

# Ice Lanterns for Winter Solstice

Up here in the North, people are perhaps more aware of winter solstice, the shortest day of the year. The Nature Center celebrates this event with annual lantern parade (details in box). A special festive look is provided by hundreds of ice candles lit all around the center. Here are instructions on how to make ice lanterns – they’re fun and easy to make. Best of all, they cost next to nothing – all you need are some votive candles. Perhaps you’ll consider making a few extra ice lanterns to drop off at the Nature Center before December 18<sup>th</sup>.

## **Ice Lantern #1: The yoghurt container Method:**

Fill 32 oz containers with water and place outside. How long? Well, here’s an approximate guide: if it’s seriously below 0F you may get away with as few as 4 hrs; if it’s in the teens you will need perhaps 6-8 hours; if it’s hovering in the 20’s, you probably need all day or night...

Test a couple before bringing them all inside — if they break handling (sides are too fragile), then give them more time in the great outdoors!

Do this next step at the sink: Run some warm water to loosen ice — then invert (TOP will become bottom of lantern) as the bottom is the weakest spot. Using a sharp kitchen knife, punch thru ice at the weak spot, then keep on widening/carving the circle until it is large enough to put a candle inside.

Empty the ice-cold water, and rinse with some warm/hot water to get rid of any sharp ice protrusions. Now your lantern is ready to be used. To store for transport, make sure the sides don’t touch.

## **Ice lantern #2 Balloon Method:**

Fill birthday-party balloons with water. Stick them in a snow bank with the knot down, or else place on individual plates or bowl — but don’t let them touch. When frozen, bring a couple inside to test (they may take longer than yoghurt containers). Again, the weakest point is the bottom. Cut and peel off the plastic balloon, and using a sharp knife, make a hole at the bottom to drain the water.

Hint: Heat a heavy duty pan on the stove and “melt” off the jagged edge until you have the desired sized opening (Wearing gloves really helps!)

Also, you can use the melting method for flattening the other end: the ice is really thick there, and you may want it flat to be able to place lantern on a level surface. Otherwise, just stick the wobbly lanterns in the snow!

