

Glenn Cartwright and Fay Linger came up to Raab Park last week to share their love of birds with the kids. We adult kids can learn from their tips too. Glen's garden is a veritable Disneyland for birds. Most of his creations come from items gleaned from thrift stores and garage sales. Glen uses old Teflon frying pans for birdbaths. Ice cube trays, coat hangers, juice cartons, pop bottles, plastic tubes, sticks, bamboo stakes, shallow baskets and straws are used to make feeders for the birds. Once bird feeders are made from these recyclables, it's time to use Fay's recipes for bird food.

To make your own bird gymnasium you'll need two tall pieces of bamboo, dark green thick plastic garden stakes (about six feet tall), or improvise. At the same time find two elbows (L-shapes) that will fit over the two stakes and a cross piece of bamboo, plastic or doweling to fit into the elbows. This is hard to explain when I don't have pictures in my column. You'll be constructing an upside down squared-off U. The two stakes will go in the ground for the gymnasium. Visit Raab Park in Poulsbo to see the bird gym or email or write me and I'll send you a diagram.

Don't leave the hardware/garden store yet. You'll also need pvc-pipe (one-half to one inch in diameter) and more elbows, plus a few tees. What you want to build is a rectangle, made up of two squares, all connected together with the elbows and tees. So, find four elbows and two tees, plus seven equal lengths of pvc pipe. The elbows go in the four corners and the two tees connect up the parallel piece that divides the rectangle into two squares.

The large rectangle will be about three feet by one and a half feet. (Think window frames.) One more task is to drill a hole through the two tee shapes that make the cross piece dividing the rectangle into two squares; because you'll be running the extra garden stake through this hole and the rectangle you've made will be able to revolve around and around. One of the adults said, "It's like leggos and another said, tinker toys."

Here comes the ice cube tray part. Find two molded plastic ice cube trays and drill small holes in each ice cube compartment so water can drain out. Find four metal coat hangers. Glenn's were red and blue. You'll use two hangers for each tray. Assume your tray has fourteen cubes (seven on each side). Using this premise you would place the tray on top of the cross piece of the hangers with one hanger between the second and third set of cubes, and another hanger between the fifth and sixth set of cubes. Sometimes you'll need to cut a groove for the hangers to stay put, but usually the trays will work as is.

The tray will balance on the two hangers and you'll hang the hangers on the cross piece of the rectangle you've made. In fact you'll do this two times. One set of hangers on the top cross piece and one set of hangers on the bottom cross piece. (Think square ferris wheel.) Fill the ice cube compartments with black oil sunflower seeds and watch the birds cavort. You can even hang other feeders from this bird gym. Remember if you can't figure this out, send me an email or a self-addressed stamped envelope and I'll send you a diagram.

Here are Fay's easy recipes for feeding birds. For "No Mess Birdseed Mix" mix together one part sunflower chips, one part mixed millets, two parts cracked corn (fine scratch feed). If you want you can also mix in one part black oil sunflower seeds. This mixture is good for hanging birdfeeders and can also be used for on the ground feeding. Watch for birds like towhees, juncos, sparrows, finches, grosbeaks, chickadees, and nuthatches.

For Fay's "Homemade Bird Pudding" mix together: one pound of lard or Crisco, one cup or more of quick-cooking oats, one cup chunky peanut butter and one cup cornmeal. Mold the mixture into disposable plastic trays (the kind suet comes in). Store in the freezer or fridge. As needed remove from the plastic and fill your wire suet feeders. This mixture melts quickly in hot summers and is best to use from fall through spring. Nearly all seed eating birds love this mixture and woodpeckers, flickers (my favorite bird) and jays enjoy it too.

Send comments or questions to Peg at gardenmentor@yahoo.com or in care of this newspaper.