

Christmas Rural Crafts



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Christmas Rural Crafts



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Introduction

This booklet is based on ideas presented at a seminar run by Julie White of Growing Rural Enterprise Ltd and Bobbie Harvey of LEAF Education.

Julie is a trained florist and Bobbie's an artist but you don't need all their skills to have a go at these simple activities.

You can plan a day's workshop or you can spend half an hour on one project—whatever time is available. Once you have the basic materials, these activities are a good standby to use on a rainy day or when you have finished everything else earlier than planned!

A chance to be creative can reveal all sorts of talents amongst adults and children alike. Even if you don't think you are artistic, being engrossed in one of these activities can be very relaxing—or stimulating!

Once you have had a go, you'll be proud of what you've achieved and wonder what else you can go on to do. Give your groups an opportunity to experience this by carrying out some of the simple activities described here.

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Materials to use

To complete all these projects you will need some bought items and others which you or your group/class can find or gather as part of the activity. Decide in advance which projects you will tackle as you won't need all the items unless you are doing all of the projects! Buying in bulk is cheaper and leaves you with a good stock ready for next time.

Bought items (available from florist wholesalers –search the internet)

Raffia	Essential oils
Ribbon/Wool/String	Carpet tape/double sided tape
Small terracotta pots	Orris root
Willow balls	Florist's scoops
Dried wheat	Beads
Artificial berries	Pipe cleaners
Cinnamon sticks, spices	Tissue paper
Florists' wire	Skeleton leaves
Wire wreath rings	Wax crayons
Blocks of Oasis	Card and paper
Florists' tape	

Gathered and found items

Ivy/Laurel/Bay/Other evergreen leaves
Twigs
Willow
Cones
Flower petals e.g. pansies, roses
Honeysuckle
Moss
Feathers

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Door hangings

Use a florist's scoop (from floristry suppliers) and firmly tape a piece of damp Oasis in place.



Take some sprigs of conifer and cut the stems at a diagonal to make them sharper.

With the handle pointing to the top, add four short conifer sprigs in the form of a cross and then four more on the diagonals. You can infill with more if you want to do so.



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Door hangings

Add stems of wheat in the same way.

Twist wire around pine cones to fix onto your hanging.



Continue building up your design by adding more foliage and natural materials!



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Pride in our work



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Christmas Topiary Pots

Gather evergreen leaves—each person needs about 10/15 leaves.

Recycle carrier bags/bin liners and cut to line a small plant pot.

Add a piece of soaked Oasis.

Add the leaves fanning from the centre and pin in place with bent wire or pins.

Bend a piece of wire and fasten in the centre a willow ball (bought or made).

Make a raffia bow (wind raffia round your fingers, slip it off and tie it in the middle. Spread out to make a bow shape).

Add ornamental berries etc to give a Christmas theme!



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Scented hay rings

Pull a bundle of hay into smaller clumps. Roll each clump tightly into a sausage shape.

Overlap the 'sausages' to fit around a wire wreath ring.

Use a reel of wire and work all round the ring (through the middle and over the rim each time) fastening the hay in place.

Before cutting off the wire, make a secure hanging loop.

Tidy the hay ring a little by snipping off untidy ends.

Pin the end of a length of ribbon to the ring.

Wind the ribbon around the hay ring. You can cover as much or as little of the ring as your creative flair demands!

Make a ribbon bow and fasten this onto the ring.

Finally, add a few drops of essential oils to the hay. Place powdered orris root in a carrier bag, insert the hay ring and give the bag a shake to "fix" the oils. Hang it up to admire!



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Hay birds

Take a small bundle of hay and twist it into a short sausage shape. Push a short twig through one end (to create the bird's eyes—you may need to chop it to size later). Bandage the hay shape with coloured wool. You will need to do this quite tightly to keep the shape but leave some spaces to poke in additional body parts! Create the shape as you go along—will your bird be perching or flying (or will you wait to see how it evolves?)

Use a knitting needle or a long nail (health and safety warning!) to poke a hole through the head. Insert a length of pipe cleaner to form a beak.

Do the same again with a longer pipe cleaner to form the legs. Twist on smaller pieces to make the feet.

Make holes to insert tail and wing feathers.

Create a loop to hang your bird from the Christmas tree or create a flock of birds to decorate the room.



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Butterflies

The wings of your butterflies can be made in a variety of ways. Use skeleton leaves (search for suppliers on the internet) - you can use them as they are but they are very delicate. Or you can spray mount them onto tissue or thin card. You can also use fabric stiffener for the wings.

Decorate the wings by using wax crayons and skeleton leaves for rubbings.

Cut a thin strip of double sided tape and place in the centre to hold the body. Bend a pipe cleaner in half and slot it over the butterfly wings (sticking down onto the tape) with the ends forming the antennae. Add tiny beads on the ends of the pipe cleaners.

Fix cotton or thin wool to make a loop for hanging.



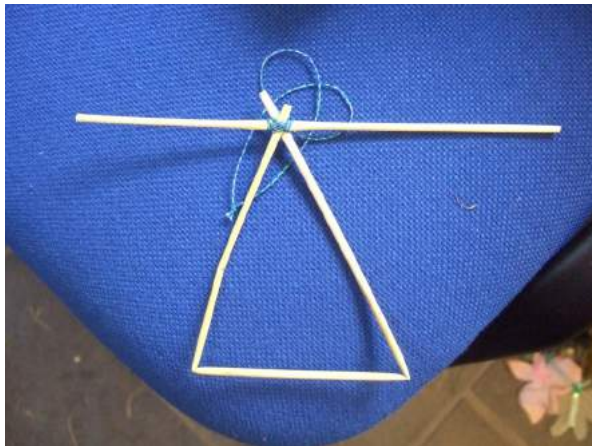
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Angels

Bend wheat straw or thin willow to create the basic outline of the angel. Tie the shape to keep it firm.

Glue in place natural materials such as honesty seed pods, feathers or any light coloured materials to form the angel's dress.

Remember to make a loop if you want to hang the angel up!



(With thanks for this idea from Jo Schofield and Fiona Danks at "Going Wild.")

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Willow Stars

Schools and farms can grow their own willow quite easily on a small patch of land but avoid planting near drains and buildings. Willow is an extremely versatile plant and can be used living or dried for a variety of purposes.

Willow is a very vigorous plant and can grow as much as 12ft or 3.5m in a year. Every time the plant is cut back (coppiced) it will produce new shoots.

Children will enjoy seeing the willow grow and you can grow willow in a variety of different types and colours to use in craft activities. Browse the internet for suppliers and ideas.



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Willow Stars

Equipment needed:

Basket willow (needs to be soaked for 24 hours) or use fresh willow.

Method:

Choose a rod to make the star shape. You will need to create four bends. Tease it gently into shape by twisting soft bends into the rod, otherwise it will snap.

With your resulting five sides, bend into shape so that you weave the sides alternately under and over to hold into shape. (Easier to try out than to explain in words!)

Tie the ends together and create a hanging loop.

Children can each make a star and they can be used to make a combined mobile.



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Other tree decorations

Collect materials in advance of the activity or make it part of the day to go out selecting natural resources!

You can use all kinds of flowers, leaves and twigs—whatever is available locally.

Start by cutting out a small circle or square of card. Fix onto it a piece of double sided tape or carpet tape.

Create a hanging loop before you go any further.

Now begin building up your decoration. For example, use four wheat straws to form a basic cross (with ears pointing North, South, East and West).

You might find it easier to create your pattern of materials on the table before sticking them into place. If you cover the tape, add another piece in the centre.

Be creative! Your decorations will be as individual as each participant.



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Selling your work

If you choose to develop a mini enterprise and sell your work, your group/class will develop a multitude of different skills including:

- Marketing
- IT
- Working as a team
- Financial management
- Customer service

Where can you sell your work?

- In the school playground at the end of the day
- At a Christmas fair or open day
- At a farmers' market or craft fair

Do not be tempted to sell your goods too cheaply. Work out how much the items have cost to make in terms of outlay plus manpower! (As a guide, a topiary pot costs just over £1 in materials so we were advised to use a selling price of £2.99)

You can plough back your profits into the enterprise to buy more materials; or add to school/organisation funds; or use to fund a farm visit or other project.

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Growing Rural Enterprise Ltd

This Christmas Rural Crafts seminar was supported by FACE member Julie White of Growing Rural Enterprise Ltd.

The vision of the organisation is

- To deliver innovative and meaningful learning opportunities for rural businesses
- To inspire and make a difference to rural businesses, building confidence, knowledge and skills

What Growing Rural Enterprise Ltd does:

- Runs courses & workshops for rural business
- Offers one to one coaching, mentoring and advice
- Manages and delivers externally funded projects which help rural businesses to start, develop and grow
- Works with partners to improve the rural economy, business sustainability and viability
- Manages trans-national projects that inspire those running rural businesses and shares good practice with European partners

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