

Vegan Education in Schools

Vegan Clubs

Years 7 to 12

DIY bird feeder or insect house workshop

Overview

A DIY bird feeder or insect house workshop provides students with a hands-on opportunity to support local wildlife by creating eco-friendly habitats. These projects encourage creativity, environmental stewardship and an understanding of the role native species play in ecosystems. By building structures where insects can live freely and birds can feed, students help create a more wildlife-friendly environment while learning about conservation.

How to organise a DIY bird feeder or insect house workshop

1. Define the purpose and focus of the workshop.

- Explain the goals of the activity:
 - a) Support native bird and insect populations by providing safe spaces for feeding or living.
 - b) Educate students about the importance of biodiversity and the role of wildlife in ecosystems.
 - c) Encourage eco-friendly practices by using sustainable or upcycled materials.
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2. Choose a project for students to create.

- Decide on the type of structure based on the needs of local wildlife and available materials:
 - a) **Bird feeders:** Simple feeders made from upcycled items like plastic bottles, wooden scraps, or teacups.
 - b) **Insect houses:** Structures designed to attract beneficial insects like bees, butterflies and ladybirds. Ensure they allow insects to come and go freely.
 - c) Provide templates or examples to guide students in their designs.

3. Gather materials and tools for the workshop.

- Use eco-friendly or upcycled materials to emphasise sustainability:
 - a) For bird feeders: Pinecones, twigs, plastic bottles, wooden planks, or ceramic bowls.
 - b) For insect houses: Bamboo, straw, wood pallets, clay, or hollow plant stems.
 - Supply basic tools and safety gear:
 - a) Scissors, glue, hammers, nails, or wire.
 - b) Non-toxic paint or finishes for decoration.
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4. Provide a step-by-step guide for building the structures.

- Demonstrate each step to ensure students understand the process:
 - a) For bird feeders: Assemble the structure, add hooks for hanging and include seeds or grains as food.
 - b) For insect houses: Layer different materials to create habitats for specific insects, ensuring proper ventilation and freedom of movement.
 - Encourage creativity while maintaining functionality.
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5. Discuss the importance of native species during the workshop.

- Use the activity as an opportunity to educate students about biodiversity:
 - a) Explain the roles of birds and insects in pollination, pest control and ecosystem balance.
 - b) Highlight the challenges faced by native species, such as habitat loss and climate change.
 - c) Share tips for creating a wildlife-friendly environment at home or school.
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6. Include a reflection or group discussion.

- Allow students to share their thoughts on the activity:
 - a) "What did you learn about supporting local wildlife?"
 - b) "How do you think these feeders or houses will help native species?"
 - c) "What else can we do to protect wildlife in our community?"

7. Install or distribute the finished structures.

- Decide where the bird feeders or insect houses will be placed:
 - a) Around the schoolyard, in local parks, or at students' homes.
 - b) Ensure placement is safe and beneficial for the intended species (e.g., in shaded areas or near flowering plants).
 - Encourage students to monitor and document the wildlife attracted to their structures.
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8. Promote the workshop and its outcomes.

- Share photos of the completed projects and their installation:
 - a) Use social media or school newsletters to celebrate the students' work.
 - b) Highlight the benefits of the structures for local wildlife.
 - Create a display or bulletin board featuring the feeders or houses and information about native species.
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9. Plan for ongoing engagement with wildlife conservation.

- Use the success of the workshop to inspire future projects:
 - a) Organise a wildlife monitoring program to track the impact of the structures.
 - b) Host seasonal workshops to create additional feeders, houses, or other eco-friendly habitats.
 - c) Start a school-wide initiative to enhance green spaces or plant native flora.
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Outcomes

- **Awareness and education:** Students gain knowledge about the importance of supporting native species and maintaining biodiversity.
- **Environmental stewardship:** The activity encourages students to take action to protect local wildlife and ecosystems.
- **Creativity and problem-solving:** Participants learn to design and build functional structures using sustainable materials.
- **Empathy and connection:** Building feeders and houses fosters a deeper appreciation for the role of birds and insects in the environment.
- **Community engagement:** The completed structures enhance the local environment, benefiting both wildlife and the broader community.