

Christmas Program Features Gift, Food Giving Suggestions

by Sally Bair
Feature Writer

Lancaster County homemakers were treated to an exciting array of holiday decorating ideas and suggestions for gifts of food at the annual Extension homemakers Christmas program held Thursday at the Farm and Home Center.

Mrs. Francis J. Graeff, Sinking Spring, and Gray Sellers, assistant to the president at Millersville State College, shared the billing on the program, and each supplied the homemakers with plentiful ideas to make their Christmas holidays unique. For those who wanted even more ideas, there were exhibits from 15 Farm Women Societies which

featured hand crafted decorations and gifts.

Mrs. Graeff, who says she has always loved flowers, shared ideas on enjoying "Holidays with Nature." Encouraging the women to take ideas from natural things, she said, "There is much beauty around us. God creates many lovely things for us to see - we just don't take time to enjoy what is around us."

She demonstrated several striking arrangements for fall and the Thanksgiving season, saying she feels Thanksgiving is often neglected in the frantic preparation for Christmas. One which won lots of applause as she worked was created from a long necked pumpkin. She hollowed

out a place in the base for a floral arrangement and positioned two candles on the long, curved neck.

An unusual arrangement which was a crowd pleaser consisted of fresh herbs. Mrs. Graeff used an old tin pie plate as the base, and in a curved pin point holder arranged sage, lavender, rue and apple mint. She added an old grater with a candle under it and created a lovely masterpiece. She said, "Herbs and kitchen utensils go together. These are the things I do for me. When the candle is lit, its warmth disturbs the fragrance of the herbs, creating a nice combination of warmth, friendship and herbs."

The apple mint has an interesting history, having been

grown from a cutting from an herb garden which has been in existence since 1857. Mrs. Graeff is assisting in the restoration of an herb garden at Hopewell Village, and it was there she was given the cutting.

Some of the unusual natural materials she used in other fall arrangements were milk weed pods, dock, goldenrod, seed pods from poppies, teasle, bittersweet, a branch pruned from a grapevine, a grape root and weathered wood. She said, "I could have brought a truckload of materials, but I had to restrain myself."

For Christmas, Mrs. Graeff showed how easy it is to make a kissing ball from small trimmings from the evergreens you have to prune anyway. She used yew, boxwood and cedar and inserted them in a potato to keep them moist. To finish, add a cord for hanging and a red bow for accent.

She created an interesting swag of greens to be used either on the door or as a centerpiece. All greens should be conditioned before using, she said, by putting them in warm water with brown sugar - two tablespoons to a quart - for two days before arranging. The swag was affixed to styrofoam, and she added apples on picks for color. As a centerpiece, she suggested just setting the fruit on the greens and allowing guests to choose their dessert from it.

Another arrangement which drew "oohs" and "aahs" from the homemakers was a natural creche which her husband fashioned from wood she salvaged from a sawmill. She added a statue of St. Francis of Assisi, and used hemlock, pyranantha and a few white chrysanthemums.

Surrounded by an impressive, delicious looking display of gift-wrapped holiday foods, Gray Sellers captivated the ladies and sent them all home filled with enthusiasm for giving gifts from their kitchens.

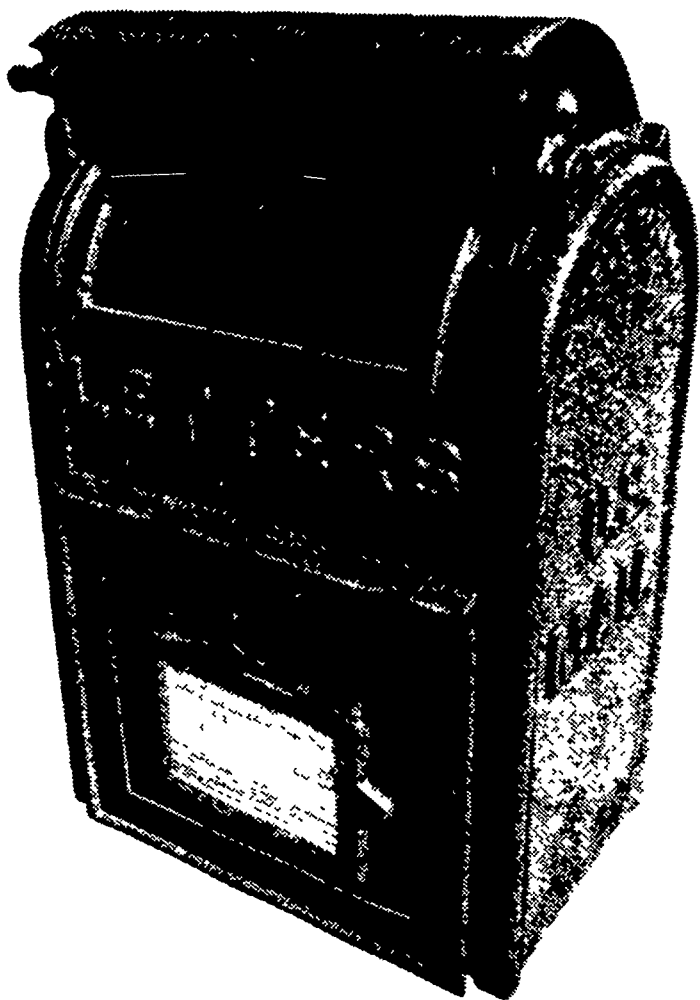
He made all the recipes seem as simple as opening a cake mix and a whole lot more desirable. He urged women to think of Christmas gifts from their kitchens as a "year round project, and do things as they come in season."

Sprinkling his talk with humor and advice on cooking techniques, he even told them how to collect gift containers all the time and gave suggestions for obtaining bargain items at garage sales and antique shops.



Gray Sellers urged giving gifts from the kitchen as a year-round gesture.

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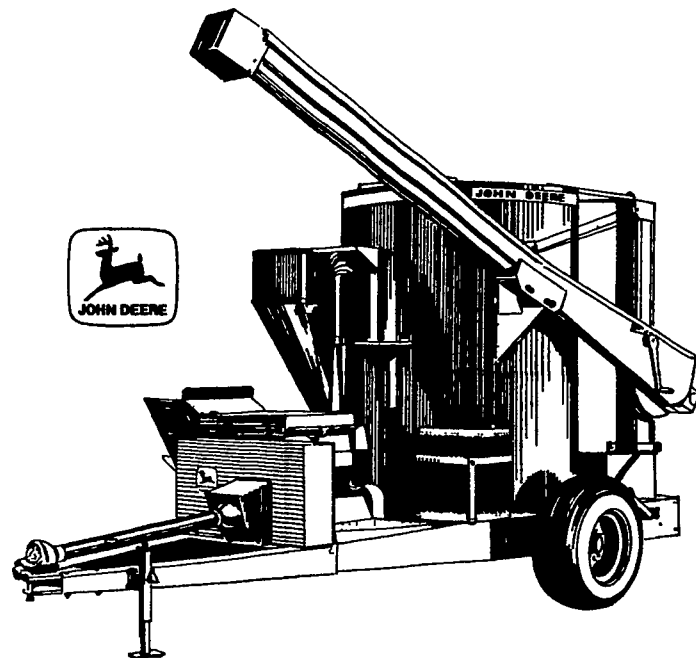
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