Holiday Tables

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Plastic foam makes an effective base for a centerpiece. Cover with greens and feature squatty plastic shapes and candles.

Two dainty reindeer prance beside greens and slim red tapers. The puffballs are white toothpicks stuck in foam. For “snowy” greens, apply glue and dust with mica.

This pert miss is made by filling a glass bowl with mints and using colored cellophane for hair, eyes, nose and mouth. Pine cones, berries and bright ribbon dress her for Christmas.

CHRISTMAS centerpieces dress up your Yuletide table. The possibilities are unlimited, so experiment with many materials during the few days you are home before Christmas.

One unique decoration transforms your table into a gift package. Lay two wide ribbons on the table so that they cross each other close to one corner. The ends should hang over the table even with the edge of the cloth. Place a centerpiece of candles, greenery and Christmas tree balls where the ribbons cross to simulate the bow of the package. With a colored table cloth and shimmering ribbons, you can plan a “package” to harmonize with your dining room. If you shop carefully, each candle in the “bow” can match the surrounding ornaments.

Contemporary decorations

For a contemporary flair in decorations, paint driftwood black, the blue of “Silent Night,” or white, and sprinkle with artificial snow. Then partially cover the wood with greens, mistletoe or holly. Candles to match the wood can be decorated with a sprig of greenery. Remember that driftwood does not have to come from a beach. Your own backyard or woods probably has a dried and knarled branch with real character.

Mobile centerpieces

Here’s an idea for a mobile centerpiece that will catch the eye of your guests. Bend a coat hanger into a circle. It will stand up if you bend the wire ends to act as stands on opposite sides of the circle. Then suspend an original Christmas mobile from the top of the wire circle. You can paint or wind the wire with paper. Again, use candles that match the decorations. Sprinkle your mobile with silver stars or snow flakes so that the candlelight will be reflected as the objects move.
A variation of this centerpiece is made by suspending a sphere of painted chicken wire from the top of the coat hanger circle. Twine it with mistletoe and ribbon. A pink sphere with red ribbon and light green mistletoe makes a lovely harmony of colors.

A single Christmas candle is a simple, but effective centerpiece. If the candle is textured, tie it with a red ribbon and add a spray of greens. However, if the wax has a smooth surface, make designs by putting on rows of sequins with straight pins or kitchen cement. Sequins in the form of doves, trees and angels may be bought at the dime store, or cut your own shapes from metallic paper. A pair of candles are even more handsome than a single taper. You may even want to make them for gifts.

To protect the table from dripping wax, put waxed paper under the candles. Then surround the candles with greens that have had this treatment: dip them in thick starch, and when still wet, dust with mica to add that special wonder, winter-white. This simple decoration is especially striking when placed on a green or red table cloth. You can dye a sheet or buy a plain inexpensive rayon cloth if you don’t have a holiday damask heirloom.

Stylized Christmas trees are fun to make and use. A crinoline tree is easy. Make a cardboard base and a “trunk” of wire. With pinking shears, cut out star-shaped forms of crinoline in graduated sizes and punch them down over the “trunk.” Make many layers so that your tree will be full. On each layer glue stars, sequins and mica. Then top with the “littlest angel.” If you paint the “tree trunk” white, your tree will appear to be silver and white gauze.

A miniature pine tree can be formed from pine boughs and screen. Purchase the screen at a hardware store as wide as you want the tree to be tall. Roll it into a cone and fasten with wire. Insert the pine branches into the screen in a symmetrical pattern and graduate them in size. Now decorate your tree with miniature ornaments that you make or buy. Angel hair or cotton at the base will give you the effect of airy snow. Perhaps small-sized gift packages containing “just-for-fun” gifts could be placed around the tree as placecards.

Decorative ornaments

If you have a large globe flower bowl or candy jar, fill it with tree ornaments and a few sprigs of evergreen. Also anchor a candle in the ornaments near the back of the bowl. Tie the globe with a piece of red ribbon and the centerpiece is complete. This decoration is especially suited to a buffet table.

Create your own symbol of Christmas for your family and friends by letting these few ideas suggest other ways of bringing sparkle, candlelight and warm Christmas colors to your holiday table.

On the left are materials to make the decoration on the right. Choose a sprightly angel and surround her with greens, pine cones, Christmas balls, candles and carnations.

Harriet Hawkins