

Holiday Feasts for the Backyard Birds

OBJECTIVES

Introduce participants to the Master Gardener Program with a brief history of its beginning. Offer opportunity for participants and fellow MGs to share bird feeding experiences. Inform all of the importance of birds to the success of our crops and gardens. Provide a hands-on activity with an end-product that the participants can take home or display in the BRI garden.

HANDOUT:

Bird feeder recipes are in a handout below. Program leader, ask your BRI MGs for recipes and favorite methods of feeding or watering birds. Include photos you or fellow MGs take of feeders or step-by-step instructions. Handout could include a table of which foods attract which birds (see attached).

INFORMATION/DESCRIPTION/FACTS

1) Birds are important to horticulture and the balance of nature

Birds eat huge amounts of insects, weed seeds and rodents. This helps farmers and gardeners. Birds eat fruit and fly away to plant the seed, *fertilizer and all* far away. Birds and bird eggs may feed larger animals. Birds are part of the chain that keeps our environment healthy. All that, AND they add beauty and entertainment to our lives!

2) Sometimes birds need our help

Natural climate changes of the season and extremes like frozen water and food supplies or drought can leave birds in trouble. We can help by providing water, shelter and food. It's important for us to keep birdbaths and feeders clean. Hummingbirds can sicken from unclean feeders. Seed-eaters can be poisoned by mold in wet seeds. Always make sure the birdseed you are feeding is clean and dry.

3) What are the best foods for birds?

Birds need foods rich in fats and oils. That's why suet and peanut butter are such good foundations for feeding, as you'll see in our activity. You can draw different types of birds to you by the foods you offer.

Foods you should not feed birds include sweetened or salted foods. Some foods are toxic to birds. No junk food or chocolate no matter how much you love them! When in doubt, Google!

4) Bird feeder ideas

- Using a mix of suet, peanut butter and seeds:
Mash mixture into pinecone
Spread mixture on toasted bagel (stale for hardness)
Fill an empty half orange with mixture
Freeze balls of the mixture with a hanging string in the center
String feeders with stale, unsweetened "Cheerios" or an attention- getting brightly colored ribbon.
- Make a wreath of unsweetened "Cheerios" and fruit (grapes, blueberries, dried cranberries [soaked in water to soften] on a wire or pipe cleaner.

Holiday Feasts for the Backyard Birds

- String peanuts in the shell (from the bird department or specialty store – unsalted!) or add them to open-bowl style mix.
- Hang orange and apple slices.

Hanging feeders are not the only way. Some birds are ground feeders. Sprinkle black oil sunflower seeds under a tree or on a tray placed on the ground. Sunflowers attract mourning doves, juncos and sparrows. **Sunflowers are a favorite, but use safflower seeds if squirrels or pests get cause problems.**

The expense of the project depends on the type of feeder you want participants to create.

STEP BY STEP INSTRUCTIONS

Making the Pinecone Feeder

Provide each participant with:

- 1 pinecone
- 2 yards of string
- ½ cup peanut butter, suet or shortening in a bowl
- Birdseed in a bowl, on a plate or pie pan

•••• Presenter will provide oats or meal in a large bowl and a scoop for participants to measure. ••••

Measuring gives participants a greater sense of accomplishment. Remember to let our guests do as much as possible for themselves.

Instruct participants to:

- Tie the string around the pinecone and set it aside.
- Use scoop to add ½ cup of dry ingredients to the “gooey” bowl and mix thoroughly with gloved hands.
- Spread the mix into/onto the pinecone using hands or spoons.
- Roll the pinecone in the bowl of birdseed covering every gooey spot.
- Add extra sunflower seeds if available.
- Hang outdoors.

If participants are taking their feeders home from the hospital, provide an attractive holder for the pinecone. A clear plastic bowl from the dollar store could be converted into a second birdfeeder! Make 3 equally distanced holes in the shape of a triangle near the edges. Extra bird seed from the project can be used in this hanging bowl feeder. Provide extra hanging string or yarn to extend the activity.

SOURCE REFERENCE:

Bird Feeders Digest
Audubon.org

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HANDOUT

BIRD FEEDER RECIPES

Miracle Meal Recipe

3 parts yellow corn meal
1 part flour

Hold together with enough pure lard so that the mixture can be formed into firm balls - you can add peanut butter also.

Suet for Birds

1 cup lard (animal fat)
1 cup peanut butter
4 cups corn meal
Bird seed
Large pine cones
Large pipe cleaners

Melt lard. While still warm, mix in peanut butter. Add corn meal. Make pine cone hanger with pipe cleaner. Stuff mixture into pine cone, roll in bird seed.

HANDOUT

What Foods for What Birds?



The experts at *Bird Watcher's Digest* have compiled this informative bird food and seed list to help you attract the birds that you want to your feeders.

Quail, pheasants:

Cracked corn, millet, wheat, milo, sunflower hearts

Pigeons, doves:

Millet, cracked corn, wheat, milo, Nyjer, buckwheat, sunflower hearts

Roadrunner:

Meat scraps, hamburger, suet

Hummingbirds:

Plant nectar, small insects, [sugar solution](#)

Woodpeckers:

Suet, meat scraps, sunflower seeds and hearts, cracked corn, peanuts, fruit, sugar solution, millet, mealworms

Jays:

Peanuts, sunflower seeds and hearts, suet, meat scraps, cracked corn, safflower, mealworms, citrus, grapes/raisins

Crows, magpies, and nutcrackers:

Meat scraps, suet, cracked corn, peanuts, leftovers, dog food, safflower, mealworms, sunflower seeds and hearts, citrus, grapes/raisins

Titmice, chickadees:

Peanut kernels, sunflower seeds and hearts, suet, peanut butter, mealworms,

Nuthatches:

Suet, sunflower hearts and seed, peanut kernels, peanut butter, mealworms,

Wrens, creepers:

Suet, peanut butter, peanut kernels, fruit, millet, mealworms, sunflower hearts and seeds

Mockingbirds, thrashers, catbirds:

Halved apple, chopped fruits, suet, nutmeats, millet, soaked raisins, currants, sunflower hearts

Robins, bluebirds, other thrushes:

Suet, mealworms, berries, chopped fruits, soaked raisins, currants, nutmeats, sunflower hearts, citrus

Kinglets:

Suet, suet mixes

Waxwings:

Berries, chopped fruits, canned peas, currants, raisins

Warblers:

Suet, fruit, sugar solution, chopped nutmeats, mealworms, sugar solution

Tanagers:

Suet, fruits, sugar solution, mealworms, grapes, raisins, citrus

Cardinals, grosbeaks, pyrrhuloxias:

Sunflower seeds and hearts, safflower, cracked corn, millet, fruit

Towhees, juncos:

Millet, sunflower, cracked corn, peanuts, nutmeats

Sparrows, buntings:

Millet, milo, sunflower hearts, black-oil sunflower seeds, cracked corn, peanuts

Blackbirds, starlings:

Holiday Feasts for the Backyard Birds

Cracked corn, milo, millet, wheat, table scraps, baked goods, suet, safflower, peanuts

Orioles:

Halved oranges, apples, berries, sugar solution, suet, suet mixes, currants, mealworms

Finches, siskins:

Nyjer, sunflower hearts, fruit, peanut kernels, suet