

The Ultimate Chickadee Success Checklist

Print this guide and keep it near your bird supplies!

The Setup Phase (One-Time Tasks)

- **Buy the right feeder:** Get a tube feeder (for seeds) and a suet cage.
Optional: Upgrade to a weight-activated smart feeder.
- **Install a squirrel baffle:** Mount it on a pole at least 5 feet high.
- **Find the perfect spot:** Place the feeder within 10 feet of a tree or native shrub for quick cover.
- **Plan your planting:** Identify an area to plant native berry-producing shrubs (e.g., Serviceberry, Winterberry) this spring.

The Winter Survival Kit

- **Stockpile premium seed:** Buy a large bag of Black Oil Sunflower Seeds (skip the cheap milo/corn mixes).
- **Stockpile energy:** Buy suet cakes for deep cold snaps.
- **Solve the water problem:** Install a submersible de-icer or a heated birdbath before the first freeze.

The Weekly Sanitation Protocol

- **The Seed Sweep:** Rake or sweep discarded hulls and dropped seeds from under the feeder to deter rodents.
- **The 10% Bleach Wash:** Empty the feeder completely. Soak and scrub with a 10% bleach solution (1 part bleach, 9 parts water).
- **The Dry Run:** Let the feeder dry *completely* before refilling to prevent toxic mold.

Seasonal Reminders

- **Spring:** Keep feeders full, but leave dead wood/snags in the yard for nesting.
- **Summer:** Traffic will slow down. Rely on your native plants and fresh water to keep them around.
- **Fall:** Re-introduce suet as temperatures drop and mixed flocks form.