



Trees, animals, birds, plants, forests, mountains, lakes and rivers — everything that exists in Nature are in desperate need of our kindness, of the compassionate care and protection of human beings. If we protect them, they in turn will protect us. - Amma

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GreenFriends is a global grassroots environmental movement which promotes environmental awareness and local participation in conservation efforts throughout the world.

GreenFriends is one of the projects of [Embracing the World](#), a not-for-profit international collective of charities founded by internationally known spiritual and humanitarian leader, Mata Amritanandamayi (Amma)

To join the Pacific Northwest GreenFriends Litter Project, write Karuna at karunap108@comcast.net

Nature

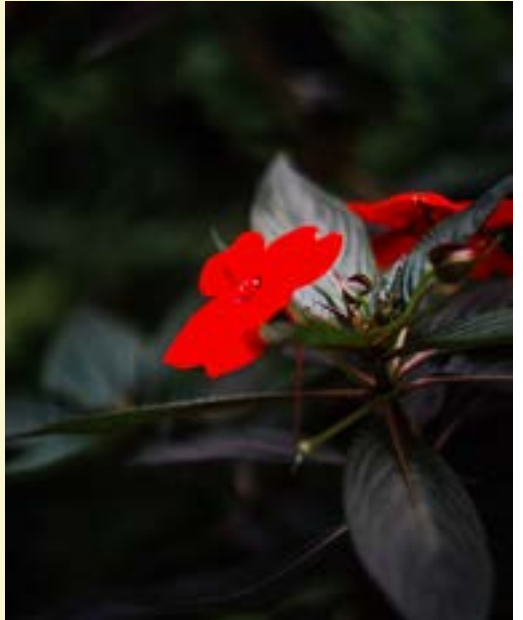
A Visit to Seattle's Volunteer Park Conservatory by Kelvin



Nature



Nature



Nature



Nature



Nature

Nature Photos

From Kaarisa in Seattle:



Nature

From Eric in Redmond:



Waiting for Orcas Ferry

From Sarah in Eugene:



Nature

From France in Seattle:



Nature

Happiness by Tirtha G. (Vancouver Island)



Happiness

*We still believe that money can buy happiness
And that nature is a boundless supply depot.*

It's all practically free!

*Like madmen, we tear entire regions apart,
Some areas so vast they can be seen from outer space
But ... we don't see!*

Our generous Mother gives Herself in entirety

And we repay her

By pulling out her hair

Carving holes in her flesh...

Selling her teeth and her eyeballs.

Where

will we get another

Mother,

When we are finished with her,

*When even the plumpest bank accounts cannot buy
clean air and fresh water...*

And when there is no more happiness left?

Nature

Build Your Own Birdhouse by Donata (Toronto)

We are all spending a lot of time indoors these days, so it is a good time for small projects. Birds need a place to nest, and now that humans have cut down a lot of their natural habitat, they need new homes in populated areas. A well-placed birdhouse gives birds a safe and secure home to raise their young. This month, I built a birdhouse for the first time and discovered how easy it can be even for someone like me who has never done any woodworking and who doesn't have a workshop or special tools. Not only did I create a new home for some songbirds, but I had a lot of fun doing it.

For my first birdhouse, I decided to keep it simple and used a hand saw and hammer and chisel. I had never done any woodworking, so this was my very first project. I wore some work gloves so that I could hold on to the wood tight so that nothing slipped around. Doing the work with hand tools gave me a chance to get to know the wood really well. If I had used power tools, I would have cut through the wood really quickly and drilled the hole for the door fast, but by sawing and chiseling by hand, I learned about the nature of cedar wood.



At the moment I am staying in a home where there isn't a space to do carpentry, so I went to a nearby park to do my sawing and hammering. I didn't have a vise or clamps to keep the wood in place while I worked, so I improvised and used a picnic table as a support, and sometimes braced the wood with my knee. If you have a power saw such as a circular saw and a drill with a hole saw, you will be able to build a birdhouse very quickly. Even with my simple tools, I was able to finish a house in a few hours, which I spread out over several walks in the park. It was a nice way to meet people who were curious about what I was doing, and one high school teacher got some ideas for projects for her students.

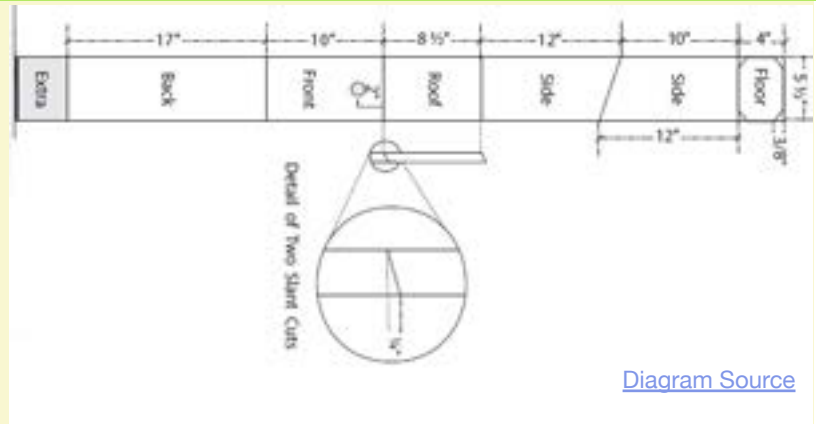
House Plan:

The size of the birdhouse and of the door hole depends on what kind of bird you are building for. I decided to make a basic songbird nesting box, with a 1 ¼" wide door hole. I used the plan from this website: <https://wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/living/woodworking-projects>.

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To the right is the layout of the pieces for this type of house.

The plan called for one of the cuts (between the roof and the front piece) to be made on a slant to bevel the edges, but in the spirit of keeping things simple I just made all my cuts 90° to the plane of the board for my first project. Next time, I will bevel those edges to make the edge of the roof flush with the back of the house.



I used a pencil and rulers to draw all my cutting lines onto the six-foot long cedar board before I started any cutting. I checked the lines to make sure they were all straight and perpendicular to the board. I had to erase and redraw a couple of the lines. If you have a carpenter's square, you can use that to draw your lines so that they are perpendicular.

Tools:

Hand saw (or circular saw or jig saw), hammer (or electric drill and screw driver), 1/4" wood chisel (or electric drill with a hole saw).

Materials:

Wood (I used a 1" x 6" x 6' cedar fence picket to build the basic songbird house), 1 1/4" Nails (or Screws), Sandpaper, ruler, pencil, eraser

It is better to use wood that won't rot in wet conditions. Woods like cedar or redwood are affordable and are naturally weather resistant. If you have other wood lying around, you can try that. Make sure the wood isn't chemically treated, because the chemicals can be toxic for the birds. Ideally the wood should be at least 3/4 inches thick to provide shelter.

I used a 1" x 6" x 6' cedar fence picket that cost just a few dollars. When you buy lumber, the advertised measurements of lumber aren't the actual measurements of the final wood. The final wood is a little smaller because it has been planed down. My plank was advertised as 1" thick, but was less than 3/4" thick, and this is normal. It wasn't really 6" wide either; it was just over 5" wide.



Sandpaper is used to smooth out any rough edges from the sawing and chiseling. I borrowed some very rough sandpaper which worked fast on the soft cedar.

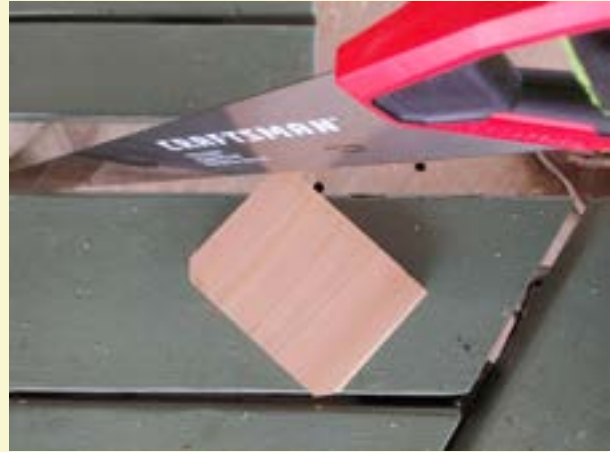
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Nails/screws – I used 1 ¼” finishing nails. If you can find them, galvanized nails or screws are more weather resistant for the outdoors. Thick nails can cause the wood to split while you are hammering, so use thinner nails if you can, or use a drill to pre-drill some holes that are a little narrower than your nails so that there is less pressure against the wood when you are hammering. If you are using screws, you will need to pre-drill all your holes.

Building details:

A few drainage holes are needed in the floor so that water that gets into the house can escape and keep the inside of the house dry. This can be done by either sawing off the corners of the floor, or by drilling holes in the floor. Putting the holes in the corners of the floor is better than putting them in the middle where the weight of the nest will be blocking the holes.

It is best if the design has a slanted roof so that water can easily run off it to keep the inside dry. An overhang over the door keeps water and predators out. A good design also raises the floor inside the walls of the house instead of attaching the walls to the top of the floor. This is so that water will run down the sides and off the house without seeping into the floor of the house. I didn't attach the floor flush to the bottom of the walls and raised it about ¼” so that there is no chance that water will seep from the walls to the floor.



Door Sizes:

If you look at the link with the plan for the basic songbird box, you will see a list of different sized door holes depending on the species of bird. If the hole is bigger than needed, bigger predatory birds and animals will be able to stick their heads or hands through the door. The entrance hole should be just big enough for the bird to get in. You can decide what size hole to use by deciding what kind of birds the house will be for, and then looking up the size of hole needed for those species.

Sawing the wood

I worked slowly and gently while cutting the cedar because I discovered how easily the cedar can splinter because it is a softwood. Hardwoods don't splinter as easily. I had to be particularly gentle as I sawed at the end of the cut.



Chiseling the door hole:

I carved the door hole by hand using a wood chisel. For hardwoods, chiselling usually means using a hammer on the end of the chisel to cut into the wood. I used cedar, which



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is a very soft wood, and I didn't need to use a hammer with it. I was able to carve out the hole by hand, and worked very carefully because the cedar splinters off so easily.

If you use a drill with a hole saw to make the door hole, this step will take only a few minutes.

Sanding:

I sanded the door hole so its edge was smooth, and also sanded some of the edges on other pieces that were rough from sawing.



Assembling the House:

The order that the pieces are put together in is shown on the plan from the website. To attach one of the sides to the back, I used my pencil to mark where the nails would go on the back. I hammered the nails into the wood, making sure that they didn't poke out the other side. Then I wedged the side piece into a gap in the picnic table so that I could hold the first piece on top of it and hammer the nails.



After the first two pieces were nailed together, the house began to have some structure and it was easier to add the rest of the pieces. The floor was next, then the front, then the roof. I positioned the floor so that it was about $\frac{1}{4}$ " above the bottom of the side and front pieces.



Putting it together



Floor

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Nailing the Last Side:

The last side is not nailed in place in the same way. It is attached in such a way that it can be swung open when it is time to clean out the inside of the box. A nail is added on either side near the top of the last wall. These two nails need to be directly across from each other to act like a hinge so that they allow the side to open. After the last side is installed, two more nails are inserted on the bottom corner so you can use some wire to keep the swinging side closed. If you have any questions about how any other part of this birdhouse is made, go to the link at the beginning of this article. On that webpage you will find a link to the plan for the Basic Songbird Nest Box.



Nail placement



Wire closure

Cleaning and Maintenance:

Birds prefer to nest in an empty house instead of having to empty out the previous bird's nest from the box. We need to maintain the house by cleaning out an old nest after the baby birds have left home so that the next bird will feel comfortable using it. This should be done at least once a season, and it can be done more often to allow several families to use the box in one season.

Installing the Birdhouse:

A nest of bird eggs or chicks is a prime target for many predators such as cats, squirrels, snakes, raccoons, larger birds, and other animals. There are many ways to protect the nest, including an overhang over the door, locating the house out of reach of predators, putting the house on a metal pole, adding a baffle to the pole, not adding a perch to the house, and keeping the house away from fences, walls, trees, shrubs, and other things that animals can climb. The way you install the house will depend on where you are installing it. A list of links is included in the Resources section to help you decide how and where to install your birdhouse.

Building a birdhouse is a very satisfying thing to do, especially for those of us who have never done any carpentry or woodworking before. I am looking forward to putting the new house in a good spot before the spring season.

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RESOURCES:

WHICH BIRDS LIVE IN YOUR AREA:

Some of the birds in your area are listed on this website:

<https://nestwatch.org/learn/all-about-birdhouses/right-bird-right-house>

After finding the birds that live in your area on the above website, click on “see this plan” to find more information.

Another website:

<https://cwf-fcf.org/en/resources/DIY/habitat-projects/map-your-backyard/build-and-maintain-nesting.html>

FLOOR PLANS:

Plans for different types of bird houses:

<https://wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/living/woodworking-projects>

DOOR HOLE SIZES:

Individual plans on the following website include a list of door sizes and species:

<https://wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/living/woodworking-projects>

More information on door sizes and species:

<https://cwf-fcf.org/en/resources/DIY/habitat-projects/map-your-backyard/build-and-maintain-nesting.html>

HOW TO MOUNT A BIRDHOUSE:

There are many websites, including:

<https://www.thespruce.com/how-to-hang-a-bird-house-386630>

<https://www.thespruce.com/protecting-bird-houses-from-predators-386633>

<https://treecaretips.org/so-you-want-to-hang-a-birdhouse/damage-prevention>

SCREWS AND NAILS FOR BIRDHOUSES:

<http://nestboxbuilder.com/nestbox-tutorial-fasteners.html>

HOW TO USE A HAND SAW:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I-6AISFXfW8>

PNW Litter Project

Litter Stats

In January 2021, **21** Litter Project members and their families and friends picked up litter for **73.7** hours. (Average **3.5** hours; Median **1** hour; Range **10** minutes to **26** hours). We have picked up litter for **11,956** hours since the project began in July of 2011.



TerraCycle Stats

We have sent TerraCycle **363,224** cigarette butts since 2013. [TerraCycle is an organization that recycles items which are normally considered unrecyclable.]



Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Repurpose, Recycle

AYUDH Plastic Awareness Competition Winner by Sonali (Redmond)

In December 2020, I held an educational AYUDH Plastic Awareness workshop over Zoom and hosted an upcycling project competition. The winner of the competition was 7-year-old Aaria Amondikar from Washington, who used her creativity to construct a bird feeder from a recycled milk carton. Not only did it repurpose an old plastic, it also provided a safe space for birds to come and eat during winter!

