



# Winter Wonders

## Backyard Bucket List Bingo



Can you get BINGO in one direction?

How about trying to check all of these boxes before the end of winter?!

### Find Nature's Valentines

Look for heart-shaped rocks and other heart-shaped formations outdoors. How many can you find?

### Build a Snow Fort

Build a wintry hideout and use it as a base for an epic snowball fight, or relax inside with a cup of cocoa!

### Paint on Snow

If you have a set of watercolor paints at home, try painting on the snow!

### Make a Bird Watering Station

Birds still need water in winter but it can be hard to find. Place a dish of water outside for them to drink.

### Look for Tracks

Look for animal tracks, especially after a fresh snow. Follow them to see where they go. Who made them?

### Make Stick Art

Find a good walking stick and paint designs on it, or use wire to build a sculpture from branches & twigs.

### Find Bird Nests

Winter is a great time to find last year's bird nests since the leaves are off the trees. How many can you spot?

### Make a Snow Maze

If there is enough snow, make trails all over your yard. See if your friends and family can find the end!

### Create Animal Snow Sculptures

Instead of a snowman, try building a snow moose you can sit on, or a snow bear!

### Backyard Olympics

Build a sledding ramp out of snow and see who has the fastest run, make a ski loop, or design your own events!

### Discover Signs of Life

Can you find squirrel nests, woodpecker holes, or branches deer have been chewing?

### Have a Winter Campfire

Dress warmly and have a family campfire in the backyard. Why not make some s'mores too?!

### Pinecone Bird Feeder

Find a pinecone, slather it with peanut butter and roll it in birdseed. Hang it out for the birds!

### Experience a Winter's Night

Go out with your family on a clear, starry night to admire the peacefulness of moonlight on snow.

### Make Snow Faces on Tree Trunks

If there's sticky snow, press and mold it onto tree trunks to make faces on the trees!

### Go on a Winter Hike

Take a walk – hiking isn't just for summer!

### Study Snowflakes

The next time it snows, go outside and collect falling flakes on a black piece of paper & examine them up close.

### Try a New Winter Activity

What is something you've never done in winter? Find something new!

### Make a Nature Museum

Collect interesting items you find in nature & display your growing collection on a table at home.

### Spread Kindness

Feb. 17th is Random Acts of Kindness Day! Shovel a neighbor's walkway or write positive messages on the sidewalk with chalk!

### Winter Birding

Watch your feeder or keep a list of birds you see when you are out and about. What birds stay here in winter?

### Play Tic Tac Snow

Draw a tic tac toe board in the snow and challenge someone to a game of tic tac snow.

### Freeze Snowballs for a Summer Day!

Pack some snowballs and hide them in the freezer- you'll have fun finding them next summer!

### Build a Snow Castle

If you have sand toys for the beach, why not use them in winter to build snow castles?

### Make a Scavenger Hunt

Make an outdoor nature scavenger hunt for your friends or family.

# Project Instructions

## Frozen Ice Globes

You can make beautiful ice globes using balloons and food coloring. These make a nice decoration along your walkway. You can admire the sun shining through them or put battery operated tea lights underneath them to illuminate them at night.

Simply fit the end of the balloon over your faucet and turn on a slow stream of water. Don't overfill the balloons, and make sure you can still easily tie them off. If you want to make colored ice globes, and have food coloring on hand, squirt a few drops into the balloon before attaching to your faucet and then fill with water. Take your water balloons outside and leave them out in the cold until they feel like they are frozen solid (this could take several days). Cut the tied end of the balloon and tear the balloon off of each ice globe. Enjoy your beautiful creation!



*photo credit: eatingrichly.com*

## Ice Sun Catchers

This is another easy ice project! Find a pie plate or muffin tins, and fill about half to 2/3 full with water. Go on a hunt for some pretty items from nature to include in your sun catcher- evergreen boughs, seed pods, and dried berries work well. Also if you have oranges you can thinly slice, or cranberries those add a nice pop of color to your ice sun catcher. Place the items you collected in the water. They will float around at first, but that's okay. Next, cut a piece of string and tie the ends together in a knot. Place the knotted end in the water and leave most of the rest of the string hanging out of the pan. This will freeze into your sun catcher and be the hanger. Place the pan in a flat spot, either in your freezer or somewhere safe outside. Once frozen, pop your ice sun catcher out of the pan- you may have to run the underside under hot water for a minute to get it to come out cleanly. Hang outside where the sunlight or an outdoor light will shine through your icy sun catcher! Alternatively, you could make this in a bundt pan and turn it out onto a platter once frozen. Place a candle in the center and it makes a lovely table centerpiece.



*photo credit: pathwayproject.ca*

## Snow Cake for the Animals

Winter can be a hard time for birds and other animals to survive. You may already have a bird feeder at your house, but you can get creative in the way you serve up snacks! Take a cake pan and pack snow into it. Flip it over and carefully pull off the pan so you make a snow cake, much like you'd make a sand castle. Decorate your snow cake with birdseed, Cheerios, or some fruits and veggies in your fridge. Maybe a deer, turkey, or squirrel will stumble upon this unexpected treat!



*photo credit: Family Fun Magazine*

## Bird Snack Garland

Another easy treat for birds is a snack garland using string and Cheerios. Load up your string with Cheerios. You can try adding cranberries if you have some too. Hang in some trees where you tend to see birds landing. The birds will enjoy munching the Cheerios off the string.



*photo credit: healthymamainfo.com*

# Snow and Ice Experiments



photo credit: canva.com

## Frozen Bubbles

Go outside and blow bubbles on a day when it is well below freezing (32 degrees Fahrenheit or lower, but this works best when temperatures are around zero or in the single digits). Try to get some bubbles to land on the snow or another surface without popping, and wait patiently for a couple of minutes. If it is cold enough, you'll start to see crystals form and soon the whole bubble will be frozen! Frozen bubbles are beautiful and lots of fun to make.



photo credit: stevespanglerscience.com

## Sticky Ice Experiment (a.k.a. Ice Fishing)

Set out three bowls on your counter- put cold water in one, some ice cubes in the second, and salt in the third. Grab a piece of string. See if you can figure out how to pick up the ice while still holding on to the ends of the string. (Hint: you'll need to use the salt) If you want to find out more about how it works visit the link below, but we won't spoil the surprise here:

<https://www.playdoughtoplato.com/sticky-ice-science-exp/>



photo credit: shareitscience.com

## How much Water is in Snow?

Fill a clear container with snow and make a mark where the top of the snow is in the container (you could do this with marker, or if using a cup, put a rubber band around the line on the cup where the top of the snow is). Leave the snow alone until it melts, then make a mark where the top of the water line is. Are you surprised by what you see?



photo credit: science-sparks.com

## Snow Volcano

Build a volcano shape in the snow, set a cup down in the center, add food coloring and baking soda, then add vinegar and watch it erupt!



**Here's One More to Try:**  
**Science Experiment with Salt and Watercolors**  
<https://artfulparent.com/melting-ice-science-experiment-with-salt-liquid-watercolors/>



photo credit: artfulparent.com

# Common Conifer Tree Species in Maine

Many tree species in Maine lose their leaves each fall and are bare all winter – these are called deciduous trees. However, you've probably noticed that there are also a lot of trees that stay green in the winter. These are often referred to as evergreen trees. Most evergreen trees in Maine are conifers, which means "bearing cones." Conifers have cones that contain their seeds, and have needles instead of broad leaves. Winter is a great time to learn how to identify some of Maine's common conifer species. See how many of these species you can find when you are outside this winter.

## TREES WITH NEEDLES IN CLUSTERS

Trees in the pine genus have needles in clusters



**White Pine**  
Clusters of 5



**Pitch Pine**  
Clusters of 3



**Red Pine**  
Clusters of 2  
Needles are 3"-8"



**Jack Pine**  
Clusters of 2  
Needles are 3/4"-1 1/2"

## TREES WITH MANY NEEDLES PER CLUSTER

\*But not in the pine genus



**Tamarack**  
Needles are soft and there are many per cluster. The needles turn yellow and drop off in fall.

## TREES WITH FLAT, BLUNT NEEDLES

\*Needles also have 2 white lines on undersides



**Hemlock**  
Needles are 1/4"-1/2"  
and have stalks



**Balsam Fir**  
Needles are 3/8"- 1 1/4"  
and do not have a stalk

## TREES WITH SQUARE, SHARP NEEDLES



**Black Spruce**  
Needles are short,  
less than 1/2"



**Red Spruce**  
Needles are longer,  
greater than 1/2"

## TREES WITH SCALE-LIKE NEEDLES



**Northern White Cedar**  
Flattened scales  
\*also known as Arborvitae



**Eastern Red Cedar**  
Rounded scales

For more information and photos of Maine trees, visit the Maine Forest Service "Trees of Maine" website below:

[https://www.maine.gov/dacf/mfs/publications/handbooks\\_guides/forest\\_trees/index.html](https://www.maine.gov/dacf/mfs/publications/handbooks_guides/forest_trees/index.html)

