

Nest boxes for birds are powerful tools in organic orchards

Problem

Organic orchards are affected by different pests (e.g., moths, aphids, etc.); natural biocontrol is crucial and shall be further supported.

Solution

Birds like tits (Pictures 1 and 2) are useful animals for pest control. However, it is important that habitat is provided and that living conditions in the orchards are favourable.

Benefits

Setting up bird nest boxes will increase their populations in and around the orchards and increase the magnitude of pest control.

Practical recommendation

- Buy or build nest boxes yourself (depending on the time and budget available)
- Look for construction tips¹
- Start with orchards which lack habitat for birds first
- Place 5 to 10 nest boxes/ha
- Set them up in existing hedges or in the orchards, at 2m high, with an opening towards the south-east.
- Clean the nests yearly for optimal occupation.
- Limit engine use as much as possible during the brooding season from March to June

Applicability box

Theme

Crop production, Farm management

Keywords

Temperate fruits, Pest control, Natural enemies, Biological control

Context

All Europe

Application time

Nests and boxes should be installed during winter-time for spring occupation

Required time

About 1 hour/ha for setting up five nests

Period of impact

Spring to summer

Equipment

Ladder, hammer

Best in

Big plots with few hedges or alternative hosting sites.



Picture 1. Great tit in a nest box (Photo: Brice Lemaire, Agrinichoires)



Picture 2. Great tit feeding on a caterpillar found in the orchard (Photo: Marcos Miñarro, Serida)

Further information

Further reading

- Bouvier, J., Lavigne, C. and Boivin, T. 2016. Les vergers comme habitat pour les oiseaux en hiver. INRAE, Phytoma - n°693. (FR)
- Bouvier, J., Lavigne, C., Thomas, C., Musseau, R., Poss, B. and Delattre, T. 2020. Les mésanges se nourrissent-elles dans les vergers? INRAE, Phytoma - n°738. (FR)
- García, D., Miñarro, M., Peña, R., Illera, J.C., Palomar, G. y Rumeu, B., 2022. Aves insectívoras y control biológico de plagas en cultivos de manzano de sidra de Asturias. Phytoma España n°336 (ES)
- García, D., Miñarro, M., 2021. Las cajas nido para pájaros ayudan a controlar las plagas del manzano SERIDA, Tecnología Agroalimentaria - nº 24 (ES)

Weblinks

- Warlop, F., Kienzle J. 2022. Practice abstract Codling moth prevention: Preserve antagonists in organic apple and pear orchards. GRAB. BIOFRUITNET.
- Check the Organic Farm Knowledge platform for more practical recommendations.
- 1. Nichoirs: Tous les nichoirs et leurs plans

About this practice abstract

Publisher: GRAB – Groupe de recherche en Agriculture Biologique
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Permalink: organic-farmknowledge.org/tool/44715

Project name: BIOFRUITNET- Boosting Innovation in ORGANIC FRUIT production through stronger networks

Project website: <https://biofruitnet.eu>

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