

3 YARD ART PROJECTS FOR YOUR FAMILY



by Stell Simonton

Judi Ingram Adkins has a log lying on the back deck of her home in Smyrna. It's waiting to be carved. This summer, Judi, her husband and their five sons will each pick a section and whittle a fanciful representation of themselves. Then they'll set the post into the ground in their back yard – and presto! – a family totem pole.

Are you looking for an inventive project, perhaps something to do outdoors with the kids this summer? A totem pole, bottle tree or even a "floral" sculpture made out of old china or glass dishes could spark everyone's creativity – and leave a lasting piece of art.

Family Totem Pole

Adkins, an artist and a Marietta psychotherapist, got the totem idea from a project she and a colleague created for a summer camp. Each group at the camp brainstormed how to illustrate themselves on a section of the totem. In the process, they gained a deeper sense of who they were and how they fit in the whole.

Adkins and her teenage sons will use a small set of wood-carving tools, including chisels in several sizes. A younger family might prefer to paint a totem pole rather than carve it.

For a painted totem, choose a post that is not pressure treated and sand the wood if desired. A post-hole digger makes it easier to set in the ground. Coat your totem with primer, spray paint a background color, or leave the surface as is. Then ask each child to imagine the kind of animal or person they'd like to paint to represent themselves. Part of the fun is learning how each child sees himself.

A ceramic totem pole outside The Atlanta School in Inman Park is topped with an eagle and includes a wolf, gator, bear and snake. Students studied Native American culture and folklore, then chose animals and stylized symbols from those stories.

Totem poles were originally created by the native peoples of the Pacific Northwest, usually carved from large cedar trees, then painted. Their meaning varied from culture to culture, but they could recount familiar legends, clan ancestry, or important events. Totems often serve as an emblem of a group of people – such as a tribe or family. Consider the characters, stories and legends in your own heritage as you design a totem pole to represent your family.



What if you're not crafty?

Parents don't have to be crafty for kids to do projects. Head to Home Depot or Lowe's on a Saturday morning to a free kids' workshop. The stores offer a different craft each session. Children have built simple herb planters, pencil holders or other projects taught by a skilled instructor. They learn tool safety and come away with a sense of pride and accomplishment, not to mention some hands-on skills – and maybe even a Father's Day gift.

Sign up in advance online:

■ **Home Depot offers workshops** the first Saturday of each month: <http://workshops.homedepot.com/workshops/>

■ **Lowe's Kids Clinic** is offered one Saturday each month: <http://lowesbuildandgrow.com/>

Catching Spirits with Bottle Trees

Another outdoor structure – with a nod to African-American folk art – is the bottle tree. The Baker family in Atlanta's Lake Claire neighborhood has one. Several Christmases ago, they opened a long narrow package. "It looked like a gun," said Deacon Baker, 12. In fact, the package contained a metal rod about 5 feet long with small branches that angled outward. Deacon's grandmother, Linda Close, of Gainesville, had ordered it from a gardening catalog.

The family set the rod upright in their yard. Deacon and his sister, Keely, 9, were in charge of hunting for bottles to put on it. They found some old reproduction Coke bottles in the basement. Their parents gave them an empty champagne bottle saved from their wedding. The children also found bottles in their recycling bin and made a game of arranging the colors and shapes.

Bottle trees can be spotted in rural yards around the South. The practice comes from Africa, where myth held that the bottles could capture evil spirits and stop them from entering a house. Africans who were brought to America put them on cedar trees for protection, says Yale art historian Robert Farris Thompson. He calls it an "important element of African-American visual culture."

Susan Abramson, a Midtown mom of three, remembers driving along backroads to Tybee Island as a child and seeing bottle trees in neatly swept dirt yards.

When she and her husband acquired a farm in Washington, Ga. – which was said to be haunted – they hammered large nails into a tall pole that had once held the farm dinner bell. In a dump site on



the property, they found a trove of old glass bottles of various colors which they placed on the post to capture any roaming ghosts.

Frames for bottle trees can be found in garden shops or made with rebar, but a sturdy young tree can also be used. Trim the branches short and set the trunk in the ground or in a large planter. Collect bottles in pleasing colors and shapes and place them upside down on the branches. They'll catch the light and add spirit to your garden.

Cont'd on page 22

65 Days Of Summer

Fight boredom! Visit atlantaparent.com to win prizes and find fun activities for everyday this summer.

SUMMER FUN!

FUN FOR EVERY KID, EVERY AGE!

Four Turner Field | Home of the Braves!

GO BEHIND-THE-SCENES

- Sky Field
- Luxury Suite
- Press Box
- TV Booth
- Surfcast Club
- Dugout
- Braves Museum Store
- Clubhouse/Locker Room
- Subject to availability

braves.com 404-614-2311

FOR MORE INFORMATION E-MAIL
TURNERFIELDTOURS@BRAVES.COM

MON-SAT 9:30 AM - 2:30 PM
SUN 1:00 PM TO 2:30 PM

Stars AND Strikes

Kids Bowl Free

Register Today for a Summer Fun BOWLING PASS!

2

Free Games of Bowling
*Mon-Sat All Summer

Call or Click for Details!
678.965.5707 www.StarsandStrikes.com

www.KidsBowlFree.com/StarsAndStrikes

YOUNG CHEFS' ACADEMY

Jump into our kitchens for a hands-on culinary adventure!

Summer Camps!

Cooking Classes!

Birthday Parties!

North Druid Hills/Emory - 404.633.2633
www.YoungChefsAcademy.com/northdruidhills

Sandy Springs/Northside - 404.255.9263
www.YoungChefsAcademy.com/sandysprings

summer cover • big beach • family fun park

SUMMER

is here!

See You At The Lake!

NEW Adventures

- Live plays with the Favorite Players!
- Delicious Restaurant & new Boardwalk
- Fun at the Beach!
- Race across the Lake!

Visit www.LakeLanierslands.com

65 Days Of *Summer*

Fight boredom! Visit atlantaparent.com to win prizes and find fun activities for everyday this summer.

Create

amazing memories with your child this summer--take a road trip to INK!



INTERACTIVE NEIGHBORHOOD FOR KIDS, inc.
... the premier children's museum in north Georgia where children come to imagine, to play, and to learn in a life-like community setting.



Visit INK's Paint-Your-Own Pottery Studio and Gift Shop while here!

The place where learning is fun!

Gainesville, Georgia ♦ 770-536-1900 ♦ www.inkfun.org
Located just off Exit 22 from I-985

\$10,000 Treasure Chest Hunt!
MAY 20 - AUG. 11
DISCOUNT TICKETS AVAILABLE ONLINE
DeSoto CAVERNS Family Fun Park
CHILDERSBURG

ATLANTA CYCLORAMA
& CIVIL WAR MUSEUM
404-658-7625
WWW.ATLANTACYCLORAMA.ORG

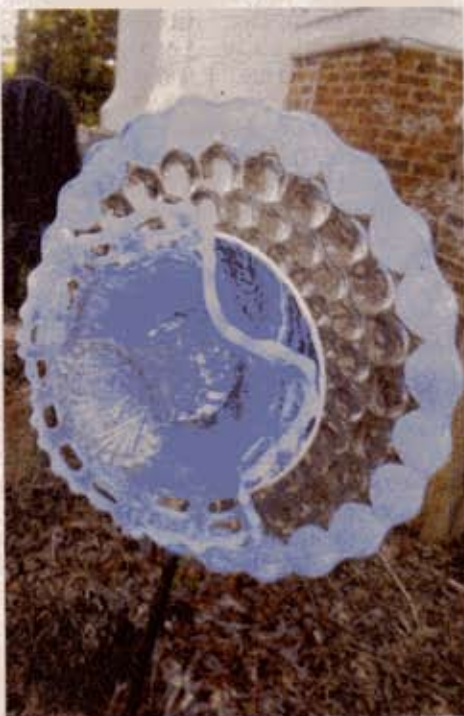
Lake Lanier CANOPY TOURS
ZIP LINE TOURS
678-622-3990
www.lakelaniercanopytours.com
7000 Lanier Islands Parkway Buford, GA 30518

To be part of this special section in July,
call Atlanta Parent at 770-454-7599

65 days of *Summer*

atlantaparent.com
Parent

YARD ART PROJECTS



Astound Butterflies with Shiny Plates

Ready for something completely inventive? Try a glass-plate sculpture. Susan Abramson has several decorating her yard.

They're made from plates glued together in the shape of flowers. Shay Harris, who has a gift shop open during the holidays in Washington, gets credit for this idea. She gathered plates from her basement and from thrift stores. For one creation, she began with a clear glass egg plate and glued a blue-patterned plate to the center using a marine sealant made by DAP. In the center of that she glued a wavy-edged glass bowl. The crowning touch: a cut-glass cup. It's important to let the pieces sit overnight to ensure the sealant is strong, Harris says.

In a burst of creativity, Harris then drilled a hole into the circular side of a hockey puck. The flat side of the puck is glued to the back of the egg plate using marine sealant. The puck can then be slipped over a rebar post set in the ground, much like the way a Tinkertoy disc can be slipped over a Tinkertoy stick.

Old plates can be found at yard sales and thrift stores; it doesn't matter if they're chipped. Kids can have fun mixing and matching the crockery to put together these colorful and whimsical "flowers." □

atlantaparent.com