

Sprouting for Birds

(what works for me)

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I feed about 1/3 of my bird's daily fresh ration as sprouts (germinating seeds), and I have tried most methods. I finally switched from sprouting sunflower hearts (which I had done for years) for my birds, because the sprout rates had become abysmal (Old? Previously frozen? Who knows?). I now do a 2-day sprout with mung beans, which sprout very quickly. *I have also used wheat berries, which also sprout quickly, but it's more difficult to find fresh wheat berries that will sprout well.*

Fresh water only, NO soil and NO coconut coir substrate. I have two sprouters, so I can keep some going all the time.

Briefly, I soak overnight by filling the bottom reservoir of the sprouter with water and a splash of bleach, full enough of water to cover about 1/2" higher than white tray bottom with 1/3 cup of mung beans in the tray, cover lightly with cloth, drain and rinse in the morning, rinse evening and morning, then feed 1/3, putting rest in refrigerator, repeat in the morning.

If you want to sprout smaller seeds, you can put a piece of fiberglass screen mesh on top of the tray mesh (tray holes are too big for the smaller seeds). I have tried this, but find that the smaller seeds don't have good yield and are not worth the trouble.

Following is my methodology for a 36 hour germination. NOTE: I think one of the reasons these sprout so quickly is because I have a small heating pad (low heat), and the sprout tray sits on it. I don't have the heating pad on when soaking overnight because a clear slime from the seed coating sometimes develops (likely due to warmth interacting with bleach—not harmful, but not desirable either). If you don't use a heating pad, expect 48 hours germination, and start the soak cycle in the morning of DAY 1.

EVENING of DAY 1:

In the evening, put 1/3 cup mung beans in the white tray of the sprouter after putting water and a splash of bleach in the green reservoir, then filling to about 1/2" above the bottom of the white tray. Cover with cloth overnight.

DAY 2 (morning and evening):

In the morning, remove white tray with mung beans, dump water, and rinse well under faucet (warm water), put a small amount of water in the reservoir of the sprout tray, place white seed tray on top of lower tray, cover top with lid.

At this point, I turn the small heating pad on low, and place the sprouting container on it with a cloth over top.

In the evening, rinse well, including changing water in tray. Seeds will be germinating at this point, with tips emerging from the mung beans, which also increase significantly in size.

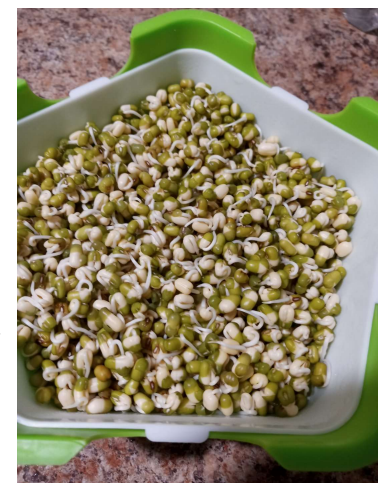


Day 1, PM:

*Seeds soaking in sprouting
container*



Day 2, AM: after draining



Day 2, PM: End of full day

DAY 3 (morning):

Rinse the next morning, feed 1/3 of sprouted mung beans, and put the sprouting container in the refrigerator. Repeat rinse and feed on days 4 and 5.

NOTE: Start the next container the evening of the 4th day.

ALSO, after washing the seed tray setup, fill with water and add a few drops of bleach to deter any mold or bacteria. Let set for 10 or 15 minutes, rinse all well and allow to dry overnight.

Start the cycle over again with seeds in a sprouting tray.



Day 3, AM: Ready to feed

Alternative with mung beans and wheat berries



*4th day: Mung & wheat berry sprouts
ready to feed*



*5th day: Mung & wheat berry sprouts
with extra day of "greening" under light*

If you wish to have more "green", you can add an extra day tray time under lights, and there will be beginning leaves on most of the sprouts.

GREENS, harvesting and production

If you wish to harvest actual "greens", you can add 3 to 4 extra days of sprout tray time (but watch for souring), with light on open container,



*Sprouting tray after
about 5 days for "greens"*

rinsing morning and evening, and misting a time or two during the day, for 3 – 4" of leaves growing from seeds. You probably won't want to use the roots that have gone through the mesh to the water in the lower tray, as they are tougher and not as palatable—this is for "greens" only! My birds were not that thrilled when I offered these. They prefer the germinating seeds with tender tails.

In summary, providing "living" food for parrots is one of the best ways to supplement their nutrition—even better, in my opinion, than a pellet-heavy diet. You can also sprinkle calcium powder and spices (cinnamon, ginger, garlic, and cayenne combo) on the germinated seed, and you can toss in coarse chopped greens (e.g., kale), yellow vegetables (e.g., carrots, sweet potato—both lightly cooked in microwave until just tender, not mushy), sweet peppers (colors to attract interest), and squash (e.g., yellow or zucchini), to pique their appetites and stimulate their palates so they eat nutritious fresh food along with the pellets. This may sound complex, but once you get into the routine with the right utensils and seeds, it is super-easy!