

The Grapevine

Feeding our Feathered Friends

Winter has arrived, as a recent trip to North Dakota reminded me, even if the weather doesn't feel like it in Butler county. With winter arriving birds will slowly start to come visit the bird feeders as the food supplies in the woods are used up, if they haven't already made a trip to your feeders. In a previous edition of the Grapevine I gave some tips on feeding the birds so this episode I'll focus on some fun crafts that can help you feed the birds this winter. If you or your neighbors had a live Christmas tree, I recommend using it to display some of these feeders in your yard.



The first bird feeder, using pine cones and peanut butter, is an old favorite that is cheap and easy to make. Growing up this was one of my favorite easy feeders to make and hang on our Christmas tree outside. The first step is to use string, wire or a pipe cleaner to make a hanger by wrapping it around the top or bottom of the pine cone. (I say this is the first step because it can get messy if you try to do this after you've done the peanut butter and bird seed. I might have some personal experience with it, oops). Then spread a generous layer of peanut butter over the pine cone, if you have peanut allergies Crisco softened works well for this step as a replacement for peanut butter. Roll the cone in bird seed, smaller seeds work best, until the cone is completely covered. Hang outside in a tree, bush or on a hook. Just remember to keep them close to trees or other shelter for the birds to hide from predators.

The second bird feeder is a new one for me, but will look really cool on an old Christmas tree. Bird Seed Cookies are simple to make and only use a few ingredients:

- 2 cups bird seed (any type)
- cookie cutters
- 1 packet unflavored gelatin
- 2 tablespoons cold water
- 1/3 cup boiling water
- string
- skewer
- non-stick cooking spray



Instructions:

1. Spray your cookie cutters with non-stick spray to make the cookies easier to pop out.
2. Empty 1 package of unflavored gelatin into a bowl with 2 tablespoons of cold water. Let this sit for 1 minute. Add 1/3 cup of boiling water to the gelatin, stirring for a few minutes or until the gelatin is dissolved. This is the binder that keeps seeds together.
3. Next add 2 cups of bird seed to the gelatin and mix thoroughly.
4. On a tray or sheet of wax paper, lay out your cookie cutters. Fill the cookie cutters with the mixture and press into shape firmly. Make a small hole in each cookie with the skewer for the string.
5. Place in the refrigerator for a few hours to allow the seed mixture to set. Carefully pop the cookies out of their molds and thread a string through the hole.

Feeding the birds can be a fun activity for people of all ages. I can't wait to make some different feeders with my son this winter and hang them in the backyard. Whatever bird feeder you decide to use or make this winter, be sure to provide our feathered friends some water along with their food, especially if the weather remains dry this winter. Our bird friends will thank you with their happy songs and fun to watch antics through out the winter months. I hope everyone has a safe and happy holiday season! The Grapevine will return the first week of January with more tips, information and upcoming events. Happy Holiday season from my family and the KSRE Butler County Extension Office to you!!

Reminders

- Be sure to water your Christmas Tree if you have it inside.
- Continue watering newly planted lawns, trees and shrubs during warm weather to encourage rooting.

Upcoming Events

- *January 5, 2022 at Noon: Vegetable Varieties for Bountiful Harvests*
Have you ever been overwhelmed by the choices in seed catalogs? Rebecca McMahon, Sedgwick County Horticulture Extension Agent, will give you the tools you need to make educated decisions about which vegetable varieties to try in your garden. Learn the differences between heirlooms and hybrids, decipher plant descriptions, and determine which varieties will provide a more bountiful harvest. Register at: https://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/info-center/k-state-garden-hour-webinar-series/k_state_garden_hour.html
- *January 13th at 6 pm: Garden Gossip- Seed Starting & Houseplant Propagation*
Do you struggle to start seeds at home or transition them outside in the spring? Have you always wanted to start new houseplants but have had issues getting them to grow? Join us for the first Garden Gossip workshop on Seed Starting and Houseplant Propagation. Participants will receive Houseplant starts to take home. Class will be offered in-person, via Facebook Live and a recording will be available. Register at: https://kstate.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_1GqKiI6nZ9NbSwC