

Homestead Notes



Personalized Crafts For Holiday Giving

by Sally Bair
Farm Feature Writer

With the Thanksgiving holiday just around the corner, the Christmas season can't be far behind. If you're planning to make some of your decorations and gifts, now is the time to begin - before the cookie making and shopping gets underway.

At the recent Homemakers Christmas program, Farm Women Society 22 offered several items custom-tailored for Christmas for sale at their bazaar table. Directions for some of them follow.



With just a touch of creativity and a little time, a square tissue box can be transformed into an attractive birdhouse which will dress up your home for the holidays or make a useful gift for a friend.

Tissue boxes are something which seem to be found in nearly every room of every home these days, so why not dress them up to make them more attractive for the holiday season? This "birdhouse" tissue box makes a thoughtful gift for friends and neighbors who seem to "have everything."

The only thing you need to make is the roof which covers a square tissue box. The pieces of styrofoam needed for the roof itself should measure 6 inches x 4 1/4 inches; 6 inches x 4 3/4 inches; and the triangle to fit into the point of the roof will measure 4 1/2 x 3 x 3 inches. Mrs. Naomi Wenger, who taught the Farm Women how to construct the houses, says that she usually buys 3/4 inch insulation to use for the roof, because it is less expensive than styrofoam. The first step is to edge the roof pieces together and glue with white glue.



Materials needed to make the tissue box birdhouse include the roof pasted together from styrofoam or insulation material, hat pins, napkins, twigs, pallettes, Mod Podge or Napcoupage, glitter, brush and artificial decorations.

Now, to decorate the roof, select a napkin with holly leaves, carolers or some appropriate holiday decoration. Separate the layers of napkin until you have just a single layer with the decoration on. Cut around the decoration to make it fit the roof.

This napkin is then adhered to the roof by using Mod-Podge or Napcoupage. First, one coat of the finish is brushed on the roof, then the napkin design is laid in place and smoothed out. Mrs. Wenger says there will be bumps in the design but when it is finished and dry they disappear. Now the design is covered with another layer of the finish brushed on evenly. White glitter is shaken over the whole area while still wet. If there is a small matching flower or design on the napkin it can be put on one end of the roof, using the same method. Now it simply needs to dry.

For added interest metallic braid or rickrack may be added to the edges of the birdhouse. On the front side of the roof (the side from which the tissue box will open) a small bright pallette is added with a pin, and a small dry twig should be placed under that - for the bird to have a resting place. On the top some type of artificial decoration - a bird, flower or leaf - should be added by pinning in place.

The roof is attached to the tissue box by means of four long hat pins stuck through the styrofoam and pushed into the folds of the box itself.

These boxes can be decorated any color, for any season or decor. For Mother's Day, Easter or Thanksgiving, just change the kind of trim and decoration used.

Another attractive item which can be used either to add cheer to your home or as a gift for friends is a styrofoam Mr. and Mrs. Holly.

The ones made by Society 22 are fashioned from 4 inch styrofoam balls, but the size could vary according to the ultimate use. To make these friendly creatures, you will need balls which will be cut in half, red, green and black felt, fringe balls in red, chenille "bumps," sequins, regular dressmaker pins, red and green ribbon and white craft glue.

The teacher of this project, Mrs. Cora Frymyer, provided patterns to cut out the holly leaves for Mr. Holly and the bonnet for Mrs. Holly, but these patterns can easily be made and fit to the size ball you wish to use. A little inventiveness will turn out dolls as attractive as the ones pictured.

To make Mr. Holly, you need to cut a large, double holly leaf from green felt. This will drape over the ball and form the base of his holly "hat." Three smaller leaves are added on top of the base, and these are kept in place with a small dab of glue. Three fringe balls are added to the top, also glued in place, or a pin can be used to add strength. For his ear muffs, the chenille "bumps" are cut apart and pushed in place over his ears. These can be glued and pinned in place if they are reluctant to stay put.

The eyes are made from a sequin, kept in place with a straight pin. Add a happy smile, eyebrows and a small bow at the neck, and Mr. Holly is ready to greet visitors to your home. A small pipe cleaner can be added on the back if you plan to hang it.

His companion, Mrs. Holly, also is made from half a styrofoam ball. She needs some black felt cut in a fringe effect for bangs to be seen under the rim of her bonnet. This is glued in place first, then a red bonnet is added with three small holly leaves on top and a few fringe balls. She also needs some fringed black felt for eyebrows to help make her feminine. Her eyes are made from sequins, and she gets a heart shaped mouth from red felt. Blusher can be added to her cheeks. Tie her a pretty bow of long, streaming ribbons and your Mr. and Mrs. Holly will add a lovely touch to your wall, mantel or table for the holidays.



Mr. and Mrs. Holly will add a bright touch to your home for the holidays.

Another idea which you might want to consider is making a burlap yardstick and scissors holder - a really thoughtful gift for a home sewer. The burlap strip is made double for extra support and stitched together, with the edges fringed. A second single strip, hemmed at the top, is stitched on top of the first to make a place to insert the folding yardstick or ruler. Curtain rings are sewn on the top of the hanger and a pair of scissors can be inserted there. Ball fringe, felt leaves and other decorations can be used as desired to make an attractive, useful gift which takes little time and money.

Any of these items can help make the holiday season bright at your home - but get an early start so you can complete them at leisure.



Members of Farm Women Society 22 use Holly to dress up the styrofoam dolls.