



Time to Feed the Birds!

Winter is a great time to make a bird feeder. Food can sometimes be in short supply and the birds can be easy to spot when there are no leaves on the trees.

You will need:

4 cups bird seed, dried fruit (optional), 3/4 cup all-purpose flour,
1/2 cup water, 3 tbsp. corn syrup, 1 package of plain gelatin,
1 craft stick or twig, 1 paper cup

What to do:

1. You will need to prepare a mold. A paper cup makes a great mold. This mixture will make enough to fill 6-7 paper cups depending on their size. First, thread a darning needle with 50 cm of string or wool. Tie a craft stick or twig to the end of the string at the opposite end from the needle. Pass the needle through the inside of the cup and poke it through the bottom of the cup so that the stick is dangling out the open end. Remove the needle and set your mold aside while you make the birdseed mixture.
2. In a large bowl, dissolve 1 package of gelatin in 1/2 cup of warm water.
3. Whisk in the corn syrup and flour to create a paste.
4. Add the bird seed (and dried fruit, if using) and stir well.
5. Pack the bird seed into the paper cups, trying to keep the wool in the centre of the cup so that the stick will hang from the bottom-middle of the finished feeder. Let the filled cups sit for 8-12 hours.
6. Peel off the paper cup and hang on a branch, fence or balcony. Watch to see what visitors are coming to your feeder.

Now Let's Investigate:

Seeds and fruit are great sources of energy for birds during the winter months. A good field guide will help you identify the birds in your area. Cornell University has a fabulous website that provides a wide variety of information about birds, including bird identification:

<https://www.allaboutbirds.org/>

Your bird feeder can provide hours of entertainment, as well as an opportunity for scientific research. Here are some suggested investigations:

1. Compile a list of the birds that come to your feeder. Which birds come most often? What features do they have in common?
2. Make several feeders, each using a different type of seed (black-oil sunflower; sunflower, mixed seeds, dried corn) and fruit. Which birds visit your various feeders? What type of beaks do they have that allow them to eat the seeds they choose?
3. Make several feeders using the same type of seeds and place them in different locations and at different heights, as well as sprinkling some seeds on the ground or in a ground feeder. Observe which birds visit the various locations. Can you make a chart or bar graph to show your results?

