



Johnson's Garden Talk

Lawn and garden information for the friends and customers of Johnson's Garden Centers

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Christmas For The Birds

Mike Hargrove, Johnson's West 13th Store Manager

A lot of the trees in my backyard are loaded with food for the birds at this time of year. My wife and I usually take the food naturally found in our landscape a step further by decorating the pine in the backyard with edible ornaments for the birds. The grandkids enjoy helping out with these ornaments, especially the ones that are a little messy to make! Here are some of the easier ornaments to try:

- Fill pinecones with peanut butter and roll in Songbird Gourmet Bird Seed. Tie some yarn or raffia around the base of the pinecone and hang from a tree.
- String peanuts in the shell on lengths of dental floss to make short pieces of garland. We have found dental floss does not break when going through the tough shells. Use a darning or upholstery needle and soak the peanuts in water for 30 minutes before stringing. Make the garland at least 6-8" so the birds can handle them easily.
- You can also make garland out of crabapples or cranberries. Use grapes as simple clusters to hang from a tree.
- Use half an orange (or grapefruit) as a mini feeder. First, eat the meat from the orange and save the rind. Melt some peanut suet and fill the empty rind. Use colorful yarn to hang the feeder in a tree.
- If you have some mesh bags (the kind onions come in) you can cut them into small squares and fill with sunflower seeds. Tie the bundles with brightly colored yarn or raffia and hang in a tree.
- Use large cookie cutters to cut out bread cookies. String yarn through the bread slice after you have cut out the cookie shape, let the bread dry, spread with peanut butter and decorate with our Gardener's Choice Bird Seed.
- Spread peanut butter on bagels and hang with yarn or just use old doughnuts and tie them to a tree.
- Small pieces of ear corn add a lot of color to the tree if you tie yarn or raffia around the top of the ear and hang from a tree.
- Some other items that work well in a tree for the birds are millet sprays and sunflower heads if you happen to have any left from those that bloomed earlier. The critters always get to mine before I can save them!

Decorating a tree for the birds is also a great use for your cut Christmas tree after the holidays. It also offers the birds some protection from the weather and predators if put out in the yard. ■