and on outdoor light fixtures and other structures.