

Diggin' In

# Songbirds Brighten Up Winter

Follow These Tips  
To Attract The Guests  
To Your Homes

BY KATHY VAN MULLEKOM

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There's nothing better than watching songbirds at feeders during winter's dreary months.

Cardinals in ruby red coats, woodpeckers in black-and-white tuxedos and bluebirds in royal finery brighten the grayest day.

"The frequent visitors to our feeders quickly become old friends — the same birds come every day, all day," says Shirley Devan, outgoing president of the Williamsburg Bird Club — [www.williamsburgbirdclub.org](http://www.williamsburgbirdclub.org) — in southeastern Virginia.

"I quickly learn who likes to eat seeds on the ground, who likes the seed feeders, who likes the suet feeders. Birds always surprise me. The red-bellied woodpecker likes the seed feeder more than the suet. The brown thrasher prefers suet. 'My' hermit thrush usually just sips water. I have a pair of downy woodpeckers — male and female. I like to think they nest in my neighborhood in spring and summer."

Birdfeeders for a home-based habitat are a personal choice.

Williamsburg birder Martha Wren Briggs says commercial feeders aren't necessary because birds are tree or ground feeders, and each type eats bread and seeds tossed on the ground, or put in a flat dish. Fresh water is important even in winter and is best provided in a shallow dish, such as a large flat saucer used under large planters, because birds dislike a deep bird bath, she advises.

"Use your imagination to feed your tree-dining friends," she says.

"The easiest way to serve fat trimmings from meats, suet or a peanut butter and cornmeal mixture is to simply rub it in the bark of a tree. Tree feeders will shimmy down the tree and peck away at the delicious treat.

"Wrens are curious birds. Place an almost empty peanut butter jar on the ground, and wrens will go in and out, taking a nibble each time."

If you opt for traditional feeders, squirrels and raccoons may raid your seed supply, so baffle deterrents are your best friend. If blackbirds swarm your surroundings, caged feeders help keep bully birds and squirrels at bay; when you choose caged feeders, make sure the cages are large enough to prevent wanted critters from reaching in to grab goodies.

Even the posts that support feeders are important parts of the pastime. Wrought-iron poles with hooks for hanging feeders are attractive, but often they lean and fall in soft, wet soil. Feeders hung on trees are highly susceptible to predators taking advantage of the situation.

If you're looking for an extra sturdy feeding station, here's one I recently created for my feathered friends.

**BIRD-FEEDING STATION**

**Materials:**

- 1 square treated post, 4-by-4, 10 feet long
- 1 bag, quick-set concrete
- Water



**TOP: A downy woodpecker feeds on a suet log in Shirley Devan's yard. RIGHT: A simple birdfeeder can be made from a pinecone smeared with peanut butter and then rolled in bird seeder; attach ribbon or twine for hanging. (Courtesy Shirley Devan/MCT)**



- Level
- Raccoon/squirrel baffle with 4-inch square opening
- 4 hooks, each about 12 inches long (consider vinyl-coated hooks, not just painted, versions for durability); choose hangers that set out far enough to accommodate width of feeders
- Decorative treated cap for post top
- Post hole digger
- 4 birdfeeders

**Directions:**

Use a post-hole digger to create a hole about 24 inches deep. Place treated post in hole, pour in concrete mixed with water according to directions on bag.

As concrete sets, adjust post and use level to ensure the post is straight on all sides.

Allow post to set a couple days before installing baffle and then attaching hangers (use long screws for stability). Place decorative cap on post top; fill and hang feeders.

**Choosing feeders and fillers:**

For feeders on the four hooks, consider a caged suet feeder, Duncraft caged peanut feeder and two Droll Yankees caged domed feeders with large tubes so you don't have to fill them so often. Plastic domes on feeders help shield them from rain; you may want to consider taking in feeders during prolonged, heavy rains to prevent costly seed from molding.

For seeds, sunflower will get you tons of beautiful birds, but it may also attract blackbirds and obnoxious fish crows that tend to live near waterways. Cole's offers special blends that include sunflower meats, fruits and assorted nuts; Cole's seeds — [www.coleswild-bird.com](http://www.coleswild-bird.com) — are sold at specialty wildlife stores and garden centers nationwide.

In addition to the feeding station, consider specialty feeders such as a finch feeder with thistle seed, bluebird feeder with dried mealworms and platform feeders (composite wood feeders are awesome!) with safflower seed,

which squirrels and nuisance birds tend to leave alone. Look for feeders that are easy to clean, such as the Droll Yankees feeders which have a metal rod that you pull to remove the ports for easy cleaning. Feeder should routinely be cleaned with a splash of bleach added to soap and water, then thoroughly rinsed and dried before refilling.

No matter how many or what style birdfeeders you choose to use, there is one all-important aspect to remember — enjoy the sights and sounds of your feathered friends. They will probably stick around and nest in your yard, turning your environment into a healthy, happy habitat.

**SUET RECIPE**

- 1 cup smooth peanut butter
- 1 cup vegetable shortening
- 1 cup white flour, not self-rising
- 3 cups yellow cornmeal, not self-rising

Mix ingredients together thoroughly and place in a suet log (small log with holes drilled in it) or simply smear the paste on the trunk of tree, branch, post of other solid object where birds can easily find and reach it. Store unused suet in closed container in refrigerator until needed. — National Audubon Society; [www.audubon.org](http://www.audubon.org)

Keep it simple: Using plain beef suet is great for birds — squirrels leave it alone, it's cheap and all the birds love it! — Cornell Lab of Ornithology; [www.birds.cornell.edu](http://www.birds.cornell.edu)

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# With Advent Of 2014, Lights Go Out On Incandescent Bulb

BY KATE MARTIN  
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TACOMA, Wash. — Thomas Edison's first public demonstration of the incandescent light bulb happened 134 years ago Tuesday.

But on Wednesday, the lights dimmed for the incandescent because of federal energy efficiency standards approved in 2007.

As of Jan. 1, companies no longer can import or make 60- and 40-watt incandescent light bulbs — the most popular bulb for indoor lighting. Instead, LED (light-emitting diode) and CFL (compact fluorescent) will replace incandescents as the dominant home fixture.

The new light bulbs reduce energy use and save consumers money. Experts say 90 percent of the electricity used by traditional incandescent light bulbs is radiated in the form of heat, rather than light.

While the bulb ban prevents the manufacture or import of incandescents, shoppers still can find the bulbs on the shelves. Since people have known the ban was coming for some time, there were no last-minute crowds shopping for incandescents Tuesday, Fred Meyer spokeswoman Melinda Merrill said.

Traditional 75- and 100-watt incandescent bulbs were to be phased out at the beginning of 2013. Home Depot stores in some areas of the country have a six-month supply of incandescent bulbs. Merrill said Fred Meyer has a two-month supply of various incandescent bulbs.

"The CFLs have become more popular and LEDs have become more popular," she said.

Lighting is no minor matter at the Tacoma Art Museum, where three galleries are lit with ceramic metal halide lamps. That has allowed the museum to reduce the number of fixtures it has and save money at the same time.

One gallery, which houses the museum's collection of Chihuly glass, still uses incandescent lighting at Dale Chihuly's request, said museum director Stephanie Stebich.

"He prefers a warmer, hotter light and it makes the vessels glow," she said. The museum is stockpiling some incandescent bulbs, but eventually it and the artist will have to decide what type of illumination to switch to.

"As usual we will do

testing and bring the artist in," said museum registrar Jessica Wilks. "Dale is aware of these things."

Early on, the CFL was met with lots of criticism. The lights flickered, took a while to attain full brightness and emitted a harsher light than the warm, familiar incandescent. Much of that has changed as manufacturers began adding features.

And the price of bulbs dropped as competition increased, said Tacoma Power's Patrick Urain, the retail program manager who concentrates on residential energy conservation.

Residents who switch out 80 percent of their old, energy-inefficient incandescent bulbs can expect to see a corresponding drop in their utility bill, between \$6 and \$7 per month. Urain said.

Some public utilities offer incentives to help bring down the cost of qualified CFL and LED bulbs. The utility offers incentives because when customers use less energy the utility is less likely to have to buy expensive power from outside sources to supplement demand, Urain said.

The use of LED and CFL bulbs will reduce the environmental impact of commercial and residential lighting, and save consumers money, said Kevin Hallinan, a University of Dayton engineering professor and co-founder of the school's master's degree program in renewable and clean energy.

"The reason why the federal government legislated the change is because these incandescent bulbs use four times or more energy than other technologies," Hallinan said. "That's more pollution coming out of power plants, that's more carbon emissions, so this is really a good thing for the U.S."

Urain said consumers need to look for an Energy Star rated bulb. Those bulbs should work as advertised in terms of energy use and the life of the bulb.

Because of the change, light bulb brightness is now rated differently. The old method, used with incandescents, was a measure of energy use. A 60-watt incandescent bulb is now roughly equivalent to a 15-watt CFL. Light output is measured in lumens. A 60-watt incandescent bulb and a 15-watt CFL will put out roughly 800 lumens, according to Tacoma Power.

# Out With The Old, In With The New: Cleaning Up In 2014

BY COURTNEY ORTEGA

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Monday, Jan. 6, marked the 12th day of Christmas and the last official day of the holiday festivities. For those who have yet to do so, it also means it's past time to take down Yuletide decor and pack everything away until next December. If you're already fatigued from the hustle and bustle of the holidays, however, the prospect of dismantling the tree and boxing up all those ornaments and decorations can seem overwhelming. Luckily, it doesn't have to be. By implementing a few tricks from local organizing mavens, you can take the process from bothersome to blissful and keep your home spic-and-span throughout the rest of the year.

**FAREWELL TO THE HOLIDAYS**

Remember how time-consuming it was decorating your home for the holidays? Did you find it stressful? Melinda Massie of Organizing with a Side of Fabulous says this is a common malady that compels most people to throw their Christmas decorations in a box (or two) in January and consider the task complete.

It might feel like a short-cut, but it's not that smooth a move, she says.

"It doesn't take a lot of time to put things away properly, though it feels like it," Massie says, adding that

the first step to a successful Christmas clean-up is to try and make the experience enjoyable. For instance, playing music and having a glass of your favorite wine or beverage on hand is an easy way to create a relaxing atmosphere that helps ease the chore.

Also, it can be a good idea to create a game plan, prioritizing what you plan to take down and pack up first. Even if you jump in head first, she recommends a section-by-section approach.

"Instead of tackling the whole thing, break it down into bite-size pieces," Massie says. "It becomes significantly more manageable."

Some people start off with the tree, but Massie reiterates the idea of taking baby steps.

"If you do other small areas first, then you feel like you've accomplished something," she says.

Because of this, she highly recommends taking down outdoor Christmas lights and the Christmas tree last.

Massie suggests organizing ornaments by size and shape for storage. Place egg carton or sock dividers inside plastic bins for a storage option that won't break the bank or require you to purchase anything new, she says. If you'd rather spring for something more elaborate, Ashley Easley of MasterPeace Solutions is a fan of the telescopic rolling ornament storage bag from Christmas Lights Etc.

"Rolling ornament storage bags such as these are a

clever and safe way to store your tree's decor," she says. Easley also suggests taking special precautions with more delicate or valuable decor items.

"Be sure to take special care for homemade ornaments by wrapping [them] in tissue, putting [them] in a zip-lock bag and labeling," she says.

Massie suggests wrapping Christmas lights in small sections so that the end result is a string of lights split into two even bundles. When stored like this, the lights are easier to check for burned out bulbs, she says.

And while we're on the topic of making Christmas decorating easy for next year, Easley offers another suggestion to help minimize future holiday grief.

"When putting away your Christmas decorations for the year, take inventory of what you did and did not use this year," she says. "This will make next year's decorating much easier."

It's important to also

point out that unloading unwanted holiday gear is an important part of a successful Christmas clean-up.

"If there is anything you didn't like, then get rid of it immediately," Massie says.

And to reduce the possibility of buyer's remorse or unnecessary hoarding, Easley offers a word of advice to anyone who frequents post-holiday sales: "Don't fall into the trap of buying everything you can find at 50 percent off," she says. "If you are in need of something in particular, that's OK, oth-

erwise, it's hoarding. Let the store be your storage unit. Nothing is ever really on sale anyway — it's just clever marketing to get you to buy things you don't need."

**CHEERS TO A CLEAN AND SHINY NEW YEAR**

When you've finally put away the last box of ornaments and your home's order has been restored, it's time to sit back and enjoy a

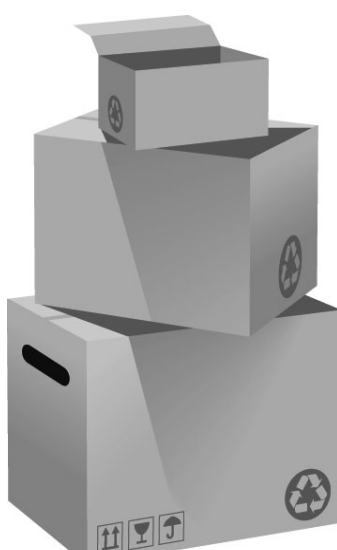


IMAGE: METRO GRAPHICS

job well done.

But don't get too comfortable yet. With the right mindset and initiative, your home's post-Christmas cleanliness can become a year-round thing.

"Being organized is not an endgame. It's a daily habit that has to be cultivated," Massie explains.

Her formula for success? Setting aside a small amount of time each day to "reset" your home by putting everything back in its place. Making cleaning a daily ritual prevents clutter from snowballing and, eventually, becoming an overwhelming problem, she says.

To make the most of the time you devote to the process, Massie also recommends purchasing a timer and setting it for an allotted period each day. Not only is the timer great for increasing motivation to get the task at hand done, it can help get the whole family involved, she says. For kids, in particular, it's a terrific tool for turning the concept of cleaning

into a game, she says.

Easley says the start of the new year is also a good opportunity to review and schedule those "one of these days" household projects that you would like to accomplish in the next 12 months. She suggests creating a list of everything that you want to do.

"Write down the steps and the cost, then prioritize accordingly," she says. "Put dates on your planner that you will be working on these projects."

At the end of the day, Massie says, it's realistic to acknowledge that most homes will never be perfectly clean, organized or project-free. But if you set attainable goals for your home, then maintaining a high level of year-round organization and tidiness is not as far-fetched as most people would think.

"It's just like exercising," Massie says. "It's a daily choice you have to make."

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