

# Wild Bird Holiday Decorations

**Overview:** Filling trees and shrubs with festive treats for the birds enlivens the winter landscape and supports our feathered friends. Berried garlands and seeded ornaments can last after the holidays, when the winter months are snowiest. Handmade outdoor ornaments also make great gifts for kids to make and give.

## Cranberry Millet Spray Garlands

**Overview:** Strings of cranberries and millet sprays feed many different wild birds, from cedar waxwings to cardinals, and they add festive color to landscape trees and shrubs. They can even be twined around a birdfeeder post—just watch out for those squirrels!

### Materials:

- One 12 oz bag cranberries
- 10 millet sprays (available at pet stores)
- 5-6 feet of heavyweight thread
- A blunt-point sewing needle (plastic or metal)
- Red ribbon. (Birds can see and are attracted to red!)

**Approximate Time to Complete:** 30 minutes

**Location:** Indoor

**Ages:** All ages

**Season:** Winter

### Instructions:

1. Thread the needle with a long thread, knotted at the end, and string the cranberries for as long as you can string them, being sure to tie the end securely when you are done
2. Then taking 10-inch pieces of ribbon, tie the millet sprays to the cranberry strand every 6 inches or so.
3. Hang your garlands. They look very pretty on trees and birds of all kinds just love them!

# Suet Cutouts

**Overview:** Many birds require fat for good health in winter and relish suet and fatted seed cakes. These seed cake cutouts are very pretty, but they can be a bit messy to prepare, so be sure to work with children directly and have some towels ready for clean-up.

## Materials:

- Mixing bowl
- Rubber spatula
- Large holiday cookie cutters with open tops
- 20 oz suet (available at pet stores and in many garden centers)
- 1/2 cup songbird seed
- Wax paper
- Twine
- Large paper clips
- Cookie sheet
- Cranberries and/or sunflower seeds

**Approximate Time to Complete:** 30 minutes

**Location:** Indoor

**Ages:** All ages

**Season:** Winter

## Instructions:

1. Mix the suet and birdseed in a mixing bowl using a rubber spatula.
2. Place wax paper on the cookie sheet and your cookie cutters on top of the paper.
3. Using the rubber spatula and your fingers, fill the cookie cutters with the soft suet/seed mix to the depth of about a  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an inch. You can use the sunflower seeds and cranberries to make decorations on the shapes.
4. When you are done, lift the cutter away from the suet cutout then stick a bent paper clip into the top for a hook. Alternatively, you can make a hole in your shape using a straw or pencil.
5. Finally, freeze the ornaments until they are hard and ready to hang. Store them in a cool place before hanging.

# Seed Encrusted Pinecones

**Overview:** White pine cones are the easiest to find and use for these cheerful, easy-to-make ornaments, but any pinecone will work. Kids love making these ornaments because they are so pretty and easy.

## Materials:

- Dried pinecones
- 1 cup peanut butter or sunflower butter
- ½ cup songbird seed (plus additional seed for sprinkling)
- A mixing bowl
- Rubber spatula
- Cookie sheet
- Wax paper
- Thin red ribbon

**Location:** Indoor

**Approximate Time to Complete:** 30 minutes

**Ages:** All ages

**Season:** Winter

## Instructions:

1. Attach a 10" length of ribbon to the top of the pine cone (a hot glue gun works well for this).
2. In a mixing bowl add the peanut butter or sunflower butter and seed, and mix with the rubber spatula until combined.
3. Place the cones on the wax paper-lined cookie sheet, and using a spatula; liberally cover them with the seed mix.
4. Once the cones are covered, add an additional sprinkling of seed to their surfaces.
5. Freeze the ornaments until firm and ready to hang. Store them in a cool place before hanging.