11-1958

Farm and home - Some novel Christmas decorations

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CHRISTMAS decorations can be quite an expensive item and could place extra strain on an already over-taxed budget, but some attractive novelties can be made very cheaply by anyone willing to devote a little time and trouble.

Pine-cones, gum-nuts, banksia nuts and other types of bush vegetation plus a small quantity of plaster-of-paris or patching plaster can be combined with odds and ends of ribbon, holly leaves, candles, miniature dolls, etc., to produce delightful effects.

PREPARATION
Wash the cones or nuts in hot water to remove mud and dust. Trim off any unsightly portions, then rinse in fresh water and stack to dry with the tops downward to facilitate draining.

When dry, attach a loop of twine or string to the base of each cone to give added support when they are set in plaster.

TIPPING
To simulate snow, the tips of the cones may be coated with a thin solution of plaster—or a similar effect may be obtained with white paint in which case a matt-finish paint is preferable.

If plaster is used, it should be mixed to the consistency of thick cream in an old plate so that there is about a half-inch depth of plaster. Hold the cone by the
Two pine-cones, a holly spray and a coloured candle

ends and rotate it in the plaster till the
tips are suitably coated. Paint can be
applied in a similar manner or a brush
may be used.

While the plaster or paint is still tacky,
it may be sprinkled with tinsel "glitter"
material for added effect.

The treated cones should be hung on a
wire or clothes-line by pegging the loops,
and should be left until thoroughly dry.

**ASSEMBLING**

Make a few trial groupings of the
treated materials before commencing to
assemble them. Various types of Christmas
decorations can be used, including
coloured ribbons, cellophane, holly-leaves,
small fairy dolls or Father Christmas
figures. Coloured candles lend themselves
to some attractive groupings.

Having decided upon a suitable design,
mark out the base on cardboard or thick
paper and cut to shape. Prepare a stiff
plaster mixture and spread it about
thick over the base. It need not be put
on smoothly—a rough finish is quite
attractive.

Now take each cone separately and push
the wire or string loop into the plaster
then pack the base with more plaster so
that it stands firmly in position. When
the main items are in position, tidy up
the plaster neatly to give a pleasing shape.

Bows of ribbon or cellophane may be
attached by pins pushed into the plaster
while it is still damp but not wet enough
to stain the material.

Candles, dolls, etc., may be pressed into
the plaster while it is still soft. Suitable
twigs may be coated with plaster and
adorned with paper flowers, leaves or
strips of tinsel. Small models of pine-trees
can be cut out in cardboard or wood and
the little china figures obtained cheaply
at chain stores can be used to good effect.

Put each group aside until the plaster
has dried and hardened, then, if necessary,
touches of colour may be applied using
quick-drying enamels.

Attractive wall-plaques, hanging orna-
ments, or decorations for the table or
mantlepiece may be made in this manner
and you will get much satisfaction from
exercising your creative powers and giving
full rein to your imagination.
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