

Making Ripples

DIY Squirrel Feeders

by Amanda Bancroft

If you have a charismatic hungry squirrel in your life, it can be hard (or impossible) to shoo it away from the bird feeders which you lovingly stock with great expense each month. Through tireless and entertaining research, some people have figured out the best ways to keep squirrels away from bird feeders. You can even make a DIY squirrel feeder with the kids to distract these acrobatic rodents.

Some squirrel feeders are admittedly designed more to entertain us humans than to feed the squirrels, but that's ok. Certain backyards become Worlds of Fun for four-legged critters. A popular model is the corn cob feeder, and some are even conversation pieces: corn cobs "sitting" on a tiny wooden swing, wind mills with four cobs spinning around, a wooden saloon with bar stools, or pint-size picnic benches. Creative feeder crafters have even recycled old china tea cups or other household junk into hanging wall art that also serves the wildlife. You could use a saucer as a base to hold spilling seeds while the teacup pours seeds out. It's attractive and mostly functional, but can't hold large quantities of seed.

The cheaper end of squirrel feeders will repurpose something you already have at home: old mason jars, milk jugs, recyclable materials or furniture. If you raise chickens or know someone who does, one easy way to do it is to attach a glass mason jar onto a chick feeder tray, and hang the whole thing in a tree. Or you could cut one large hole or several smaller holes into a milk jug and hang it by the handle. Toilet paper rolls and pinecones can be rolled in peanut butter and then birdseed, and are easy to hang or slip on a branch. Muffin trays make super platform feeders, so you can be friendly to squirrels but also attract the lovely mourning doves and other birds who may not visit your standard feeder. If you're lucky and observant at night, our local southern flying squirrel may visit your feeder!

If you want free squirrel feeder plans, many websites and organizations encourage this hobby by providing a variety of downloadable plans. There are also books on the subject, such as *Squirrel Feeder*, Kindle edition by Paul Anderson, or *Outwitting Squirrels: 101 Cunning Stratagems to Reduce Dramatically the Egregious Misappropriation of Seed from Your Birdfeeder by Squirrels* by Bill Adler, Jr. And if you just don't have time to make one yourself or want a well-made, long-lasting option, online pricing for squirrel feeders ranges from \$15 to \$80.

Hopefully, these ideas will help redirect squirrels away from your bird feeders. But remember some wise advice from my friend Geshe la: getting upset because you want to feed the pretty bird and not the ugly squirrel will not bring inner peace and happiness. Sometimes it's best to just enjoy nature the way it is, squirrels and all.

Amanda Bancroft is a Master Naturalist and volunteers with her husband Ryan for their solar-powered online educational center on how to make a difference with everyday choices at: www.RipplesBlog.org.