

Birdhouse Building Competition Resources

Some ideas to get you started!

Building materials

Whether you are building a birdhouse from scratch or are modifying a found object into a birdhouse, there are a few basics you need to think about. If you are scavenging stores and flea markets, you need to be looking for an object that has a cavity, that is, a hollowed-out space in which the bird can live. So any item that has an empty space inside would be good—as long as a hole can be drilled in it.

- wood
- metal
- plastic
- clay (must be fired to be used outdoors)
- paper mache
- cardboard
- foam board
- gourds and coconuts
- coffee can

Coverings

After you figure out the basic structure, you need to paint or cover it with decoration. If yours is to be a functional birdhouse, it needs to be made of materials that will hold up in all kinds of weather. If yours is a “green” birdhouse, be sure to use eco-friendly materials. Here are just a few ideas to get you started or give you inspiration. These are not the only materials you can use.

- paint, latex or acrylic
- special effects paint, textured paints and gels
- polyurethane
- shellac, lacquer, tung oil
- wallpaper
- newspaper
- scrapbook paper
- plaster, concrete/mortar patch
- spackle or joint compound

Decorative materials

Look all around you for items that can be used. Think out of the box!

sea shells

broken pottery

mirrors

hardware such as washers, bolts, nails

wire

organic materials such as leaves, twigs, moss, and tree bark

stones

school supplies

game cards and pieces

Places to look

As you walk through the aisles at home improvement store or the grocery store, look at items and try to picture them with a hole for a birdhouse. Or look at the small objects as possible items that can be used for decoration.

hardware stores

craft stores

dollar stores

flea markets

yard sales

antique stores

junk yards

grocery stores

Some Guidelines for Building Your Birdhouse

1. There are two approaches to building a birdhouse. You must decide if you want to construct a birdhouse that will be (1) mostly for decoration OR (2) will attract birds to live in your backyard. If you are creating a decorative birdhouse, you are limited only by your imagination—build a basic birdhouse box and decorate it however you choose. But if you are serious about building a functional birdhouse, then you must identify the species of birds that usually visit your backyard and identify which ones are the cavity nesters, that is, those that will live in houses. Typical cavity nesters that are also backyard birds are chickadees, wrens, woodpeckers, and bluebirds.
 2. Next do some research on the kind of bird you want to attract so that you can build a house that meets its needs. Find out the dimensions and other specifications of its preferred house. The dimensions you need to know are: entrance hole, floor size, depth and height. Smaller birds such as chickadees and wrens should have 8 inches in depth and 4 x 4 floor dimensions.
 3. Find a good design or draft one yourself. Use a slanted roof so that dirt, moisture and rain will not gather on top that may eventually cause the wood to rot. Extend the roof over the front and sides to keep rain out. Perches are good but not really necessary. Don't forget ventilation and drainage needs. Drill small holes in the floor for water drainage. Spaces or holes in the sides will promote ventilation and keep the house cool.
 4. For the materials, it is best to use untreated lumber or wood for your bird house. Apart from imitating the natural habitat of the birds, wood lessens the risks of overheating and poisoning. Processed and pressure-treated woods contain toxic chemicals. Plastics and metals are not ideal since both are prone to heat. Cedar or redwood are weather-resistant and naturally insect repellent. You can paint the outside of a birdhouse, but never the interior, including the inside of the hole. Birds often prefer plain, weathered and unpainted houses, but if you want to paint, subdued colors such as brown, tan, and gray are good choices because they're pleasing to many types of birds. Martins seem to prefer white houses.
 5. The bird's safety is your utmost concern so make sure that they will be protected from predators. One source states that birds prefer a stationary house attached to a pole or wall rather than one that swings from a chain or rope. Securely attach the house to a pole or wall at the preferred height for your bird. Do not attach the birdhouse to a tree because a cat or raccoon can climb it and raid the birdhouse. If you use a metal roof, make sure there is enough shade so that the house will be cool.
1. Cleanliness and maintenance of the birdhouse is also important to prevent disease to your birds. Adding a backdoor or a side door that pivots open will allow you to easily remove dirt, droppings, and old/unused nests inside the birdhouse.

Resources

This is not an exhaustive list of books and some are better than others. Most of these books are found at www.amazon.com. You are urged to go to that website for more details and customer reviews. Many can be purchased as used books. Be aware that publishers will publish the same book inside a different cover. Check with our local library to find these or other books on birdhouse construction. And of course, the Internet is a resource for ideas, designs and plans.

Banks, Richard T. *Designer Birdhouses*. 2008. Lark Publishers. ISBN 1579908349

Berger, Michael. *The Best Birdhouses for Your Backyard*. 2001. Popular Woodworking Books. ISBN 155870583X

Campbell, Scott D. *The Complete Book of Birdhouse Construction for Woodworkers*. 1984. Dover Publications. ISBN 0486244075

Dillon, Mike. *The Great Birdhouse: Fun, Fabulous Designs You Can Build*. 1999. New York: Sterling Publishing Company, Inc. ISBN 0-8069-9334-0.

Egan, Dorothy. *Painting and Decorating Bird Houses*. 1997. Cincinnati: North Light Books. ISBN 0-89134-737-2

Egan, Dorothy. *Quaint Birdhouses You can Paint and Decorate*. 2000. Cincinnati: North Light Books. ISBN 0-89134-986-3

Garisto, Leslie. *The New Birdhouse Book*. 2004. Quarry Books, Inc. ISBN 1592530648

Gerhards, Paul. *Birdhouses & Feeders You Can Make*. 1999. Stackpole Books. ISBN 0811726797

Kephart, David. *How to Build Collectible Birdhouses*. 1996. Philadelphia: Radnor –Hill Publishing, Inc. ISBN 0-9642482-0-4

Macy, Lucinda Claire. *Enchanting Woodland Birdhouses*. 2002. Cincinnati: North Light Books. ISBN 1-58180-071-1

Maguire, Mary. *Creating Birdhouses*. 2000. London: Lorenz Books, Anness Publishing Limited. ISBN 0-7548-0450-X

Newton-Cox, Andrew and Deena Beverly. 1997. *Making Birdhouses*. New York: Barnes and Noble Publishers. ISBN 0-7607-0845-2

Perkins, John. *Build Your Own Birdhouses*. 1997. London: Quintet Publishing Limited. ISBN 0-7858-0741-1

Rice, Joyce. *Making and Painting Victorian Birdhouses*. 1999. Cincinnati: North Light Books. ISBN 0-89134-881-6

Self, Charles R. *Making Fancy Birdhouses and Feeders*. 1988. New York: Sterling Publishing Co., Inc. ISBN 0-8069-6691-2

Schroeder, Roger and Chuck Grodski. *Birdhouse Builders Manual*. 1999. East Petersburg, PA: Fox Chapel Publishing Co., Inc. ISBN 1-56523-100-7

Stender, Thomas. *Architectural Birdhouses*. 2001. New York: Lark Books, Sterling Publishing Co., Inc. ISBN 1-57990-236-7

Wells, Malcolm. *Classic Architectural Birdhouses*. 1998. Published by the author. ISBN 0-9621878-0-1

Wolfman, Peri and Charles Gold. 1993. *Birdhousing*. New York: Clarkson Potter Publishers. ISBN 0-517-58827-7

Woods, Bruce and David Schoonmaker. *The Bird House Book*. 1996. New York: Sterling Publishing Co. ISBN 0-806908325-1

Birdhouse Building Plans

Here are a few websites that offer free birdhouse plans.

<http://www.choosefreedom.com/birdhouse>

<http://www.birdsandblooms.com/Birdhouse-for-Beginners-/detail.aspx>

<http://www.freebirdhouseplans.net/freebuildingbirdhouseplans.html>

<http://www.coderedrover.org/birdhouse.htm>

<http://50birds.com/D50BH.htm>

<http://www.craftybirds.com/index.html>

<http://www.freeww.com/birdhouses.html>

Birdhouses Online for Inspiration

Remember, you can't buy a birdhouse and enter it into the competition. But the websites listed below have pictures that will give you tons of ideas for decorative birdhouses.

www.architecturaleditions.com

www.windsong4you.com/birdhouses

www.bestnest.com

www.birdhousesbymark.com

www.skeetercreekfabricators.com

www.newenglandbirdhouse.com

www.lbkcreations.com

www.onlinediscountmart.com/decorative-birdhouses

www.water-fountains-and-garden-decor.com/birdhouses

www.genericgifts.com

www.recycledbirdhouse.com

www.backyardbird.com

www.marclsecreations.com/shop

www.birdingdepot.com

www.justbirdhouses.net

GOOD LUCK AND HAVE FUN!!!