

Science: Suet Bird Feeder

Ages: 7 - 13

Hello everyone. This is Bill from the Okanagan Regional Library System. Welcome to the fun and inventive world of making STEAM projects in your own home. Each month, I will share a fun and interesting project that you can make using materials commonly found in your own home.

This month's project: Suet Bird Feeder

Suet Bird Feeder



When the weather is cold, many birds rely on fat to help them survive freezing temperatures. A bird feeder made of suet or other fat is a great way to help out the birds during the winter, and it's an easy and fun project to tackle on a cold winter's day.

Suet feeders attract many types of birds, including finches, bluebirds, wrens, sparrows, robins, woodpeckers, chickadees and nuthatches.

Materials Needed:

1. Suet or lard
2. Bird Seed
3. Paper Cup
4. String
5. Stick
6. Bowl



Time: 30 minutes to 1 hour

Steps:

1. Poke 2 holes in the side of your paper cup and thread a piece of the string through them to serve as a hanger for your feeder. Note: The long part of the string should be over the hole closest to the rim of the cup once you have tied it on.



2. Gently melt the lard in a saucepan over low heat, or in the microwave for 30 seconds at a time just until it has melted and turned to liquid.



3. Place your bird seed into a bowl and slowly pour the melted lard over it. Stir everything until well mixed.



4. Spoon the mixture into the cup, making sure that the string does not get in the way.



5. Insert the stick into the mixture. This will provide a place for the birds to roost while they are eating.



6. Place your cup with the mixture in the refrigerator for at least one hour until the lard has hardened.



7. When the suet feeder has solidified, you can hang it outdoors in a shady, cool spot. Make sure that you can see it from a window, so you can watch the birds as they enjoy the treat that you have given them.

Fat Sources:

Any fat that is solid or semi-solid at room temperature will work. Harder fats will hold their shape better in cake-type feeders. Softer fats work better in a container like a paper cup. Ideas for fat include:

- Rendered suet, tallow, or animal fat
- Lard or shortening
- Recycled bacon or pork/beef roast drippings
- Pure, unsalted peanut butter
- Coconut oil
- Unsalted butter

Fillings:

Fillings can be made from:

- Bird Seed
- Chopped apples or other fruit
- Berries such as cranberries or blueberries
- Unsalted, raw chopped peanuts
- Whole-wheat flour, oatmeal, cornmeal or wheat berries
- Pieces of bread, or cooked, unsalted rice
- Seeds such as black sunflower, millet, or linseed

Containers:

You can make suet feeders out of most anything you can find around the house. Ideas for feeders include:

- Old yogurt cups, frozen food trays, or other plastic containers
- Muffin tins lined with paper baking cups
- Shaped molds or plastic eggs
- Grapefruit or melon rinds, ice-cream cones, or taco shells

Suet Feeder Tips:

- Keep in a cool, shady spot since fatty feeders can go rancid in warmer temperatures
- Wash and disinfect your feeder or container each time you replace the suet
- Be careful when heating fat! All fats are flammable at high temperatures, and super hot fats will melt plastic containers. Gentle melting is all that is needed.