

# (Cold weather) bird feeder

## WHAT YOU WILL NEED

Seed mix, e.g. hemp, linseed, chia, sunflower and pumpkin seeds

Fruit and nut mix, e.g. orange peel, flaked and ground almonds, macadamia and cashew nuts (as appropriate for your child's age and allergies)



Jam jar (370g)

3 tbsp coconut oil

Cupcake tray

Mixing bowl

Wooden spoon

Pencil

Twine

Scissors

## POTENTIAL FOR MESS

There is the potential for mess during the mixing stage, of course, but as with all cooking or baking activities, you can prepare by wearing aprons, putting down a table cover, or working on this in the garden – feed the birds with the spillage while you work!



## ENGAGED FOR

The time taken to mix, fill and hang, but checking on the bird feeders will also become a thing and can be incorporated into outdoor play in the weeks to come.

## PARENTAL ENJOYMENT

I personally enjoy anything that involves nature and recipes, and this is easy to do, with satisfying results. It's also natural, eco-friendly and KIND. Remember, when the weather is cold and food is limited, birds will appreciate the extra bit of help. It feels good to take care of wildlife.

## GOOD STUFF

Listening

Creativity

Nature

Care for animals

## METHOD

To make your seed, fruit and nut mixes, get a tablespoon of whatever you can get your hands on in the pantry, or try my tested mixes above, which went down very well with the birds in our garden. For the orange peel, I simply cut

tiny strips, but equally you could grate a little into the mix. Fill an old jam jar (I often use old jam jars for quantity



measuring; the ones I use have a capacity of 370g) with the chosen mix and then prepare your coconut oil.

Grown-ups: put 3 tablespoons of coconut oil into a pan and melt it on the stove. When it's melted, pour it into a mixing bowl along with your jar of seeds and stir with a wooden spoon – remember, it will be hot!

When you've given it a stir, pop it into the fridge for 30 minutes to solidify a little, so that it's nice and workable for your little one's hands. I'd suggest that during this time you set up a space for messy mixing with your kids, or take the next stage outside.

Once out of the fridge you can give the bowl to your little one and get into

this nutty, oily sensory experience with them. Fill the cupcake tray with the mix. You can tidy up the edges and pat them down as they go (if your inner neat-freak is at its limits!), but allow them to get it all over their hands, making balls with this stuff and overfilling the tray (under filling is more of an issue, as I learned when a couple of our first attempts couldn't pack the punch of being hung up, due to us being far too sparing at this stage!).

When the tray is filled, put it into the freezer for a minimum of 12 hours, although this could also be a return activity a week later should you find yourself bored with bird feeders by this point. Once in the freezer these will last a long time, a feel-good stock of wildlife care and kindness at your disposal.



We took ours out the next day, desperate to see the results, and I poked holes into all the little coconut discs with a pencil. Depending on your child's ability to thread twine

through holes, this can then be a joint effort or you can whizz through this part, knotting them all, so now each has a perfect hair-tie-size hanging loop.

Finally, head out into the wilds, the garden or park and put your coconut delights on every eager branch you can find. A bonus if you can then see

them from your window, as the flock of visitors will delight your children on a daily basis – for at least three weeks, which is how long ours lasted.

PS The reason these are called cold-weather feeders, is that the coconut oil will melt in the heat . . . these are perfect for frosty days.