

Lets Get Ready!

The Purple Martins have returned to the United States and are arriving daily to your southern sites! Are you ready? If not lets get ourselves ready for their return.

For gourd racks with 2 inch square poles. Lets begin with some basic maintenance that should be done yearly. If you completely removed your pole and or have access to your aluminum ground stake: make sure the stake is dry, wipe it down with a cloth. You can place a layer of oil on the exterior of the ground stake. This will keep condensation from forming as well as aid in the removal of the pole at the season end.

Next check your rope for fraying. If you see signs of damage replace the rope. You do not need the rope to break mid season. Please note you should be able to get a minimum of 5 years, most landlords can see 10 years or more. I have rope that is still in use from the first 12 unit I put up over 18 years ago!

Moving along your pole lets oil the pulleys next. Use a good quality oil like 3 in 1 household oil. Do not use WD 40 as it will dissipate quickly. Apply a few drops of oil by moving the pulley sheave to one side of the pulley, place a few drops of oil, then do the opposite side. Repeat for the other pulley.

For gourd racks with 3 inch square poles. Most landlords leave the larger units up year round. If possible wash your pole down using car wash. Hose off the soap. Dry the pole as high as you can safely reach. Wash any of the angle arms too.

Check your cable for damage. You don't want to see any broken strands as this could end up getting lodged in a pulley or the winch.

Examine your brake winch. You can add lubricant to the GEAR of the winch only. DO NOT get oil of any kind of the brake pad (looks like cork). Your winch could fail if you get oil on the brake pad.

Check to make sure all bolts and nuts are nice and snug. A square will help you to determine if your angle arms need any adjustments.

Use pole guards to prevent attacks by snakes and raccoon. The EZ OFF Pole/Predator Guard is a great choice. While no Pole Guard is 100% effective this guard has the best overall performance.

There are many owl guards on the market today. CUE actually designed the original arched guard that attached to the gourd arm and came down in front of the gourd. However I have mixed feelings about these. When owls attack they beat their wings along the side of the gourd or house causing the martins to flush. Owl guards will work, AS LONG AS THE MARTIN STAYS INSIDE THE HOUSING. As a landlord that had owl problems, I have tried it all, and for me, what has stopped the owls, even after they have feasted on my martins, is the Dancing Scarecrow. The whole premise of this product is to keep owls from even stopping by. I have used mine for two years now and have had no more owl attacks while the scarecrow is in use.

Consider adding a Bed & Breakfast or Feeding Tray. You can even make a simple elevated platform. Teach your martins to accept supplemental food. Purchase at least 1000 crickets and place them in the freezer. Thaw crickets before offering supplemental food.

Start trapping European Starlings and English House Sparrows. There are many options available for capturing sparrow and starlings. Bait and nest traps differ and are best used at different times of the year. While martins are nesting using nest box traps like the Troyer's Eliminator Trap, or the Troyer's Tunnel Trap if you have Troyer Gourds. Remember to monitor your traps!



OIL THE PULLEYS



TIGHTEN SET SCREWS



CHECKING FOR SQUARE



MARTINS USING B&B