

Original Gifts and Decorations You Make at Home

By Sally Bair
Feature Writer

It's not too late to plan a few new decorations to welcome the holidays at your home, or to make some simple gifts to save last-minute shopping trips.

This week we are offering a few unique decorations to make for use in your home or to give as unusual gifts, and two gift items which can be made inexpensively and easily. The ideas came from the homemakers' Christmas program sponsored by the Lebanon County Extension office. Decorations were suggested by their speaker, Mrs. Jesse Myers of York, and the gifts were demonstrated by Mrs. Alletta Shadler, extension home economist and Mrs. Cheryl Reitz, assistant extension home economist.

Creative Gifts

Children of all ages love hand puppets, and your gift will also be adored by Mommy if you give hand puppets which make bath time fun time. All you need are inexpensive hand towels and a little imagination.

From the hand towels, cut two pieces of fabric six inches wide and 12 inches long, cutting an oval shape at one end. Then from a contrasting color, cut a matching oval for the mouth. Before sewing the mouth to the body, zig zag in place an applique tongue and add a "tooth" at the top for interest. Sew the oval mouth into the two pieces of toweling, finishing all the inside seams by zig-zagging to prevent raveling. Then edge stitch around the mouth so that the "lips" will be more prominent. Add ears fashioned from the toweling and sew on button eyes, and you've created a friendly creature to make bath time a pleasure. Just by turning the seams to the top and bottom and adding some fringe, you can have a fish puppet.

Another gift idea for a difficult person on your list is a tennis racket cover fashioned out of towels. For one cover use two hand towels and for two covers use one bath towel. You'll also need lightweight plastic (garbage bags will do just fine) and three quarter yard of drawstring.

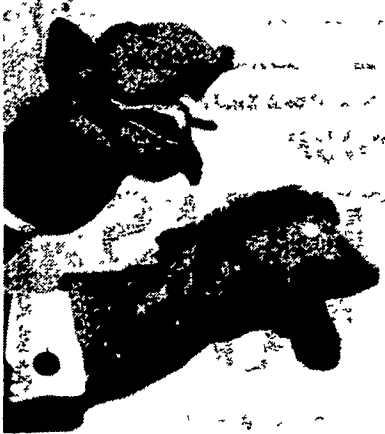
For one cover, cut a 12 inch by 17 inch piece from each of the two handtowels, cutting one end in an oval shape. Cut two pieces of lightweight plastic, one inch shorter than the towel pieces for each cover. Baste plastic to

wrong side of cover, back and front. With right towel sides together, machine stitch around outer edge using longest machine stitch. Repeat this stitching for strength. Leave seams open one quarter inch from bottom. Turn up bottom edge of cover one quarter inch and stitch, being sure to catch plastic in seam. Finish edges of casing by hand, and insert draw string.

This is a gift sure to please the tennis buff in your family, but you could vary the dimensions and sew a make-up case for traveling.

Festive Decorations

Have you ever wondered if you could make some of that lovely fruit you see on Christmas decorations? Well you can, and very simply. All you need are



For that youngster on your gift list (and his harried mother) a hand puppet washcloth might mean hours of fun in the bath - and it means an easy inexpensive gift for you.



Mrs. Myers demonstrates just how to hold the balls and wrap the crepe paper to achieve the proper effect.

some styrofoam balls - you can purchase them in different shapes in craft shops - crepe paper and wax. The variety of fruit you can make ranges from limes, apples, pears and lemons, to grapes and strawberries.

First pull a small amount of crepe paper - not tissue paper - out of the end of the plastic bag it comes in, and cut through all thicknesses to get a strip of paper about one quarter to three eighths inch wide. Unwrap the strip of paper and hold securely and wrap around the ball once, then turn and wrap in the other direction so that you have four sections. Continue wrapping around the ball, overlapping slightly and being sure to hold the ends with your finger and thumb. After completely wrapping half, turn the ball and wrap the other half. Fasten the paper by inserting a pipe cleaner to the end, creating a stem on your fruit.

Now dip this finished product once into melted paraffin wax which is warm but not hot. Stick the pipe cleaner end in a piece of styrofoam until the fruit dries. This way the wax will mold perfectly and any drips will not be a problem. If you're making apples, insert a clove in the end and make your "apple" authentic.

If you'd like, you can wire several pieces of fruit together to make a bunch, or use them separately on wreaths, with candles or wherever fruit will add a welcome touch of color to your holiday decorating.

If you're looking for something different in the way of a door hanging, why not try a basket of cones? It's easy to make and will certainly be a conversation piece. All you need is some hardware cloth, some fabric for backing, a lot of cones, some ribbon, greens and other decorations.



For an unusual gift you can make a tennis racket cover easily and inexpensively from hand towels.

varied slightly as you choose. These can be wired together along the sides, and then the flat piece of hardware cloth covered with fabric to prevent your door from being scratched. When wiring the cones on the front of the basket, do the sides first and then fill in the center. Attach a sturdy ribbon for hanging, insert some greens of your choice and if you like you can add some birds, fruit or other decoration. Now you have a door decoration which is uniquely yours.

Mrs. Myers suggested that you can make this decoration in the summer (if you want to wait until next year) and then just add greens at Christmas.

To make your cones their prettiest, she suggests putting them on aluminum foil in a 200 degree oven for 10 to 15 minutes to get rid of the sap.

If you're having an old-fashioned Christmas celebration at your house, here's a beautiful way to use that accordion coat hanger as a decoration that's sure to get rave notices from young and old alike.

Mrs. Myers started by wiring greens to the back of the hanger to steady it so that it wouldn't

(Continued On Page 23)

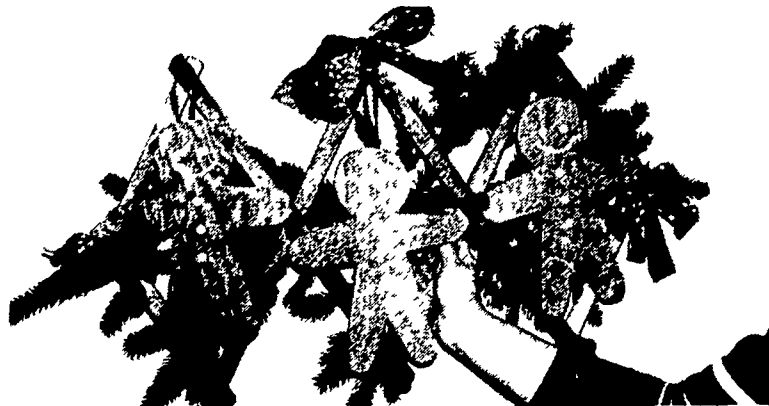


A candle on a tall stand is made special by adding a few sprigs of greenery and two clusters of "apples."

You need two pieces of hardware cloth - one to be used for the backing, and one which will be bowed to form the basket. The size and shape of these can be



Mrs. Myers shows her cone basket filled with holly and decorated with red birds, ready to greet visitors at her door.



Gingerbread boys, calico bows and pine combine to create an unusual decoration for your home - and it puts to use that antique accordion coat hanger you don't know what to do with.