

Hand building Project – Friendship Tree

See our general HANDBUILDING CLAY guide for basic tips including: *Hand-building, preparing your clay, Joining your clay, stopping your clay from sticking and preventing explosions!*

A friendship tree is something you can share with friends or family. The idea is that you make a selection of pots or ornaments that you ask friends or family to decorate. You then hang the collection in your garden or conservatory as a visual reminder of the people that mean most to you. You can vary the project swapping items so everyone gets to make something and gets a collection to hang up, having a theme, hanging along a fence or from a tree. This guide explains how to build hanging bird feeder pots but these can easily convert to hanging lanterns too.



To make your bird feeder pots:

1. Sketch out some basic design ideas, remember to keep the finished pots quite small, simple, rounded, light and evenly weighted. Cut a lump of clay about the size of a small orange. Roll clay in the palms of your hand into a ball.
2. Press your thumb into the centre of the ball and press and turn using your thumb and forefinger to squeeze the clay into a small bowl shape.



3. Repeat step 2 so you have two halves of a sphere. You may find it easier at this stage to cover in plastic and allow your halves to dry a little so they become firmer.

4. Score around the edges of each half, dab with water then press together firmly. Smooth the join. If there is a 'dip' where they join, roll out a thin sausage of clay, add a little water, press into dip and smooth. Use your fingertips to smooth the surface of your ball

5. If your clay is dry, add a little water and rub in gently SO NOT ADD TOO MUCH! If you find it is not sticking together very well, make up a little slip and use like glue (slip is a small piece of clay mixed with water into a thick paste).



6. Add any decorative detail you wish, eg, ears, noses, eyes, tails etc. **IMPORTANT: Be careful to make sure any decorations that you add are securely fixed so that they will remain**

attached when it dries out. To attach ANYTHING too your work, score BOTH adjoining sides and add water. Press the two parts together gently but firmly to get a good bond.



7. Carefully cut out a mouth or other opening at the front of your ball. This is where you will put your tea light or bird food. Gently press and twist a thin pencil into the top to make two small holes for hanging your ball.

8. Once your piece is thoroughly dried it will be ready for firing. This

can take anything between 5 and 10 days but depends on room temperature and thickness of clay. DO NOT be tempted to try and dry too quick as the piece may crack.

9. If you used AIR DRYING Clay, once dry, paint with acrylics and use PVA wash to seal. If you used NORMAL CLAY, bring to the studio for firing. Once fired, your project will be ready to bring alive with coloured glazes and then fire a second time.



10. Do remember that your finished pot may need to be brought inside (or wrap in newspaper and store in a shed) if there is frost.

11. *DESIGN IDEAS:* You may also like to roll out your clay with a rolling pin and use cookie cutters to make leaves, birds, fairies or different shapes and characters to hang from your tree.

