

The Artistic Touch

Your dry, clean, empty gourd is now ready for your personal artistic touch.

You can use acrylic paint, waterproof pens or leather dye to decorate the outside surface of your gourd.

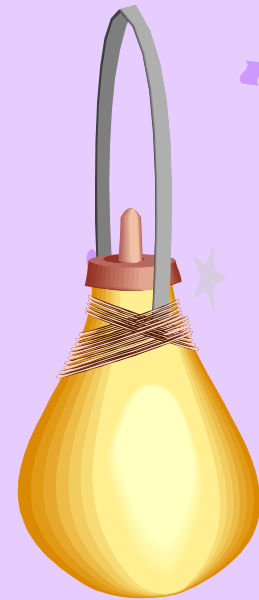
Not feeling all that creative? It is okay to leave your gourd its natural color as well. Be sure to coat your creation, whether painted or natural, with a polyurethane finish to help it withstand the elements.

Insert wire into the two top holes and twist to create a loop. You can hide the twisted part of the wire on the inside of the gourd by rotating it out of sight. Once the finish is dry, your birdhouse is ready to be hung and inhabited.



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Gourds for the Birds



**How to
make gourd
birdhouses.**

The Gourd

The ideal type of gourd for this project is aptly named...a birdhouse gourd.

You can grow your own or purchase them at farmers markets and pumpkin patches.

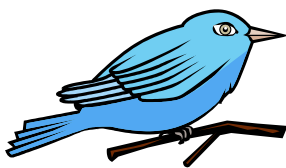


Drying Your Gourds

Before a birdhouse can be made, your gourd needs to dry. Drying time ranges from three to six months depending on the size of the gourd. Hang the gourds from the stem so that they are not touching each other. As they are drying, mold will grow on the outside of your gourd. To lessen the amount of mold that grows on your gourds, wipe them down periodically with a cloth soaked in vinegar. The gourd is dry when you can hear the seeds rattling around inside when shaken.

Cleaning Your Dry Gourd

The surface of your gourd can be washed with warm water. Allow the water to soak into the gourd for five to ten minutes. Being careful not to breathe in the mold dust, use a scrub brush to clean the outer surface of your gourd. It is best to do this outside.



From Solid Gourd to Hollow

Birdhouse

You will need to drill two 1/8th inch holes in the top of your clean, dry gourd for the hanger. Four more 1/8th inch holes will need to be drilled in the bottom for drainage. As a general rule for the main entryway, a 1 1/4 to 1 1/2 inch hole will suffice. The entryway hole can be made using a craft knife or a hole cutter attached to a drill. You will need to add a perch to your birdhouse and can do so by drilling a hole the size of a dowel rod under the entryway hole (once the gourd is hollowed out you will be able to glue and insert the dowel).

Next you will need to hollow out your gourd. You can use anything convenient for this (coat hanger, fingers, spoon or pliers). If you are interested in creating future gourd gardens, be sure to save the seeds. Seeds can be stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator or in envelopes kept in a cool dry place.

