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EC72-2016 Woods Pretties

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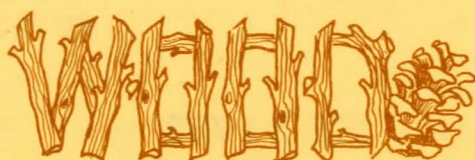
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WOOD PRETTIES



EXTENSION SERVICE, UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA-LINCOLN COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE COOPERATING WITH THE
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND THE COLLEGE OF HOME ECONOMICS
E. F. FROLIK, DEAN J. L. ADAMS, DIRECTOR



PRETTIES

by Magdalene Pfister

Extension Home Furnishing Specialist

Appalachian mountain women have given the name "wood pretties" to wreaths, swags and other articles made from cones, nuts, and seed pods from timbers and fields.

These materials make decorations which are practically permanent and can be stored and used for many years on doorways, mantels and windows, or placed on table and chests. The dried materials can be combined with evergreen at Christmas.

Materials to Collect

To gather materials you've got to get out ahead of the squirrels in the fall before weather discolors acorns and seed pods. Pine cones of different kinds may be used. Some can be used to show the stem end and some placed upright, and others cut down to about three rows to make "wooden roses."

Acorns, Osage orange (hedge balls), sycamore balls, yucca pods, prickly jimpson weed burr, button weed, cockle burr, milk weed pods, horse chestnut (if picked green, the pods split showing the smooth brown nut), rose hips, and milo are some that may be found in Nebraska.

Preparation of the Material

Bake nuts, cones and fungi in a 200° oven for several hours to remove moisture and to kill any insects.

Pine cone flowers may be made by sawing cones horizontally in three pieces. Using a pliers, twist wire around the petals on the underside if you wish to wire them to a frame.

Flowers may also be made by slicing hedge balls about ¼ inch thick. In the center punch two holes like those in a button. Place on foil-lined baking sheet. Bake 3 hours at 200°.

If articles are to be wired together or to a pick, make holes with an awl or drill for inserting the wire. On heavy or thick material screw eyes may be needed for inserting the wire.

Dried materials may be sprayed with a clear plastic or dipped in shellac that has been diluted with an equal part of thinner.

It is usually better to use the materials in their natural colors than to dye them. Let texture become the important element.

Tools and Equipment

The tools and materials you need will depend on the type of decorative piece you make (Fig. 1). Read through the directions before you start assembling any of the following:

- pruning shears, tinner's snip
- awl or drill
- pliers
- wreath frame (wire, plastic foam, or hardware cloth in a circle)
- balls or cones of plastic foam
- floral wire, brown floral tape, picks (pointed wooden sticks)
- white glue or linoleum adhesive
- small screw eyes
- colorless spray or shellac and thinner
- shingle or board covered with burlap
- ribbon

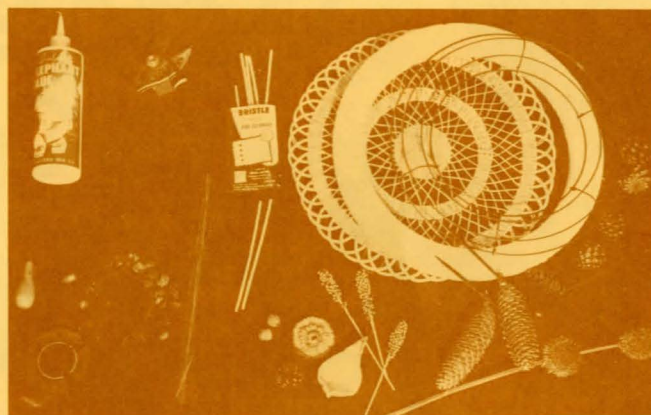


Figure 1 Materials needed to make wood pretties.

Methods of Construction

Various methods are used to make these decorative pieces. Dried materials are glued to half a plastic foam ball fitted in a clay pot for a centerpiece (Fig. 2). With a cone of foam, trees can be fashioned. Arrange some dried materials on a shingle or a burlap-covered board for making a placque (Fig. 3).

A 4-inch circle cut from plywood or hardboard forms the base for the candle holder. Glue the pine cone petals to the outside edge. In the center glue down a bottle cap for holding the candle. Finish with dried materials glued in between (Fig. 4).

The swag was made in the same way with the addition of a bow.

Wreaths can be made by wiring the dried material directly to a wire wreath frame (Fig. 5). Corrugated paper or felt should be applied to the back to prevent surfaces from getting scratched. A circle of hardware cloth can be used as a wreath frame. Another method is to wire cones to a floral pick and then stick it into a foam circle. Small materials can be clustered together on a pick. Pipe stem cleaners with bristles provide a secure hold in the foam. Round tooth picks can be used in place of floral picks.

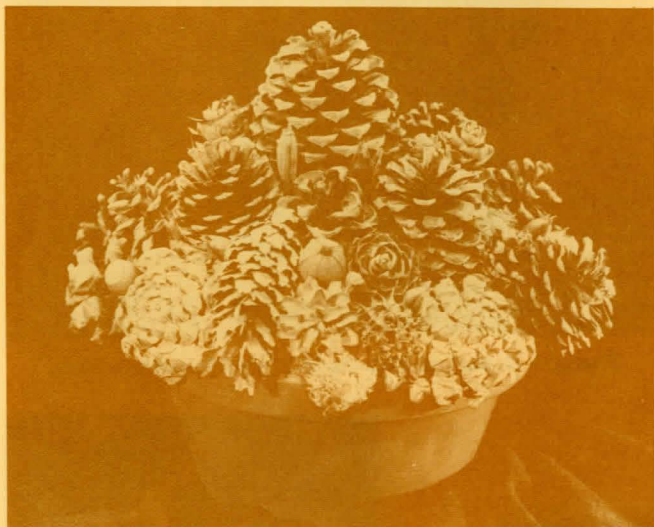


Figure 2 Centerpiece made of forest products in a clay pot.



Figure 5 A velvet bow finishes off a pine cone wreath.



Figure 3. Burlap-covered board is the background for this wall plaque.



Figure 4. Woodsy materials made into a candle ring.



Figure 6 Centerpiece .



Figure 7. A Kissing Ball made from crossed hoops.

Fig. 7 photo courtesy Biltmore Gardens, Asheville, N.C.

Fig. 8 photo courtesy the U. S. Forest Service.

The cone tree is made by wiring cones to a dowel centered on a wooden base (Fig. 6).

The kissing ball (Fig. 7) involves crossing two wire rings or embroidery hoops and wiring the materials to them. The hoops are covered with brown floral tape.

The candle ring and corsage (Fig. 8) are made by attaching wire to materials then covering the wire with brown floral tape.

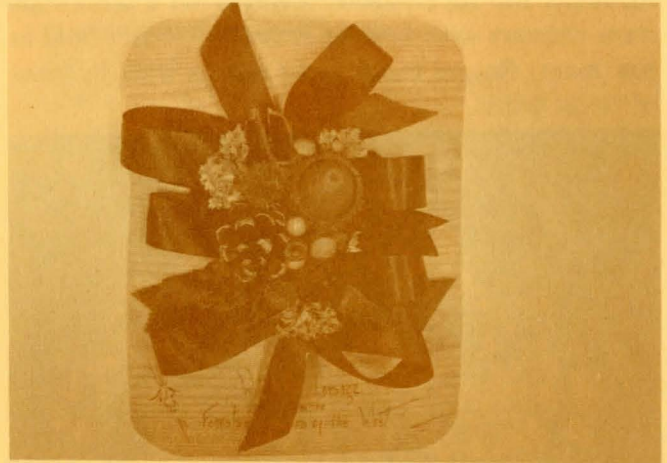


Figure 8 A pert corsage made of tiny forest products.

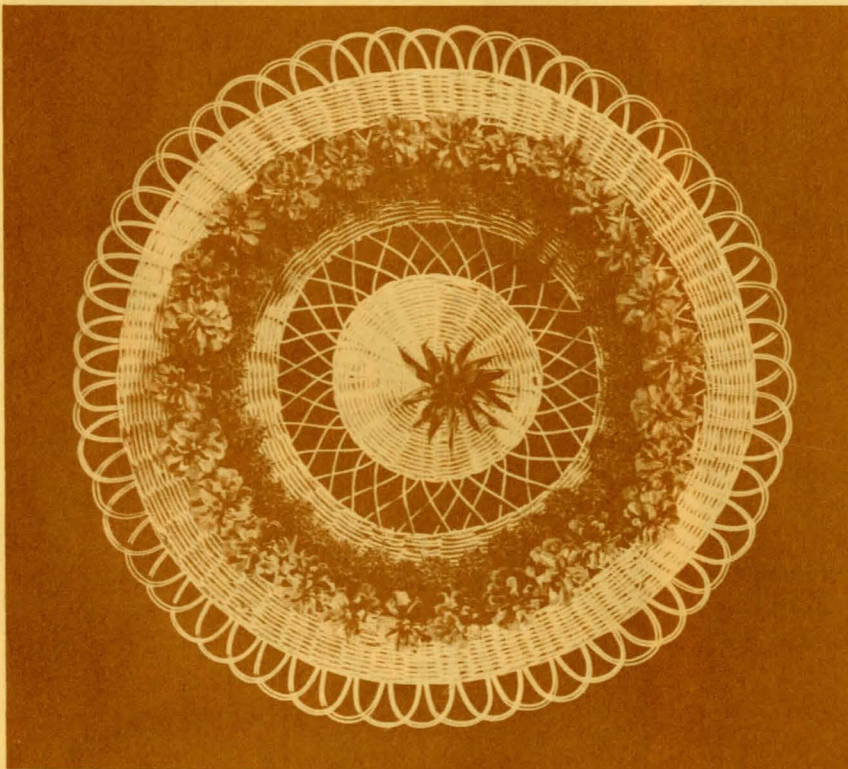


Figure 9. Forest materials glued to a reed mat makes a beautiful underlay for a punch bowl.

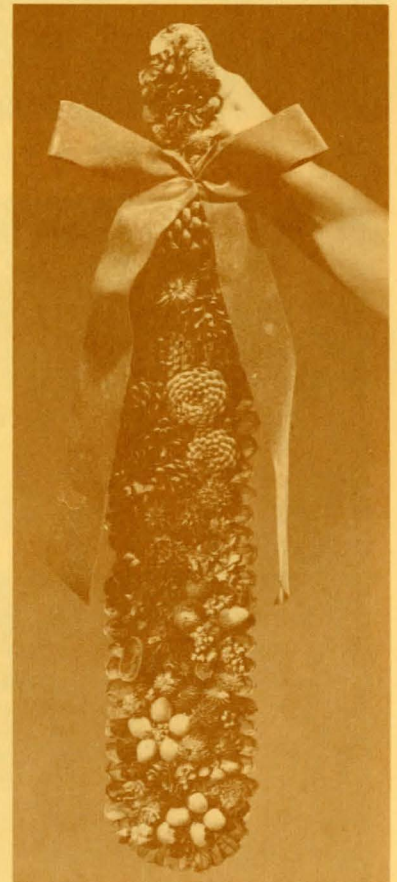


Figure 10. Handsome holiday swag made of forest products.