

## KEEPING YOUR BIRD OCCUPIED

### **Climbing Trees**

- A climbing tree is an important means of exercise and stimulation for any large parrot. Made up of natural branches it offers lots of opportunity for climbing and keeping occupied, which has the added advantage of ensuring your parrot does not take out its boredom on your furniture or upholstery.
- If set up properly it should also limit the area over which droppings fall.
- Chewing on the bark of the branches not only supplies valuable nutrients but also keeps the bird occupied.

If you cannot provide a climbing tree, then your parrot should have a freestanding perch outside the cage. These stands are an acceptable substitute for a climbing tree, especially if the manufactured round perches are replaced with sturdy and securely mounted natural branches.

### **Constructing a climbing tree**

- To construct an ideal climbing tree, a piece of tree trunk about 1 foot in diameter is needed. This should be set into a large tub (about 3 feet in diameter) by means of a metal ring or poured concrete.
- If tree limbs exist, cut them back so that they do not stick out beyond the tub.
- Next, drill deep holes into the trunk at different intervals of 12 to 16 inches (30-40cm). Stick oak, beech, or ash branches into the holes, using wedges, if necessary, to hold them securely.

(NB: - The parrot will gnaw on the bark of these branches, so they may have to be replaced periodically.)

Pour a layer of bird sand into the tub. Droppings and other dirt can then be easily removed, using a slotted spoon.

### **Toys and Entertainment**

- In addition to a climbing tree, additional objects are advised to keep your parrot busy. Unfortunately parrots vary a lot in what they consider entertaining and what they ignore!
- If you can, you should supply your bird with fresh twigs - rinsed under hot water and dried - every day to gnaw on. Maple, beech, oak, alder, ash, elderberry, unsprayed fruit trees, poplar, willow, and hawthorn are all suitable.
- For entertainment you can offer various items; a thick piece of rope with a knot tied in it; a short, rust-proof chain made of big links; wooden curtain rings; leather dice shakers; old postcards; the cardboard tubes from toilet or kitchen rolls; as well as purpose made toys sold in the pet shops.
- Put whatever toy you are offering within the parrot's reach or tie it to the climbing tree. The bird will then decide whether and when to investigate it.
- So that boredom does not develop, it is a good idea to rotate the toys provided to the bird every few weeks.

NB: - It is important to ensure that any toys provided are zinc-free.