

Dairy craft ideas

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flanked with haystacks and a silo. A straw-hatted farmer, leaning on his pitchfork, and his companion dog, survey the scene. A careful observer will even spot the four barnyard cats, one tucked with cross-stitches in each corner.

June's sampler did not win her one of the top prizes of cash or a sewing machine.

Instead, it won an honorable mention, and a truly impressive honor for June.

"I was just so delighted with what they chose to do with it instead," June says.

The publishing firm asked if they might purchase the sampler, and donate it to the Birmingham, Alabama, Museum of Art, where the tribute to the American family dairy farm would hang in the collection of Arts and Crafts.

June's children are just proud of the sampler they inspired and the special recognition given their mother's art. Because the family was almost reluctant to part with the sampler, though, June now hopes to design and stitch a sampler for each of the children, based on their individual lives and achievements.

Last year, June entered another craft design contest, this one sponsored by the Stearns and Foster Company, makers of Mountain Mist quilting supplies.

That competition was held to select 30 original quilt squares, which would later be combined into a display quilt to travel all over the nation with the Mountain Mist craft show exhibit.

To June Adams, the fact that she had never quilted a stitch in her life was just a minor drawback.

For her first attempt at the old-fashioned skill, June settled on a theme that was on the mind of the world at the time of the contest: America's hostages being held captive in Iran.

Against a calico background, she

stitched slender profiles, one for each hostage imprisoned in the embassy. The profiles are arranged around the focal point of a tree, with a yellow ribbon tied prominently around the trunk. A muslin back and frame accented the square when it was completed.

While the square was not one of the 30 winners chosen to be used in the touring display, June did receive recognition as a semi-finalist and won a book on the art of quilting.

And the attempt at quilting has given her another goal. Now she wants to complete a quilt for each one of the three children.

But the craft that has captured the Adams family's greatest interest is not cross-stitch or quilting or ceramics or macarame or any one of a dozen other creative outlets that June Adams has tried.

It's burlap flower design, a craft that June Adams invented.

The burlap that claims the bulk of June's craft hours is not the dull brown material that once came wrapped around livestock feed, but a big-city cousin of the feed company standby, purchased by June in bolts of a rainbow of colors.

Most of the burlap yardage is then chopped up into pieces of various lengths and literally torn apart, piece by piece into bunches of loose threads.

Massing, shaping, trimming, and fastening with wire and floral tape, June magically transforms the fluffy threads into flowers that even fool the bees that alight on the flowers as she works outside in sunny weather.

Pale lavender burlap, for instance, becomes clover flowers, attached to wire, floral-tape wrapped stems. Leaves are cut from green burlap, and dipped in a mixture of half water and half-glue, making them rigid when they dry. Yellows and oranges become marigolds and sunflowers, gray turns into realistic pussywillows, and the glue-dipped green burlap sometimes even is transformed into garlands of trailing ivy.

June was introduced to burlap as a craft material while working with 4-H'ers. Not satisfied with the ideas then in use, June began further experimenting with the fabric threads and the flowers blossomed from her creative mind and nimble fingers.

She found an outlet for sharing the new craft publicly when nearby Harpers' Ferry national historic park sought community ideas and support for a crafts festival. June reasoned that it would take some new craft twist to catch the interest of visitors and potential customers. The entire family pitched in to prepare for the first burlap booth at the festival.

Burlap by Adams was a smashing success.

Many displays later, June hauled her burlap and finished

floral arrangements to a Richmond, Virginia crafts exhibit.

While she was showing there, two women kept returning each day of the show to watch her demonstrate the burlap techniques. But somehow they just couldn't get the instructions down to put the flowers together back home.

"Have you ever considered putting out a book?" they finally asked June.

"I never thought I could do something like that," was her immediate reaction at the time. But the suggestions took root, and before too long, June and Woody set out to write, photograph, print and publish a book on burlap flower designs.

"There were times when I almost gave up on it," she remembers, reflecting on the two years of sometimes frustrating spare time efforts it took to develop the 22-page-plus-covers softbacked publication.

June wrote the step-by-step burlap flower instructions, and sketched illustrations for "Magic With Burlap," while Woody took pictures of arrangements using the completed flowers. Patterns for the various designs of leaves were included.

The 2,000 copies June had printed were sold only through her burlap display booth at craft shows; and that printing is now nearly exhausted. She's considering a follow-up publication, one that would use color pictures

instead of the black-and-whites in the first volume, and that could be distributed on a wider scale.

Several months ago, June wrote to a New York burlap supplier about her craft and was invited to visit the firm's offices. She and Woody carried along a suitcase full of her burlap flowers, which received quite a favorable reaction from the company's top, administrative staff. June hopes that, by working with the burlap supplier, her design knowledge can be shared with more crafters.

As the popularity of June's burlap creations brought increased customer demand, the fabric bolts, completed flowers, arrangements, and miscellaneous supplies took a bigger and bigger chunk of living space in the Adams house.

"One day my son came home from school grumbling that he had found burlap in his bag lunch sandwich," June relates. "Then I knew something had to go."

Woody came to her rescue by purchasing a small, older-model mobile home, parking the trailer at the edge of the back yard. Here June stores all her inventory of craft supplies, finished products packed for show, and maintains her work area out of the family's living space - and sandwiches.

Ever on the lookout for yet another idea for her expanding following of customers, June is now developing fabric roses to

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