



# WREATHS FOR ALL OCCASIONS



Wreaths are a delightful way to decorate your home all year around and provide one of the prettiest ways to celebrate special moments. They can be used for any occasion, placed in almost any location and can be made from an endless variety of materials. They can focus on a holiday or seasonal theme or simply be a spur-of-the-moment inspiration created from some interesting materials. Wreath styles range from elegant and formal works of art to whimsical centerpieces for buffet tables. Dainty wreaths can be placed as a “halo” on your favorite teddy bear while larger ones may have a place of honor over a fireplace mantel.

There is no one right way to design a wreath, but there are certain guidelines that will help you when working with an idea. These guidelines consider the principles of space, form, color, texture, line, balance, movement and scale. A lovely wreath is made by bringing these principles together in a pleasing way.

There are many different ways to begin your hobby of making wreaths. It's a good idea to keep an idea file of clippings, photos, materials, samples and colors on hand to help give your imagination a nudge. Anything that interests you is worth filing whether it is obviously wreath-related or not. At first your main interest may be designing a wreath for a certain space or a special function. If so, consider the theme and the colors that could be used as well as the space to be filled.

You'll also need to consider the materials that you wish to use. What kind of base will you have? How will you hold the materials together? Whether you're planning to use dried materials, greens, ribbons, fabric, corn husks, raffia or other types of materials, be sure to gather all of them before you begin. Think of ways that the materials relate to one another and whether the total effect is interesting. Relationships should be pleasing. If some of the items are much too large or too small, and they may destroy your final design. Think, too, of colors and textures. Do all of the elements blend together and work as a family?

Collect various types of materials that you may wish to use in wreaths. Many materials can be purchased from florist and craft supply shops. Other materials can be gathered free-of-charge from your natural surroundings. (See HF-LCR.90, Nature Caught and Held.)

## TOOLS AND SUPPLIES

Proper tools will make your work easier and quicker. Consider the following suggested tools:

### For gathering materials, you'll need:

- Good pair of garden pruners
- Sharp pocketknife
- Small saw
- Scissors or floral shears



### For your work area, you'll need:

- Wire cutters
- Scissors for fabric and ribbons
- Second pair of pruners
- Second pair of floral shears
- Hot-glue gun(s)
- Craft or florists wire in several different weights
- Florists' picks in a variety of lengths in natural and green colors
- Water picks to hold fresh flowers and greens
- Florists' tapes in green and brown
- Glue pellets for glue guns
- Quick-drying white glue
- Acrylic and metallic paints, if needed
- Paint brushes, if needed
- Dyes, if needed, to color cones or vines
- Twine or string (include garden, kitchen and waxed types)



If you are looking for nature materials, enjoy the outdoors but be respectful of the environment, avoid trespassing and watch for poison ivy. Place your wreath making materials in well-labeled boxes and stack on shelves in your work area. Plastic storage boxes are good for protecting dried materials and crushable decorations.

## WORK SPACES

For the most satisfying experience in making wreaths have proper tools and work in an adequate working area. The better your work space, the smoother your efforts in creating wreaths will proceed. This space can be on the kitchen table, in the garage on a workbench or in a special hobby area. Wherever your work space is located, it should be well lighted by both nature and electricity. Check that there are no shadows falling over your work. Clip-on lights are inexpensive and easy to move around and adjust. You'll also need electrical outlets nearby for using hot-glue guns and other light tools.

Clear off a large work space area to give plenty of room to work and to place the materials that you are working with. You'll need both a horizontal and a vertical surface. You'll also need enough room to step back and see how the wreath is developing on the vertical surface and yet be close enough to the horizontal areas to have all the necessary tools and supplies close at hand. Pegboard is handy for storing tools and for hanging wreaths that are in various stages of development. A shelf unit can hold the boxes of supplies and dried materials.

Check to be sure that your work surface is a comfortable height (Hip bone level is ideal).

## WREATH BASES THAT YOU CAN PURCHASE

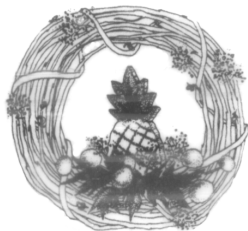
Vine wreaths come in a wide range of sizes and shapes. They can be made from grapevine (the most common), honeysuckle, paper rope or other materials in a natural finish or a variety of colors. Usually vine wreaths are designed for the base to be seen.

Straw wreaths also come in a variety of sizes and shapes. They are made of dense straw over a wire ring and wrapped in place with nylon filament. They are tight and full and can be designed for the base to be seen or to be covered with moss. You can poke decorations into the base or glue them directly onto the straw.

Foam wreath bases are similar to straw ones. They're easy to use, but you'll want to completely cover the surface. Materials include cut or extruded foam and a sponge-like florist's foam that absorbs water and is ideal for making fresh flower wreaths.

Wire bases come in a variety of sizes and usually in ring or heart shapes. They are often used for fabric and raffia wreaths or for making wreaths of fresh flowers and greens. They're easy to work with either by twining things through them or by attaching decorations with wire. Plan to make the wreath extra full so that the wire frame will be well hidden.

### MAKING A VINE WREATH



Making a vine wreath is easy. Simply hold one end of a length of vine in one hand and bend the vine into a circle with your other. The diameter of the wreath can be adjusted to fit the space you want to fill. Clasp the vine with one hand and wrap the free end of the vine in and out through the circle with the other. Fasten the end by tucking it into the vines. Add other lengths of vine by tucking them into the previous vines and wrapping them in and out of the circle as before. When the wreath is the size and density you want, tuck in any stray ends. As you work, keep in mind the amount of firmness or looseness you wish your finished base to have. Irregularities in shape add unexpected surfaces for decorations and opportunities for creativity.

## BASIC STEPS IN MAKING WREATHS

**Getting Started.** Gather all the materials that you are thinking of using and make a rough arrangement to get an idea of the techniques you will be using and the tools you'll need. Try to gather all of the needed tools and supplies before starting.

**Attaching a Hanger.** For almost any wreath the first step will be to attach a wire hanging loop to the base. To do this, take a length of florists' wire, pass it through the center of the wreath and bring the ends together. Twist them securely and circle them back on themselves. Twist them again to form a sturdy loop. This will be the top of your design.

**Preparing the Base.** Moss or another similar material can be used to cover the wreath base. Moss can be glued into place with hot glue or quick-drying glue if you are working with a straw or foam base. Work with smaller pieces rather than trying to cover the whole base at once. Apply glue to the wrong side and press it onto the base. Wire bases can be covered by twining fabric or green materials through the frame and securing with twine or string as necessary. Place knots toward the back of the base. For the best appearance the wreath will need to be full and very dense to hide the base.

**Planning the Design.** Consider the overall design as you are deciding on decorative elements. Color is important. Think how the colors can be repeated throughout the wreath design and also how they will look in the location where it will be displayed. Scale and proportion are both important. Is the wreath an appropriate size for the space in which it will hang? Are the sizes of the decorative elements compatible with each other and the overall wreath size? Textures need to blend together and help give unity to your design. Consider, too, the placement of the point of emphasis. This focal point should direct attention to a certain spot and may provide an element of surprise to the overall design.

**Covering Florists' Wire.** Cover florists' wire with florists' tape by holding the tape in your left hand and placing the wire at an angle against it with your right hand. Then twist the tape over the wire with your right thumb and forefinger. To do this, spin the wire against the tape, winding the tape over it until it is covered. After some practice, try holding a short flower stem next to one end of the wire and then wrapping the wire. This will attach them together in one motion and give the flower a new stem. Keep in mind that practice is the key to doing this quickly and easily.

**Attaching Decorations.** Begin at the base and work around the wreath. First, check to be sure that all of the items have stems that are long enough to lie flat against the base and be held by the twine. Then attach decorative materials to the base by wrapping twine several times over each item. Large or full decorations can be applied individually. Smaller decorations can be wired together into bunches. As you work, arrange all of the stems in the same direction (clockwise or counterclockwise) and adjust the angle either toward the center or the outside of the circle as you work. Don't worry about using too many flowers or greens since a full wreath is always attractive. As you approach the beginning point, carefully slide the stems of the last decorations under the first and wrap very gently with the twine.

**Using Florist's Picks.** Insert decorative materials into a straw or foam wreath base with florist's picks. To do this, simply wrap the wire on the end of the pick around the decorative material until it is securely fastened. Then stick the other end of the pick into the base. If needed, use glue to attach the pick to either the decoration or the base.

**Adding Water Picks.** Add an accent of fresh flowers to a wreath by using water picks. These picks have small, pointed glass or plastic tubes and a rubber cap with a small hole over one end. Simply fill them with water, replace the rubber cap and insert the flower stem into the small hole. Then place them onto the wreath. The flowers will last for several days. Add fresh water as needed.

## FINISHING DETAILS

**Bows.** Many wreaths have at least one bow. French ribbon, which has wired edges, is the easiest to control. However, there are many other types and combinations that can be used. It's often easier to tie the bow before you place it on the wreath. The bow can be tied from one long length of ribbon or from several shorter lengths that are folded and twisted into shapes and held together with wire.

**Surface Treatments.** If desired, a clear sealer can be sprayed over the surface of dried flowers to help preserve the arrangement and make dusting easier. Use glycerin to preserve leaves and give them a glossy look. Leaves, pine cones and similar materials can be painted or the edges touched with paint to emphasize certain details. Apply silver or gold leaf to selected areas to give a festive sparkle to even the most ordinary objects.

### SUGAR-COATED FRUIT

Sugar-coated fruit adds a festive translucent touch to any wreath. It's quick and easy to make. Here 's how to do it.



#### You will need:

- two lightly beaten egg whites in a medium-sized bowl
- a pastry brush or paintbrush
- a second medium-sized bowl containing a cup of granulated sugar
- a wire rack
- some paper towels
- a moist sponge

Cover the work surface with paper towels. Hold the fruit gently in one hand. Then using the brush with the other hand, coat the surface of the fruit lightly with egg white. (Any missed areas can be easily touched up later.) While the surface is wet, sprinkle sugar over the coated fruit with your fingers. If the sugar coating gets too thick, simply wipe it off with the damp sponge and try again. Then set the fruit on the wire rack to dry (about 30 to 60 minutes).

**Note:** White glue can be used in place of egg whites, but is not quite as translucent. Fine glitter can be added to the sugar to give extra sparkle.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

Very often the most successful design is a spontaneous . . . one that just happens because the creator is having fun, relaxing and becoming involved in the experience. Feel free to let the design lead you wherever it will go. Be whimsical or sentimental. Use your imagination and trust your instincts. Not all wreaths need to be serious intellectual works. Some should be made just for fun or to capture a lighthearted impulse.

Enjoy your work again and again. Keep wreaths hanging throughout the year to add interest to your home. To store a wreath between hangings, gently wrap it in tissue paper and place it in a labeled box. Store it where it won't be bumped and use care that heavy boxes are not placed on top of it.

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