

# Tufted Titmouse Nest Box Plans

*Baeolophus bicolor*

The Tufted Titmouse is a charismatic and bold addition to any backyard, known for its jaunty crest and large, dark eyes. Building a nest box for these 'peter-peter-peter' singers offers a front-row seat to their fascinating moss-gathering behavior and their energetic parenting style in deciduous woodlots.

## Nest Box Specifications

<b>Entrance hole</b>	1.25 inches (32 mm)
<b>Floor dimensions</b>	4 x 4 inches (102 x 102 mm)
<b>Interior depth</b>	8 inches (203 mm)
<b>Mount height</b>	5-15 feet (1.5-4.5 m) above ground
<b>Facing direction</b>	East or northeast, to avoid the heat of the afternoon sun and protect from prevailing winds.

Position the box on the edge of a wooded area or in a yard with mature deciduous trees. Titmice are territorial, so ensure boxes are placed at least 100 feet (30 m) apart. Avoid placing the box in deep shade; a spot with dappled sunlight is ideal.

## Cut List

From a 1x6 x 6 ft

Panel	Dimensions	Qty	Notes
<b>Front</b>	5.50" x 9.25"	1	Drill 1.25" entrance hole 6.5" from bottom, centered. Score horizontal 'ladder' lines inside below the hole.
<b>Back</b>	5.50" x 16"	1	Standard mounting board; drill pilot holes at top and bottom for mounting screws.
<b>Side</b>	5.50" x 9"	2	Cut top edge at a 10-degree angle to shed water. One side should be hinged for cleaning.
<b>Roof</b>	7.25" x 9"	1	Cut from 1x8 stock to allow for a 1.75" side overhang and front drip edge.

<b>Floor</b>	4" x 4"	1	Recess 1/4" up from the bottom of sides; clip 1/2" off corners for drainage.
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*The body panels (front, back, sides) are ripped from a 1x6 board. The floor is also cut from 1x6 stock but ripped down to 4" to fit between the 3/4" sides. The roof must be wider than 5.5" to protect the side seams, requiring a 1x8 scrap.*

## Materials & Construction

**Wood:** 3/4-inch (19 mm) untreated cedar or cypress for maximum weather resistance. Avoid pine if you live in extremely humid climates.

**Boards:** 1x 1" x 6" x 6' untreated cedar board provides the body, while a small 1x8 scrap is used for the roof.

**Hardware:** 20x 1-5/8" galvanized deck screws, 2x 1-1/2" exterior brass hinges, 1x stainless steel cabin hook, 4x 2-1/2" exterior mounting screws, 1x 1-1/4" galvanized slate nail for door stop

**Ventilation:** Leave a 1/4-inch (6 mm) gap at the top of both side panels under the roof to allow heat to escape.

**Drainage:** Clip all four corners of the floor board by 1/2-inch (13 mm) and drill four 1/4-inch (6 mm) holes in the center of the floor.

**Predator guard:** A 1.5-inch thick wood block with a matching 1.25-inch hole (a 'portal') can be added to the front to prevent raccoons from reaching in. A stovepipe baffle on the mounting pole is highly recommended to stop climbing snakes and cats.

## Materials Checklist

- 1x 1" x 6" x 6' untreated cedar board
- 1x 1" x 8" x 1' cedar scrap (for roof)
- 20x 1-5/8" galvanized deck screws
- 2x 1-1/2" exterior brass hinges
- 1x stainless steel hook and eye latch
- Exterior wood glue
- 1.25" hole saw bit
- Drill with 1/8" pilot bit and 1/4" drainage bit
- Measuring tape and carpenter's pencil
- Combination square
- Miter saw or handsaw

Sandpaper (80 grit)

## Seasonal Timeline

**Install:** Install in late fall or early winter (December-January) so birds can use it for roosting and scouting before the spring season.

**Nesting start:** In the Southeast, nesting begins as early as late February or March. In the Northeast and Midwest, expect activity to pick up in mid-to-late April. Titmice typically raise one brood per year, but may attempt a second in the southern reaches of their range.

**Clutch size:** 5-8 eggs (usually 6)

**Incubation:** 12-14 days

**Fledging:** 15-18 days after hatching

**Cleaning:** Remove old nesting material immediately after the young fledge. Conduct a deep clean with a 10% bleach solution in late autumn to prepare for winter roosting.

## Regional Considerations

The Tufted Titmouse is found throughout the Eastern United States, from the Atlantic coast to the Great Plains. They are common in deciduous forests, orchards, and suburban areas with significant tree canopy.

Nesting is triggered by photoperiod and local temperature; southern populations may start three weeks earlier than those in the Great Lakes region. Higher elevation populations in the Appalachians will also start later than those in the coastal plains.

Rat snakes and raccoons are the primary threats. The recommended 1.25-inch hole specifically excludes starlings, while a pole-mounted baffle is the most effective defense against climbing predators.

## Camera Placement

Because Tufted Titmice build remarkably thick nests—often composed of a base of moss, dried leaves, and even animal hair—interior camera placement is best achieved from the very top of the box. Mount a small, wide-angle USB or Wi-Fi camera directly to the underside of the roof, offset slightly from the entrance hole to capture both the brooding female and the incoming parents. Ensure the lens is focused for a distance of approximately 6 to 8 inches to account for the height of the nest cup as it grows during the season.

Exterior cameras are also highly effective for this species, as titmice are active and social. A battery-powered camera like a Blink Outdoor mounted on a nearby branch or a dedicated post 5 feet away provides excellent footage of their 'staging' behavior before entering the box. Since titmice are sensitive to changes in their immediate environment during the construction phase, it is best to have all camera hardware installed and tested before the nesting season begins in early spring.

For high-quality results, use a camera with infrared (IR) night vision capabilities. Titmice are cavity nesters that appreciate a dark interior, and white LEDs can be disruptive to their natural sleep and incubation cycles. Routing cables through a small 1/4-inch notch in the upper corner of a side panel will keep the box weather-tight while providing a secure path for power if you are not using a battery-powered unit.

Lastly, consider the 'hair-plucking' behavior of the titmouse. They are known to harvest fur from living animals for their nests. An exterior camera can often catch them arriving with impressive mouthfuls of fluff, providing unique behavioral data that an interior camera might miss once they dive into the deep nest cup.

### **Powering with a USB solar panel**

Mount a 5V USB solar panel with a built-in battery 1-2 ft above the box on the same post, angled 30-45 degrees from vertical and facing south. Run the USB cable down the post inside split loom conduit (squirrels will chew unshielded wire), enter the box through the same grommeted hole as the camera cable, and seal with exterior silicone. Choose a panel with a 5-10 Ah battery buffer so the camera runs through cloudy days.

## **Common Problems & Solutions**

**House Wren competition:** Place the box at least 30 feet away from dense brush or thickets where wrens prefer to nest.

**Blowfly infestation:** Ensure floor drainage is clear; if infestation occurs, replace the bottom inch of nesting material with clean dried grass during the nestling stage.

**House Sparrow aggression:** The 1.25" hole is slightly small for many sparrows, but if they persist, move the box further into a wooded area away from open lawns.

**Wet nesting material:** Increase the roof overhang to 2 inches and ensure the roof is slanted at least 10 degrees to shed rain away from the hole.

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