



PLANTS FOR PARROTS

Prepared by Paradise Park, home of the World Parrot Trust

Giving your parrot browse and greenery to chew on is a great way to encourage natural behaviour. Experiment with different types and use this to provide occupational enrichment.

SAFE SPECIES FOR BROWSE

- **Ilex Oak:** available all year round.
- **Ash:** identifiable by its black buds.
- **Sycamore:** identifiable by its star-shaped leaf and helicopter seeds which can also be chewed.
- **Horse Chestnut:** also known as a conker tree, they have a large palmate-shaped leaves.
- **Willow:** all species are safe. They can be grown continuously by putting cuttings in water and then planting out.
- **Hazel:** this can be coppiced to give to your parrot and this will also encourage new growth.
- **Eucalyptus:** easily identified by its smell, perfect for bark stripping.

TIP: *Spray with water to encourage 'rain bathing' and sensory enrichment for your bird!*

Always ensure you know exactly what species of plant you are using. When in doubt - leave it out!



Take care to select plants free of pesticides, moulds and fertilizers



NATURAL BROWSE FOR PERCHING

Providing appropriate perching is essential for parrot foot care and enrichment. You want your parrot to chew on its perch and any perching should be changed regularly. *(Do not use wood dowel for perching as it can cause pressure sores.)*

- **Ilex Oak:** a hard wood great for macaws and other large parrot species.
- **Eucalyptus:** another hard wood, perfect for chewers.
- **Hazel:** a slightly softer wood that can be quickly replenished.
- **Buddleia:** common in gardens, grows quickly. Parrots love to shred the bark.

FLOWERS FOR ENRICHMENT

Flowers can be used for nutritional or foraging enrichment. Thread them into toys and cages to occupy your parrot and extend their feeding period.

- **Roses:** use only the heads of roses you are confident haven't been sprayed.
- **Buddleia:** easy to grow, flowers, leaves and branches are all edible.
- **Nasturtiums:** can grow in baskets or pots. All parts are safe for parrots.
- **Dandelion:** all parts are safe and nutritious; ensure they are sourced from a clean and spray-free location.
- **Elderflower:** flowering head and berries are a great source of Vitamin C.
- **Fuchsia:** whole plant is safe and lorikeet species especially will enjoy getting the nectar from the flowers.

OTHER PLANTS TO INCORPORATE

All of these plants can be woven into your parrot's cage or added to toys to create chewing and foraging opportunities.

- **Hawthorn:** berries are an antioxidant and a great treat. Pick and store in your freezer for winter forage. Flowers and leaves are also safe.
- **Yorkshire Fog Grass:** identified by its purple seed heads.
- **Cock's Foot Grass:** cable tie (or jute tie for larger parrots) to their cage for them to chew on.
- **Crested Dog's Tail:** this plant is full of pollen that parrots will enjoy.
- **Quaker Grass:** parrots will rip the pods apart for hours of fun.





PLANTS AS TOYS

Incorporating natural materials into your parrot's daily activities can be a great source of (affordable) enrichment. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- **Natural bouquets:** group some of the plants together with natural jute to hang in their cage. Vary every day for continued engagement.
- **Horizontal branch or vertical hanging wood toys:** drill holes into a branch and thread flowers and browse into the holes for your parrot to pull out and chew. Flowers can be changed daily and provides a reusable toy.
- **Rope twist:** take some sisal rope and untwist the rope slightly. Thread vegetation and flowers through which can then be hung on the inside or outside of your bird's cage.
- **Cordyline Palm fronds:** fold across itself to create a plait for your parrot to chew, hang and climb on.
- **Grass plait:** you can use dry or fresh grass, secure at the top with jute and then plait. You can then thread flowers into this and hang for your parrot.
- **Nutty log:** drill holes into a branch and insert your bird's favourite nuts into the log to prolong feeding time and encourage natural behaviour.
- **Hanging ladder:** use sisal rope, a drill and some branches to create a rope ladder and secure using strong knots. To enhance, add wood with holes onto the rope that your bird can push up and down and chew on.

GROW AT HOME IDEAS

- **Carrots:** grow your own carrots to add to your parrot's diet and give the tops as nutritional enrichment. *Can also make a fun and edible (temporary) perch!*
- **Beetroot:** whole plant is safe; leaf tops can be woven into the cage for your parrot to chew.
- **Beans:** dwarf, runner, french and purple beans are easy to grow, all parts are safe.
- **Rainbow chard; Kale:** leaves can be picked again and again for a continuous food source.
- **Herbs:** mint, basil, parsley, rosemary, thyme can all be grown quickly in a small space (indoors and out) and provide a great sensory nutritional treat.
- **Marigold:** the flowering head can be used as a foot toy, or pulled apart and petals sprinkled onto fresh food.
- **Clover:** can be grown and mixed with other plants. Leaves and flowers are safe to use.
- **Wheat and Rye Grasses:** can be potted in small cardboard cups and given to your parrots. Very good nutrition and can be grown in a continuous cycle.





TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- Always supervise your parrot when you introduce a new toy or piece of enrichment.
- If your parrot is nervous around new things, leave the item in the same room as them for a couple of days to get them used to it and explore it voluntarily when they come out of their cage, before you introduce it into their cage.
- Keep trying your parrot with different enrichment, your birds taste can change weekly so what might not be favourable one week might be their tastiest treat the next week.
- It is important to remember that few studies are available in regard to plant toxicity and parrots, so always err on the side of caution and if in doubt, refrain from use until you can check with your avian veterinarian.

References:

<https://www.exoticdirect.co.uk/news/safe-food-and-plants-list-parrots>

<https://vcahospitals.com/know-your-pet/plants-safe-for-birds>

<https://brookfallsveterinary.com/pet-library/bird-articles/safe-plants-for-birds/>