

## *Making a Birdfeeder from Creatively Repurposed Materials*

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### **Helpful Hints:**

- Be sure the container is washed and completely clean.
- Save the lid when washing a soda bottle.
- Remove the labels.
- If there is a strong smell after washing, fill with water and add several tablespoons of baking soda. Let sit for an hour, Wash again.
- After washing, let the container dry completely.
- **Have a parent help you if you are cutting with a sharp tool.**
- Try creating a feeder by using the bottle or carton upside down!
- Use twigs or sticks from your yard as perches.
- Do not use glitter, toxic paint, or items that may harm birds.
- Be sure there are no sharp edges on the feeder.
- When you take your feeder home, place it where birds can easily reach it. Place your birdfeeders in places that aren't too windy, have good cover nearby, and minimize other hazards.

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- A couple simple recycled bird feeder options are a 20-ounce plastic bottle or a quart or half-gallon cardboard drink carton. For either one, simply wash it out well, cut two to three sets of holes opposite each other at varying levels and insert old wooden spoons all the way through. Attach twine at the top to hang it by, and fill with your favorite bird seed.

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- Punch holes on either side of a plastic pop bottle, stick a twig all the way through with its ends sticking out for perches and poking more holes nearby for the birds to pull the seeds out. Then hang the bottle by tying a string around its neck. (Finches really like these!)



### MILK CARTON BIRD FEEDER

Small milk carton (the kind at school)  
non-toxic poster paints  
stapler and staples  
hole punch=20  
yarn or string



- Wash and thoroughly dry the milk carton.
- Cut a small section from the carton and then staple the top opening closed.
- Paint the container, if desired. Let it dry. (Note: I like to paint my feeders in streaks of tan, gray and brown to resemble tree bark. Then, on the bottom, I paint on dark and light green leaves. When you stand underneath the hanging bird feeder, it really blends in with the canopy of leaves above it!)
- Poke a hole in the middle of the top of the carton, and thread a piece of yarn or string through it to use as a hanger. (The string should be long enough for the feeder to hang where the branches don't rub against, but not so long that the feeder hangs too far away from the tree's leaf cover. Birds like to feel they have a hiding place to fly into quickly!)
- Add birdseed and hang the feeder. (Since the small milk carton feeders are just the right size for the tiny birds such as finches, wrens, etc., you might want to use thistle seed. It is the finch's favorite food! Garden supply stores carry a sterile thistle seed just for bird feeding which is guaranteed not to sprout all over your yard).

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Backyard birds won't know the difference between a fancy, store-bought bird feeder and one that's homemade, so save your pennies and make one out of an empty milk carton. Cut openings on opposite sides of a clean carton and coat with nontoxic paint. Glue Popsicle stick shingles onto the roof. For a perch, poke holes below the openings and slip a dowel through the holes. Fill the bottom of the feeder with birdseed mix. (You can make your own mix by combining a variety of nuts and seeds, such as sunflower seeds, millet, thistle seeds and yellow corn.) Then hang the feeder with wire in a spot that's easy to view but far enough away from fences or posts to thwart predators.



### Milk or Juice Jug Bird Feeder

*You will need:*

- Washed gallon plastic jug
- Marking pen
- Craft knife
- Wire or twine

*Method:*

Use the marking pen to draw a large window in one or two sides of the jug, leaving a wide piece at the base to hold the seed. Attach the wire or twine to the neck of the bottle and replace the cap. Make sure it hangs straight. Fill with mixed seed and hang from the nearest tree.

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### Milk Jug Feeder Instructions

You'll need a gallon or half-gallon plastic jug, small wooden dowel rods, and string to hang the feeder. Cut two or three holes in the middle of the jug, as shown in the picture. The holes should be between two and four inches wide depending on the type of birds you want to attract. Then make smaller holes below the feeding holes for the dowel rod. Take each rod and insert it into the smaller hole for a perch. Fill the feeder with seed and hang it in a nearby tree.



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### Soda Bottle Bird Feeder

#### Materials

- Clean 1-liter soda bottle
- Craft knife
- 2 wooden spoons
- small eye screw
- Length of twine for hanging



#### Instructions

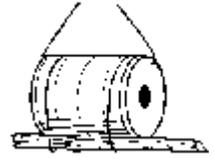
1. Start by drawing a 1/2-inch asterisk on the side of a clean 1-liter soda bottle, about 4 inches from the bottom. Rotate the bottle 90 degrees and draw another asterisk 2 inches from the bottom. Draw a 1-inch-wide circle opposite each asterisk, as shown.
2. Use a craft knife to slit the asterisk lines and cut out the circles (a parent's job). Insert a wooden spoon handle first through each hole and then through the opposite asterisk, as shown.
3. Remove the bottle cap and twist a small eye screw into the top of it for hanging.
4. Finally, fill your feeder with birdseed, recap it, and use a length of twine to hang it from a tree.



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### Recycle for the Birds

If you think about some of the stuff we throw away each day, you'll realize that many containers can be used several times by finding creative ways to reuse them. In this activity, you'll see how to turn food containers into a nice feeder for the birds. When reusing any food containers, be sure that you completely clean the inside before beginning your craft project.



### Here's What to Do:

1. Create bird feeders out of clean household containers by using the drawings you see here for models. Remember to punch small drain holes in the bottom of the containers to let rain water out. (For complete instructions on making milk jug feeders, keep reading.)
2. Do some research to find out where to locate each different type of feeder. Each one will attract different types and sizes of birds. You'll also want to find out what types of bird feed to put in each container. Birds have very different diets and will be picky about what they will eat. It is also important to keep the feeders clean to avoid making the birds sick.

### Use household containers that are completely clean:

- milk jugs
- milk cartons
- coffee cans
- sticks or dowels (for perches)



### **Milk Carton Bird Feeder**

- Rinse and dry an empty milk carton. Cut a semi-circular hole on one side of the milk carton. The hole should be about 1/3 from the bottom of the carton. Cut another semi-circular hole on the side of the milk carton directly opposite the first hole.
- Cut a small hole with the box cutter about 1 inch below the semi-circular hole. Repeat underneath the other semi-circular hole. Push the  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch wooden dowel into the hole, through the milk carton and out the other hole.
- Insert twine or strong string at the top of the milk carton. Poke a small hole  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inch from the top of the milk carton above the semi-circular hole. Repeat with the opposite side of the milk carton. Push the twine into the hole, through the milk carton and out the other hole.
- Hang the bird feeder on a low tree limb. Pour birdseed into the milk carton.



### **Milk Carton Bird Feeder**

*You will need:*

- Washed milk carton
- Craft knife
- Piece of dowel or small twig
- Non-toxic paint for decorating, if desired

*Method:*

Glue the opening flap on the top closed. Make a pattern for the size and shape you want the feeding windows to be and trace on the sides of the carton. Cut large window openings in all four sides, just leaving inch wide pillars on the corners for strength. Or you can leave one or more sides solid to keep out rain. Be sure to leave a 2 to 3 inch-wide strip at the base to hold the seed. If you want to be creative, now is the time to paint your bird feeder. Poke holes through two opposite sides at the base of the windows and push the dowel or twig through from one side to the other to form a perch. Make a small hole through the top flap for the twine and hang your new feeder on a branch at head height, near a window so you can enjoy the visitors. Fill the base with bird seed, shelled nuts or dried fruit.



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There are a lot of feeders that any feeding enthusiast can use to feed wild birds. These feeders can vary in styles, shapes, sizes and prices. However, you do not need to purchase a new one or build a highly complicated bird feeder. Instead, you can use some stuff that can easily be found at home. Building bird feeders from recycled materials is a great way to help keep our environment healthy and you can also get your kids involved in these simple projects, spending quality time with them and encouraging them to learn about the natural world as well.

You have a myriad of choices of things to use when making recycled bird feeders starting from the obvious, like milk cartons and plastic bottles, to the mildly unusual toilet paper rolls. Plastic drink bottles and empty milk jugs pretty much go through the same process when being converted to wild bird feeders. You first need to clean them thoroughly and dry them out then drill some holes into them and insert dowels for perches. You then need to drill holes large enough for seeds to go through at a spot located a few inches above the dowels. You can then fill the bird feeder and suspend on branches using wires or chains.

Using milk cartons is also easy. You just need to cut out a hole on the middle part of the body of the carton. The size of this hole should be enough to allow small birds to access the bird feed you will place inside. You will then need to punch a hole at the top of your milk carton, thread a piece of yarn or string through it and use this to hang your bird feeder. You can also use this method on 1 liter soda bottles.

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### Recycle an empty milk jug into a bird feeder

You can feed the songbirds in your yard using a feeder you make from an empty milkjug.

#### **MATERIALS**

- 1 gallon milk jug with lid
- 2 sturdy tree branches for perches
- Twine or heavy string
- Markers
- Sharp knife
- Scissors
- Nail or heavy needle



#### **DIRECTIONS**

- Wash and rinse the jug. Dry thoroughly.
- Draw your doors on two opposite sides and where you want the dowels for perches. The perches should be centered beneath the doorways. The first perch should be about 2 inches from the bottom and the door about 1/2 inch or so above that. One side will need to be about 1/2 inch lower than the other so the perches have clearance to cross each other in the center.
- Using the point of the knife, make a cut at the center of your door large enough to get a blade of your scissors through. This will make cutting easier. Cut outward and at an angle towards the line you've drawn. This makes following your outline, rounding the corners and getting the shape you want easier.

### Milk Carton Bird Feeder

What you'll need:

- Empty cardboard milk carton (quart size)
- Scissors
- String or cord
- Hole punch or pencil



How to make it:

1. Have an adult help you cut a hole in the bird feeder - it should be big enough so a bird could come and sit and eat the feed, but not too big or the carton will become unstable.
2. Have an adult help you cut a hole using the hole punch in the top of the milk carton and put a string through the hole. Alternatively, you can poke a hole on either side of the flap at the top of the carton by poking a pencil through the top.
3. Tie a knot in the string.
4. Fill the carton with bird seed until it reaches the top of the hole.
5. Hang the cart on a tree branch and watch the birds enjoy their snack!

Tips:

- A quart size carton works perfect as it isn't too large and holds a decent amount of food.
- You may choose to decorate the outside of the carton but keep in mind that it will be outside in the elements and decorations may wash off in the rain. Also, you wouldn't want the birds pecking at flaking paint!
- Check your bird feeder regularly and refill as needed.

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### How To Make a Milk Carton Bird Feeder

- You will need a small milk carton to start with. Take off the label.
- With a compass or old ball point pen make a hole for the perch. Make sure it is as close to the bottom of the milk carton as possible. This might require some adult supervision.
- Wiggle a pencil into the hole and push it through to the other side of the carton. Make another hole where the pencil hits the other side of the milk carton.
- Push the pencil all the way through so it sticks out evenly on both sides.
- Now we need to cut a hole to let the birds get the seed. Make a hole about 2 cms above the perch. Wiggle a pen/pencil in to make it bigger. Push your scissors into the hole and cut out a big square. This may also require some adult supervision.
- Do exactly the same on the other side. To hang the feeder up make two holes in the very top of the carton and poke through some string, an old boot lace or a piece of washing line.

