

# Lancaster homemakers get head start on decorating at Christmas in Oct. program

BY SUZANNE KEENE

LANCASTER — At a time when thoughts of goblins, jack-o'-lanterns and Halloween goodies are foremost in many youngsters' minds, creative homemakers are concentrating on Christmas gift and decoration ideas.

The 825 women who attended the Christmas in October program sponsored by the Lancaster County Cooperative Extension last week took home a host of innovative craft ideas for creating beautiful Christmas settings in their homes.

Nancy Gingrich, a floral designer from Lancaster, started the program off with her "Holiday of Flowers" presentation.

The first idea Gingrich had for

the ladies was an advent wreath made of fresh, all-natural materials. "You can use any materials that grow around your home," she said. The result, she said, is a "very, very natural, nature-oriented feel."

To keep the materials fresh, Gingrich used a European Designer Collection wreath base which can be soaked in water and will retain that moisture without marking tabletops.

Fresh flowers can be added to the wreath, which will last from Thanksgiving to Christmas, to dress it up for a special party, she said.

Gingrich stressed the importance of incorporating everyday



Nancy Fasolt pours beeswax into a candy mold to create lovely beeswax ornaments to hang on the Christmas tree.



This Christmas tree is loaded with beeswax ornaments. The first beeswax ornament to come to the United States was of the Christ child in a walnut shell, ornamented with wax roses.

knickknacks into Christmas decorating schemes. For example, she suggested adorning a whistling swan's neck with a hunter green wreath. Hunter green, she said, is a new important Christmas color this year, replacing the more traditional kelly green.

House plants don't have to be put away for the Christmas season; they, too, can be decorated for Christmas. Long vining plants like ivy can be wrapped around styrofoam cones to create living trees. Gingrich suggested adorning the plant tree with ribbons and bows to give it a festive appearance.

The trees make excellent gifts as well. "It's a cute way of saying, 'I'm giving you some of my love,'" she said.

Two important looks for Christmas this year are glittery high style and the country look, Gingrich explained. For those who prefer the glittery approach to Christmas, she showed how to make a floral arrangement for a party in a silver champagne cooler.

Floral arrangements will last the longest if they are stored in a 48 to 50°F. room overnight, when no one is around to enjoy them, she said.

"The most important place to decorate is the front door," Gingrich counseled.

She demonstrated how to make a



Vining house plants can easily be transformed into Christmas trees using a styrofoam cone. Ribbons and bows or hearts can be added for a festive touch.



Home economist Barbara Herr displays a Christmas wreath constructed of styrofoam balls on a coat hanger. Barbara presented a number of craft ideas to brighten up everyone's Christmas.

topiary for the front step or porch using two tree branches cemented in a ceramic pot and decorated with various greens.

The topiary design can be scaled down and used as table decorations for a party, giving a sense of continuity to the decorating scheme, she said.

No Christmas would be complete without special foods and traditions. Susan Chandler Kurth spoke to the women about German holiday foods and traditions she experienced first-hand while her husband was stationed in Germany.

Christmas in Germany, she said, means children with gingerbread cookies around their neck, slices of "tree cake," and generous supplies of marzipan, an almond based candy.

For Kurth, Christmas also means making dozens and dozens of cookies that can be made only at Christmas.

Kurth remembered how her mother always hid the Christmas

cookies so the kids wouldn't eat them too soon. "Because of that, we would eat Christmas cookies for Easter," she chuckled, confessing that it is a tradition she continues.

German children, she explained, receive five traditional gifts - food, clothing, a coin, a toy and a pencil box - representing the five important aspects of a child's life.

On Dec. 6 St. Nicholas Day is celebrated and Santa Claus and Krampus (like our scrooge) gives the children gifts or sticks, depending on whether they have been good or bad.

For the crafty individuals in the group, Nancy Fasolt, a professional candy making and cake decorating instructor, showed how to make beeswax Christmas ornaments.

The process, which is much like candy making, involves pouring melted beeswax into candy molds and chilling them until the beeswax returns to a solid state.

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