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TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE

**MAKING THE MOST  
OUT OF WHAT YOU HARVEST**



*Wild-  
Crafting*

**A SURVIVAL GUIDE  
FOR THOSE OF US  
LIVING WITH A  
HUNTER IN THE HOUSE**

BY LINDA McMURRY

## Introduction

Early Texas settlers relied on the land to support them. The rich soils of the Blackland Prairie and Post Oak Savannah grew crops that provided these settlers with food. The land also supported a diverse habitat that provided ample wild game with which to keep larders well supplied with meat.

Hunting is a tradition that goes beyond just providing food. It provides a tradition of land ethics, appreciation for the habitat and a basis for many of our social and cultural traditions. It provides a link between generations.

With time however, the necessity to hunt to keep a family supplied with meat has become far less important than the recreational, social and cultural traditions that hunting provides. With these changes comes new dilemmas—what are you going to *do* with the *rest* of the critter? No doubt about it—the meat's great! It's nice to be able to fill up your freezer with deer meat, dove, duck, quail, pheasant, wild hog—you name it. Company dinner is oh-so-special when you can serve up a "roast beast" that you harvested yourself. It's just dealing with the rest of the stuff that goes with it that can get frustrating. Let's face it—a person only needs just so many sets of deer antlers on the wall. And yet, if you're like me, you hate to see all these beautiful creatures not being fully utilized.

If you're going to get serious about truly utilizing the generally discarded parts of hunting, then you might seriously consider purchasing a small "dorm size" freezer in which to store the "supplies" for your projects until you're ready to use them. They aren't that expensive and can sure make life easier when the next hunting season rolls around and the freezer is full of your "projects" and not meat!

So here you are—the first survival guide for those of us who live with a hunter and must cope with all those extra antlers and other non-edible parts. You're not going to get away from them, so you might as well figure out what you can *do* with them.

Enjoy!

This booklet is dedicated to all those spouses, partners and family members who faithfully take to the field in pursuit of whatever game is currently in season, but particularly to my own spouse, Mike. It is their dedication in anxiously and eagerly awaiting the opening of each new season that keeps the hunting tradition alive while also creating the need for this booklet.

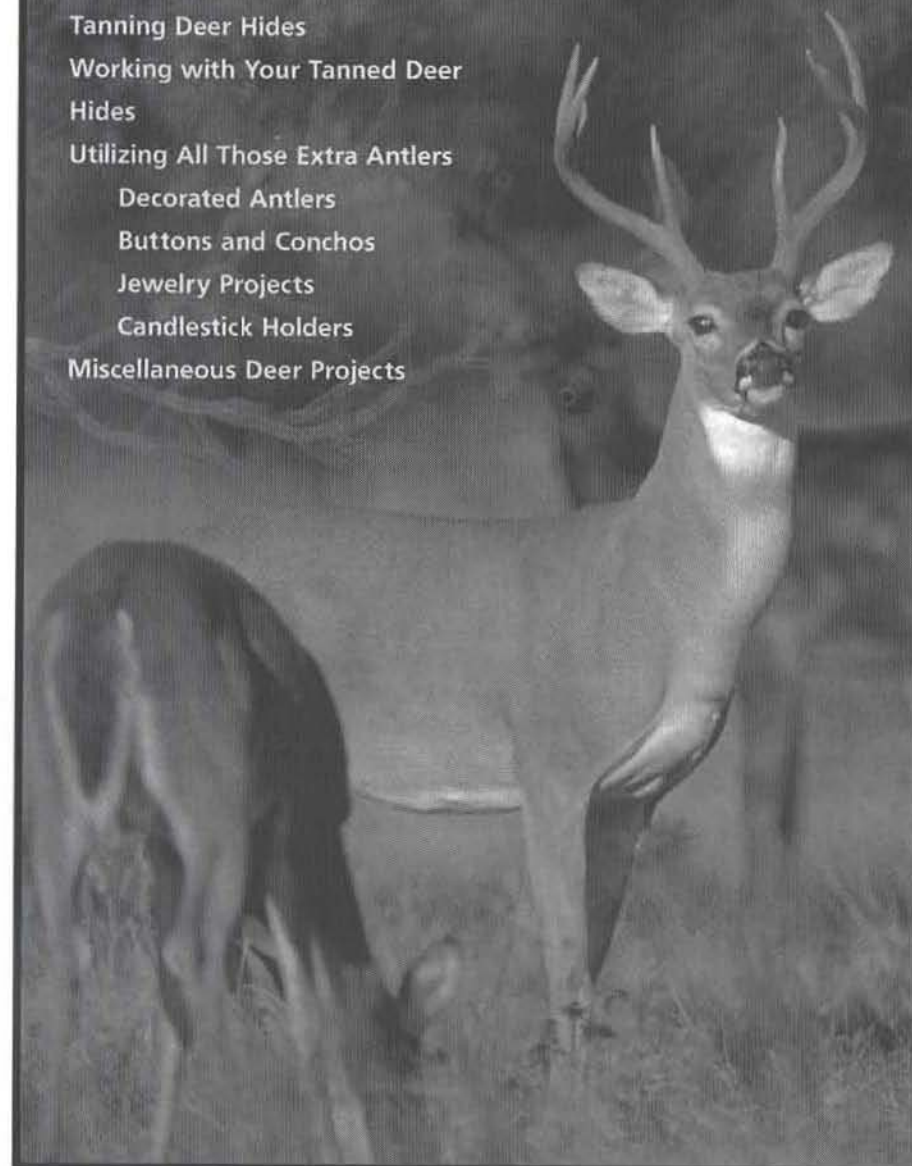


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## Chapter 1 Deer

Tanning Deer Hides  
 Working with Your Tanned Deer  
 Hides  
 Utilizing All Those Extra Antlers  
     Decorated Antlers  
     Buttons and Conchos  
     Jewelry Projects  
     Candlestick Holders  
 Miscellaneous Deer Projects





## Tanning Deer Hides at Home

White-tailed deer are beautiful animals. Early settlers to North America not only used the meat from deer, they also used the hides and antlers. Most of us nowadays don't tan leather at home, as we really don't depend upon the animals we hunt for our clothing, rugs and other leather products. Regardless, I just really had a hard time seeing these beautiful hides relegated to the "gut-pile." I was determined to figure out how to tan a deer hide. What I found is that there are lots of recipes—some practical and others not so practical. Leave it to *Readers Digest* to come up with one that uses ingredients that are cheap, easy to come by and non-toxic.

There are lots of reasons for tanning a hide at home. Tanning a deer hide at home is one more way you can share with your children and grandchildren your love of the outdoors, the beauty of these wonderful animals and the conservation ethic of using what you harvest. In addition, it is a wonderful way to preserve forever that first hunt, whether doe or buck. Nothing beats getting up on a cold morning, sliding out of bed and sinking your feet into a soft, warm, deerskin rug—one that you harvested and tanned yourself.

### MATERIALS

#### Soaking Solution

Large plastic trash can

1 ounce borax per gallon of water

#### Fleshing

Wheel barrow or other slanting surface

4-5 pounds of salt per hide (canning/pickling salt works great)

*Optional:* Rubber gloves, especially for children can be very nice.

#### Tanning Solution

Large plastic trash can

Boat paddle, broom stick, etc. for stirring solution

10 gallons of water

5 pounds of salt

2 pounds (32 ounces) of alum (check first aid section or ask your pharmacist to order)

### DIRECTIONS

1. Before the hide can be tanned, it must first be fleshed. To make this easier, mix the ingredients for the soaking solution together in a large 30-gallon trash can. Usually about 10 gallons of soaking solution is plenty. You will need enough solution so that the hide gets thoroughly soaked, and can be easily stirred around. You can soak up to 5 deer hides in this amount. Soak 12 hours or overnight.
2. The next day, remove the hides from the borax soaking solution and rinse thoroughly. Placing the hides in the driveway or over a clothesline and hosing them off works great.
3. Place the hides flesh side up on a flat surface. Picnic tables work just fine. Generously coat the flesh side with salt. As the salt soaks in, pour on more. An average of 4-5 pounds of salt per hide is about usual. Be generous. Salt is the cheapest ingredient, and the more moisture you can remove, the easier the fleshing will be, and the better the hide will tan.
4. Fold the hide in half, flesh side to flesh side. Then roll the hide and place it on a slanting surface. A wheel barrow works great, as it also contains the water that drains out. (If you have dogs, this is the point at which you might want to consider putting a board or other cover over the hides while they drain.) Let the hides drain overnight.
5. The next day, place the hides on a flat surface and begin fleshing the hide. You can use a fleshing knife, a butcher knife, drawknife or anything else that allows you to remove the flesh. Remove as much of the membrane as you possibly can. The cleaner you get the hide, the better it will tan. Edges will be difficult to get clean, but can always be cut off after the hide is tanned.
6. Once the hide is fleshed, mix up the tanning solution in a plastic trash can. Put the hide in the solution and stir well to make sure no air bubbles remain and that the hide is thoroughly submerged. Up to 5 hides can be tanned at once. Stir once or twice daily for about a week. Check the edges of the hide to make sure the color is uniform all the way through. This particular tanning solution is not going to hurt the hide if it is left in after tanning is complete, but be careful not to remove the hide *before* the process is complete.
7. **Finishing the hide.** Remove the hide from the tanning solution. Rinse the hide thoroughly with fresh water. As before, the garden hose works great for this. Hang the hide over a wooden railing or over two lines on a clothes



line and it dry. (Again, watch your dogs at this point). Depending upon the weather, this can take anywhere from one day to as long as three.

8. When the hide is just about dry, it is time to start working it to soften it up. If you find you misjudged the drying time and your hide is already completely dry, just re-dampen it by sponging water on the flesh side. At this point the object is to break down the fibers that keep the hide stiff. This can be accomplished by stretching the hide, pulling back and forth over a wooden railing or even by beating it with a mallet. This step is the most time-consuming, so be patient. Add neat's foot oil or other leather softening lotion to the hide and rub it in well. Continue to work the hide until it is as soft as you'd like it.

Start this process on a Friday night, let the hide tan during the week, and by the following Sunday you should have a finished deer hide rug.



This process will never make a hide that will be as soft as most of the commercial tanning processes, so don't expect to make jackets and such out of your hide. Does will tan up the nicest because their hides are thinner. Very old bucks will probably never be very soft, but they'll make great rugs! The more you walk on your hide, the softer it will become.

The cost is essentially the same for tanning one hide or five, so you might want to put your hides in the freezer until you have enough to make it "worth your while." The tanning solution can be reused, so this also allows you to stretch out your tanning process.

*Examples of deer hide and antler projects. From back to front: Bola tie, deer-skin purse, candlestick holders, necklace, hide bottom chair, deer hide rug.*

## Working With Your Tanned Deer Hides

*I will be the first to admit it—you only need just so many deer skin rugs. After you've got one next to every bed in the house, draped over the backs of all the sofas and loveseats, both at home and at the camphouse—then what? You move on to bigger and better uses, of course! Try some of these...*

**Deerhide Purse.** Using a plastic canvas purse form (available at Hobby Lobby or Michael's) as a pattern, trace the pattern on the backside of the hide. Cut it out, punch holes around the edges and lace it together. You can easily add a strap or handle to it. Use deer antler conchos to decorate it.

**Hidebottom Chairs.** Who says you have to use only cowhide for the seats in chairs! Deerhide works just as well. I suggest that you cut out a pattern first before you start cutting the hide. Since you will be lacing this underneath, use some cheap fabric for your pattern. It will drape better, and you can reuse it later on. When you've got it just right, trace it on the still damp hide and cut it out.

To make the lacing, cut a continuous strip of hide from the pieces you aren't going to be using for the seat. Again, it should be damp.

Place the hide over the chair bottom and secure with clamps. Turn the chair upside down and make three small slits on each of the four sides for lacing. Leaving about a 6-8 inch "tail," start to lace the seat in place. The secret is to go from one side to a point on the other side that is as far away as possible, keeping the hide as taut as possible. Repeat this until you have laced through all 12 slits. As the hide and the lacing dries it will shrink and tighten up the seat bottom.

If the seat doesn't turn out quite as tight as you'd like, just get the whole thing wet again and tighten up the lacing. About the third chair and you'll be pretty darn good at this!

**Upholstering Other Items in Deer Hide.** One of my best looking projects was a chest I purchased at Wal-Mart on clearance at the end of the hunting season. It had a cheap camo fabric top, and a picture of some Yankee deer on the front. I took off the camo top and the picture of the Yankee deer (it now hangs in the garage over the workbench). I replaced both with deer hide, using a staple gun to hold the hide in place.



Unfortunately, there were a few small holes in the hide. It would be nice to say that was where the deer was shot, but such was not the case—it was the result of a slip of the knife. But by taking a piece of hide of the same coloring and direction, I was able to glue a “patch” in the hole that even I have to look carefully to find.



**Tying Fishing Flies.** Yup, people actually BUY little 2" x 2" squares of deer hide to cut up for use in tying fishing flies. At about a dollar a square inch, I figure I've got at least half a million dollars worth of fly tying material lying around the house!

But, since no one is beating a path to our door to purchase deer hide, I've been using it myself to tie flies. Might as well! I've also given pieces of hide to some of my fishing fanatic friends who also tie their own flies. So you might consider brightening the day of your favorite fly fishermen and give them a large chunk of deer hide. They'll love you for it!

## Utilizing All Those Extra Antlers

*Sadly, a person only needs a certain number of mounted trophy antlers, and sets of rattling horns. Still—nobody throws them away just because you have all you can use. Excess antlers deserve better than being relegated to a cardboard box in the garage!*

### Decorated Antlers

A set—even a mismatched set—of antlers decorated up can make a very interesting object d'art for those smaller spaces or offices that can't quite handle a full mount.

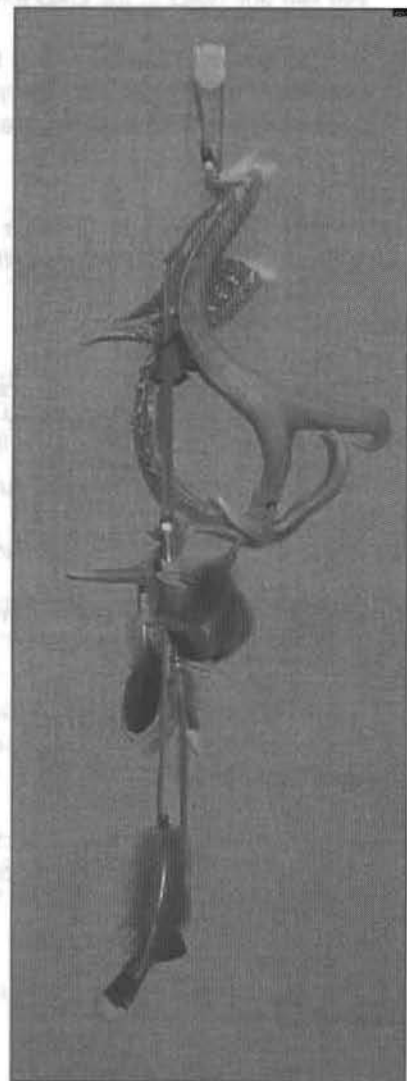
North American Indians often decorated deer antlers for use in various ceremonies. You can recreate similar antlers with items you probably already have around the house.

### MATERIALS

Two antlers  
Plastic pony beads or large glass beads  
Leather lacing  
Feathers (ducks, pheasant, turkey, etc.)  
Stamp pad ink  
Dental pick, awl, or similar item (nut picks work fairly well)

### DIRECTIONS

1. Using the dental pick or awl, scratch your design into the sides of the antler as desired.
2. Darken in the design by rubbing stamp pad ink over the etching, and wipe off excess.
3. Wrap short pieces of varying lengths of the leather lacing around tines of your choice.



- Slide the plastic pony beads on to the bottom ends of the leather pieces.
- Slide feathers of your choice up into the beads so that the beads hold them into place.
- Attach both antlers together (similar to a set of rattling horns!) in whatever method you choose. You can wrap leather lacing around both of them, or you can drill holes in the ends and then put the leather lacing through.
- Before hanging, hold the antlers by the lacing, adjust them so that they hang in a pleasing manner. Adjust any feathers and lacing that are going in directions other than the ones you want them to.

### Buttons and Conchos

*One of my favorite uses of antlers is as buttons and conchos. Once you start using one or two, you'll find yourself using them on all sorts of things.*

#### DIRECTIONS

##### Conchos

- Decide how big you want your conchos and locate the proper place on the antler that will give you that size.
- Secure the antler in a vise and cut it into 1/4" to 1/2" thick disks.
- Locate the approximate center, and drill two holes.
- Sand the edges of the concho smooth with a grinder or with sandpaper.

##### Buttons

- Following the same procedure, slice the disks thinner. You will need to be more careful with the thinner disks because they are easier to break while working with them.
- If you're making a specific project such as a hunting coat, it's a good idea to hold off on making the buttonholes until you can match the size with the size of the resulting buttons.

## Jewelry Projects

### Antler and Gemstone Necklace

*With all the parties that take place around the opening of hunting season, this is a definite "must have." It's attractive, unusual and highly unlikely that anyone else will be wearing one!*

#### MATERIALS

Deer antlers

Approximately 24 8-10 mm round beads (tiger eye and jasper look fabulous).

The number needed will depend upon the length of your necklace.

1 package of 2" eye-pins

1 package of 1/8" jump-rings

Approximately 48 small metal spacer beads. The number needed will depend upon the length of your necklace.

Jewelry pliers or small needlenose pliers.

#### DIRECTIONS

What you are essentially doing is making bugle (tube-shaped) beads ... of epic proportions, but bugle beads nonetheless. Choose your antlers carefully. The straighter the tines, the easier this project will be.

##### Cutting the beads

- With a soft lead pencil, mark the position of your intended cuts.
- Secure the antler in a vise and cut along the straightest tines you can find. Cut segments out of the antlers that are no longer than about 1-1/2" inches long. You will need about 14-16 of them.

##### Drilling the holes

*This step is definitely easier with two people, and a drill press makes it much easier to control your progress.*

- Stand the antler piece on end. Carefully, carefully, drill down through the antler piece. Holes will not necessarily be centered on both ends, but that's just part of the charm!
- Sand the edges of the beads smooth on a grinder, or with sandpaper.



Assembling the necklace

5. Thread a spacer bead, an antler bead and a spacer bead onto an eye-pin. With the jewelry pliers, form a loop and secure. Repeat with the rest of your antler beads.
6. Arrange your antler beads, spacer beads and your gemstone beads into a design of your choosing. When you're satisfied with the design, attach each of your beads to the other with a jump-ring.

**Bolo Tie****MATERIALS**

Base of one shed antler  
Metal bolo slide  
Bolo cord with tips  
Hot glue

**DIRECTIONS**

1. Slice off the base of the antler. Leaving the outside edge "as-is," smooth off the end that was attached at the skull with either a grinder or sandpaper.
2. With the hot glue, glue the slide to the cut side of the antler base. Clip the slide onto the cord.
3. Decorate the front side of the bolo if desired. Etch and stain a design, glue on a "bird point" arrowhead or just leave plain.

**Antler Scrimshaw Tie Tack or Pendant**

*Scrimshaw is a traditional art form where drawings are etched onto teeth or tusks of various types of mammals such as elephants, whales and walruses. Just about all scrimshaw items today are carved into composite ivory substitutes, antique piano keys or other types of bone. Well, why not deer antlers?*

**MATERIALS**

Antler slice  
Fine sandpaper  
Tie tack back (available at most craft stores)  
Hot glue or epoxy  
Stamp pad ink  
Dental pick, awl or similar item (nut picks work fairly well)

**DIRECTIONS**

1. Carefully sand the antler slice until it is extremely smooth.
2. Using the dental pick or awl, scratch your design into the antler.
3. Darken in the design by rubbing stamp pad ink over the etching, wiping off any excess ink. The smoother the surface is to begin with, the easier this will be. Seal with spray acrylic, clear nail polish or even extra-hold hairspray.
4. If making a tie tack, glue the Tie Tack back onto the reverse side when the sealant is dry.
5. For a pendant, drill a small hole at the top, attach a jump ring and chain or cord.

**Candlestick Holders**

*Catalogs want a small fortune for these, but they aren't that difficult to make yourself. They don't have to be trophy antlers to look nice.*

**MATERIALS**

2 antlers  
Wooden or metal candle cups (craft stores carry these)  
Screws — 1 per candle cup

**DIRECTIONS**

1. Find the most stable position for each antler, either tines up or tines down. The number of cups depends upon how many places you can attach them so that the candle will be upright and stable.
2. Attach the candle cup to the antler by screwing it on from the inside of the candle cup.
3. If the candle cup is wooden, paint or stain it.
4. Polish the antlers with a light coat of linseed or other appropriate oil.



## Miscellaneous Deer Projects

For unfinished wood projects, use scraps of deer hide to decorate things like the top of small jewelry boxes.

Deer hide makes an excellent material when preparing dried turkey tail fans for display.

Cover a picture frame with pieces of deer hide.

Replace the slide on the hurricane string of your hat with a deer antler concho.

Hollow out a piece of antler for a bandanna or scarf slide.

Then of course, there are the deer antler drawer pulls, ceiling fan pulls and lamp cords pulls.

Once you get started, there's no end to what you can do with deer hides and antlers!

2. With the hair glue, glue the turkey tail fan onto the card.

3. Decorate the front of the card with the most attractive turkey tail fan you can find.

**Antler Sash:** Tie the Tack on the antler.

Scissors are a great tool for cutting the antler. Use the scissors to cut the antler into the shape you want. The antler should be about 1/2 inch thick and 1/2 inch wide. The antler should be about 1/2 inch thick and 1/2 inch wide.

**MATERIALS:**  
Antler (1/2 inch thick and 1/2 inch wide)  
Tack (1/2 inch thick and 1/2 inch wide)

The tack is a small piece of wood that is used to hold the antler in place. It is made of wood and is about 1/2 inch thick and 1/2 inch wide.

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## Chapter 2 Turkeys



Drying Your Turkey Tail Fan

Turkey Fan Beadwork

Creating Dried Arrangements with Turkey Feathers

Turkey Feather Wreath

Turkey Feather Earrings

## Drying Your Turkey Tail Fan

Drying a turkey tail fan is not that difficult although it is certainly easier with two people. The advantage of doing it in this manner is that you don't have to de-bone the fan. Nonetheless, the more meat you can remove prior to drying, the faster it will dry and the easier it will be to work with.

### MATERIALS

Large piece of cardboard  
Several long strips of cardboard  
Masking tape  
Borax

### DIRECTIONS

1. Spread the turkey tail out on the cardboard. Once you have it in the correct position on the cardboard, pour a generous amount of borax in the position where the skin is. Make sure the meat is well covered underneath with borax.
2. Spread the feathers out into the desired position. (This is where it's nice to have two people.) You don't want to tape the feathers into position, so this is where the cardboard strips come in.
3. Place the strips of cardboard over the various places in the fan where it is needed to hold it in place. Tape the cardboard strips to the cardboard.
4. Pour a generous amount of borax on exposed meat on top of the fan, and spread a lighter amount on top of the rest of the feathers to discourage bugs from nibbling at the feathers.
5. Allow the fan to dry for at least a month to 6 weeks. Replenish the borax as needed.

And now comes the fun part—decorating your turkey tail fan!

## Turkey Fan Beadwork

Turkey tail fans are exquisite. But personally, other than perhaps your first turkey, I really can't see having multiple trophy-type tail mounts all over the house. But of course, neither can I stand to see them thrown away. So instead of displaying them as trophies, I've been using them as decorations. Yes guys, there *is* a difference!

### MATERIALS

Dried turkey tail fan  
Brown or green felt  
Brown or green hand quilting thread. (Don't substitute thread because this type is a much thicker and sturdier thread.)  
1-2 "Value Packs" of the larger seed beads. They are often labeled "E" beads.  
1 concho (optional)  
Dish for putting the beads into while working  
Hot glue

### DIRECTIONS

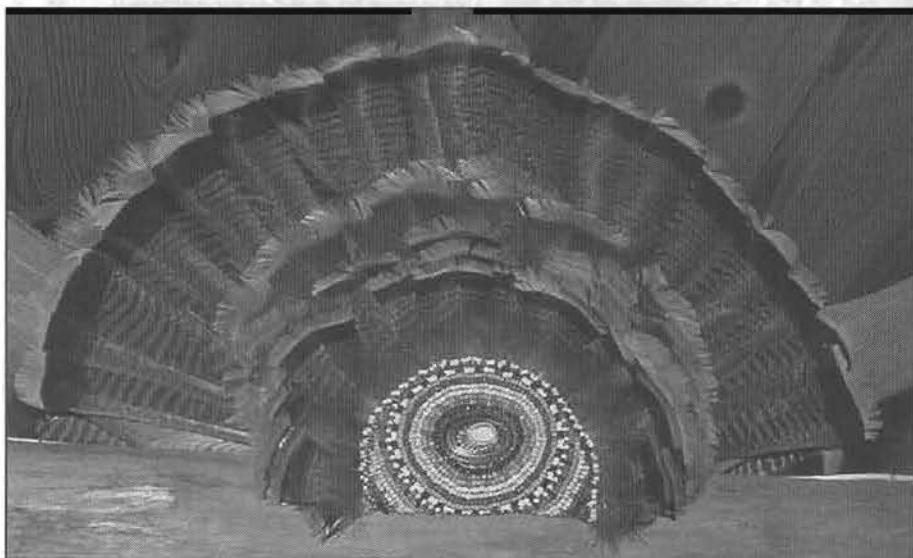
1. First step is to make the pattern for covering the bottom part of the fan. The general idea is to make a "tortilla" that will fit over the bottom of your fan to cover up the dried skin and where the feathers come together. You will probably want to give it a slight hourglass shape so that the "tortilla" doesn't stick out at the very bottom of the fan. Use paper to make your pattern.
2. Once you are satisfied with your pattern, use it to cut out the felt. It is the felt you are going to decorate and use to cover the bottom part of your fan.

Now you are ready to bead your design onto the felt. *There is a secret to beadwork.* Beads are strung on thread, the thread placed into position and then tacked down about every 2-3 beads. *You don't sew down each bead individually!*

3. Fold the felt in half and place it over the bottom of the turkey tail fan. You will not be beading the back, so determine the point at which your beading will no longer show and mark it with a line so you'll know where to stop.
4. Remove the turkey tail, but keep the felt folded in half. Place your concho in the center of the front half of the felt. Trace around it. (There is no point in gluing it down now, it will just come off!)



5. Thread your needle and come up from the bottom along the line you marked for the concho.
6. Thread on beads in whatever order you desire. Periodically place the thread around the line to make sure you are putting on enough beads.
7. When you have enough beads on your thread to go completely around the line, go back down through the original hole (or as close to it as possible) and pull the thread tight.
8. Bring your thread back to the front and tack down the threaded beads about every 2-3 beads. Row 1 should now be complete!
9. Come up with your needle and thread close to the previous row and repeat the process. You need not tack down each row as you go. You can actually tack down two rows at a time. More than two rows and the thread begins to show.
10. Attach the concho to the center with hot glue. Glue the beaded felt to the turkey tail.
11. You may hang your turkey tail fan by using a loop and a wreath hanger, hanging it from a loop on the back or even using velcro and hot glue!



## Creating Dried Arrangements with Turkey Feathers

*This is a messy project. There is no way to be terribly neat, so just be prepared to deal with it. The results however, are very, very lovely.*

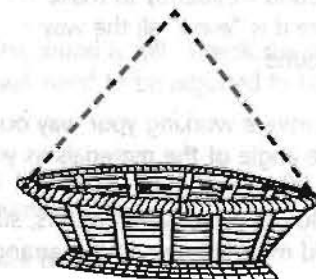
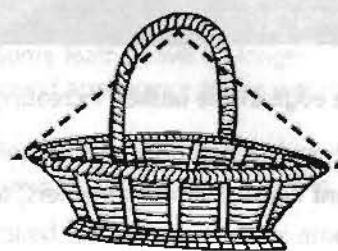
### MATERIALS

Turkey feathers, both body feathers and tail feathers  
 Dried baby's breath or statice  
 Other types of dried materials such as reeds, wheat, grasses, etc.  
 Florist foam (enough to fill basket or container)  
 Gray excelsior or peat moss  
 Wire cutters  
 Scissors  
 Pocket knife  
 Basket or other container

### DIRECTIONS

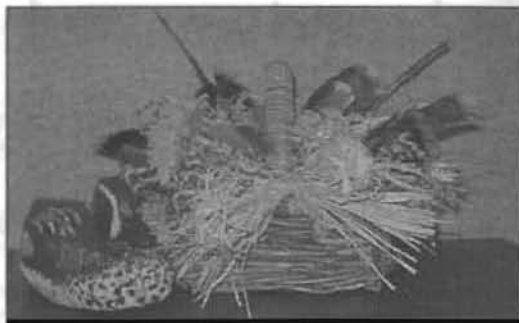
1. Place the florist foam into the bottom of the basket. You may need to cut some of it in order to fill in the entire bottom.
2. Cover the florist foam with the excelsior or peat moss.
3. Pull small twigs of the dried baby's breath off the large branch it comes on and insert it into the bottom of the basket. Repeat this until you have the entire bottom covered with the baby's breath.

Now you're ready to get serious. What you do next depends upon your container. If you're using a basket with a handle, start working from the edges to the middle. If your basket does not have a handle, then start from the center and work towards the edges. Turn the arrangement around frequently to make sure it looks balanced from all sides. The basic idea is to visualize a triangle. The object is to fill in that triangle with feathers and other dried plants.



**For Baskets With Handles:**

1. Insert small body feathers around the outside edge of the basket. The curve of the feathers should be down and all feathers should be at an angle that is almost flat.
2. Next, start working with slightly larger feathers. Work in circles around the basket, but from the outside in. Angle the feathers so that they are not poked in straight up, but rather at an angle.
3. Finally, use the large tail feathers and wing feathers. Feathers should be straight up next to the handle, angling progressively downward towards the edge.
4. Using the same procedure of straight up towards the center of the basket and increasing the angle as you work towards the outside, start inserting the dried grasses, twigs, wheat, etc.
5. Fill in any "empty" areas with extra feathers, baby's breath or dried vegetation.

**For Baskets without Handles:**

1. Follow the same procedures outlined above, but in the reverse order.
2. Start at the center and place your tallest feathers, dried plants, etc. Turn the basket around frequently to make sure it is "even" all the way around.
3. Continue working your way out towards the edge of the basket, increasing the angle of the materials as you go.
4. Add other types of feathers, such as pheasant feathers or duck feathers, to add more interest to the arrangement.

**Turkey Feather Wreath**

*This is a truly stunning project! It is adapted from the January/February 2003 issue of Turkey Call magazine. If you have problems removing the tail feathers from the fan, stand the fan up in about 3 inches of boiling water and "cook" for about 10 minutes. The feathers will pull out easily. Don't make the water too deep because melted turkey fat in the water will get on the feathers.*

**MATERIALS**

1 small (about 10") straw wreath form  
 About 40-50 gobbler tail feathers  
 About 10-20 smaller tail feathers (those just in front of the fan)  
 About 10-20 body feathers (to fill in any "holes")

**DIRECTIONS**

1. Place the wreath on a flat surface where it can be easily turned. Determine where the wreath touches the table. This is the level where you will start inserting the turkey feathers.
2. Start by inserting the first four feathers at a 45 degree angle, one each at the top, bottom, and both sides.
3. Fill in with a feather between each of these points. Again, make sure all feathers go in at an angle of about 45 degrees.
4. Keep filling in around and around until the first round is full. Check the shape. Some feathers will be longer or shorter and will need to be adjusted to keep a round appearance to the wreath.
5. Repeat this procedure and work towards the top of the wreath. As you get towards the center, start using the smaller feathers.

If desired, add a bow or other arrangement to the base of the wreath.



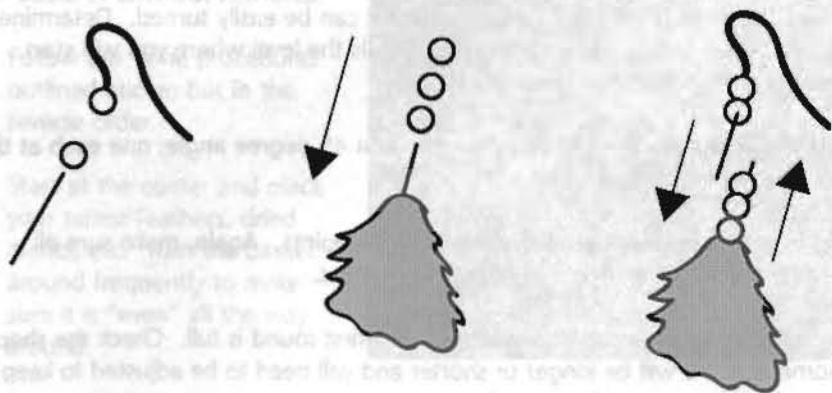
## Turkey Feather Earrings

### MATERIALS

- 2 equal sized body feathers
- Pair of earring wires
- 2 eye-pins
- 2-6 beads, depending upon size
- Jewelry pliers or small needlenose pliers
- Scissors

### DIRECTIONS

1. Attach the eye-pin to the earring wire. Cut off all but about 1/2".
2. Slide enough beads on the quill point of the feather to cover it up.
3. Starting from the top, slide the eye-pin down through the beads to secure the feather to the ear-wire.
4. Put a drop of glue at the top and at the base of the beads to hold everything in place. Repeat with the other earring.



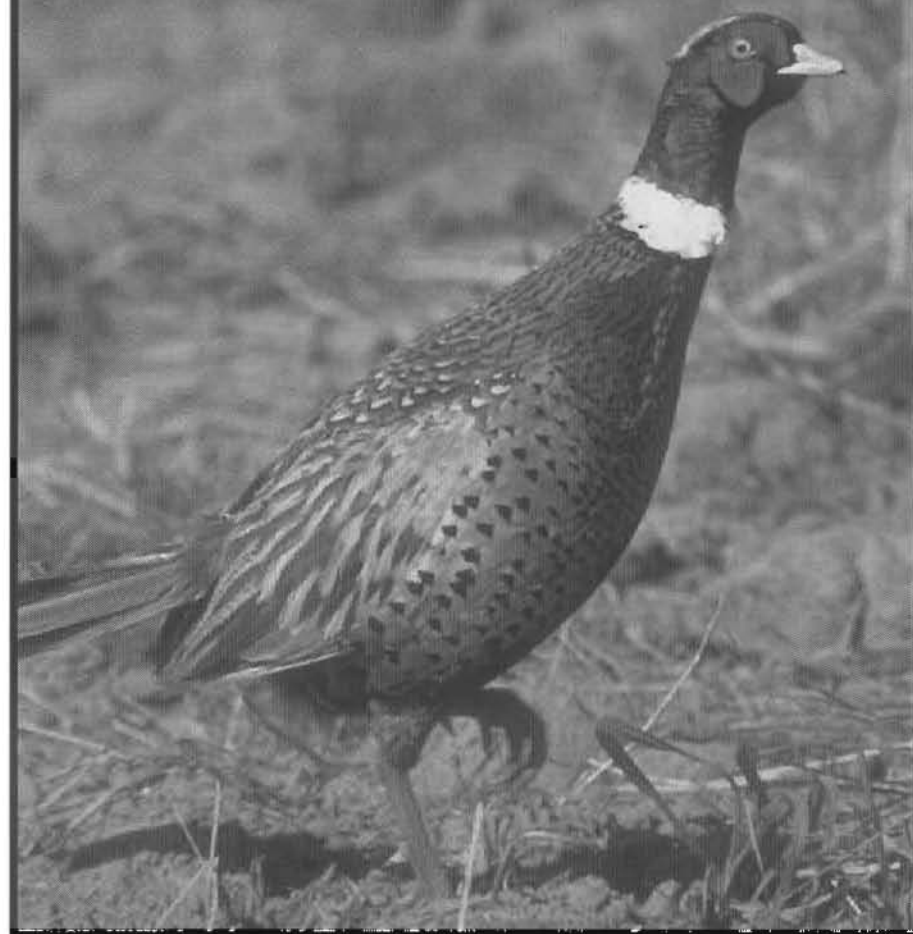
## Chapter 3 Pheasants

Drying Your Pheasant Skins

Pheasant Feather Wreath

Decorating With Pheasant Feathers

Miscellaneous Pheasant Feather Projects



## Drying Your Pheasant Skins

Fortunately, there isn't a whole lot to drying pheasant skins. The hard part is getting the hunter to take just a little more care in skinning them.

### MATERIALS

Borax (preferred) or salt (canning salt is very convenient to use)  
Large sheet of cardboard

### DIRECTIONS

1. Generously spread a large amount of borax onto the cardboard.
2. Skin side down, rub the pheasant skin around in the borax to make sure it is completely covered. Sprinkle a light coating of borax on the feathers.
3. Weight the skin down by placing another sheet of cardboard on top and setting something heavy like a fishing tackle box on top of it.
4. Check the skin about once a week for up to 6 weeks. Add more borax if necessary.
5. As the skin gets drier, if you want it to be flexible, you will need to flex it a bit before you put in back down to continue the drying process.

An alternative method is **freeze drying**, which is actually nothing more than deliberate freezer burn. This method is nice if you aren't going to be working with the skins for some time, and is infinitely easier ... it just takes a whole lot longer!

6. Put the skins in a plastic trash bag, add some borax and shake well. Put the skins into the freezer (another reason for wanting your own private "crafting freezer") for 6 months to a year. You will need to thaw out the skins before working with them.

## Pheasant Feather Wreath

The first time I saw one of these I couldn't believe how stunning it looked. Neither could I believe the \$450 price tag! The variety of different colors of pheasant feathers makes this an easy project and enables you to use those smaller pieces of skin.

### MATERIALS

Pheasant skins with feathers  
T-pins  
Small straw wreath  
Hot glue

### DIRECTIONS

1. You are only going to be covering the front and sides of the wreath. Keep the plastic wrapping on the wreath. It gives the project a foundation for the T-pins, and keeps the back of the wreath from "shedding" straw all over the place.
2. Take your pieces of pheasant skin and wrap them around the wreath. Secure the pieces of hide with the T-pins.
3. Keep adding pheasant skin until you have completely covered the wreath. Be sure you keep all the feathers going in more or less the same direction.
4. Add the tail feathers to the bottom of the wreath and cover with more pheasant skin or a raffia bow. Use hot glue as necessary to secure any pieces of skin that resist staying put.





## Decorating With Pheasant Feathers

As soon as I discovered that the craft stores were charging about \$2 per pheasant tail feather, it was a whole lot easier to convince Mike that all my feathers were not just so much junk taking up room in the freezer that could be better utilized by meat. I think it was at this point that I got my own freezer...

### Pheasant Feather Christmas Tree Ornaments

#### MATERIALS

Pheasant feathers other than tail feathers (look for feathers with a good curve to them)  
2-3 of the smaller tail feathers  
Styrofoam ball  
White glue or hot glue  
Loop for hanging

#### DIRECTIONS

In this project you will work from the bottom of the ornament to the top, overlapping feathers from the new row on top of feathers of the previous row.

1. Starting at what will be the bottom of the ornament, take 2-3 feathers and arrange them so that the tops overlap each other on the bottom of the styrofoam ball. Use the curve in the feathers to help cover the ornament.
2. Mark where the shafts are and spread a thin layer of glue around the styrofoam ball. Attach the shafts of the feathers into this glue layer so that the entire lower area is covered by the feathers.
3. Take another 2-3 feathers and overlap them so that they cover up the shafts of the previous row. Mark where the shafts are. Spread glue at this height and attach another row of feathers.
4. Repeat this process as you work up the ornament. Use smaller feathers as necessary to fill in any gaps.
5. Take several of the smaller tail feathers and insert them into the bottom of the ornament. Attach a loop, and the ornament is ready to hang.

### Pheasant Feather Picture Frame

#### MATERIALS

Pheasant skin with feathers attached  
Hot glue  
Ready-made picture frame

#### DIRECTIONS

1. Making sure your feathers go more or less in the same direction, glue pieces of feathered pheasant skin so that you cover up the frame.

## Miscellaneous Pheasant Feather Projects

Take pieces of feathered pheasant skin and accent the corners and edges of existing items such as mirrors and lampshades.

Use the pheasant feathers in dried arrangements along with turkey feathers.

Cover the bottom of dried turkey tail fans with pheasant feathers.

Use the feathers to tie fly fishing flies.

## Chapter 4

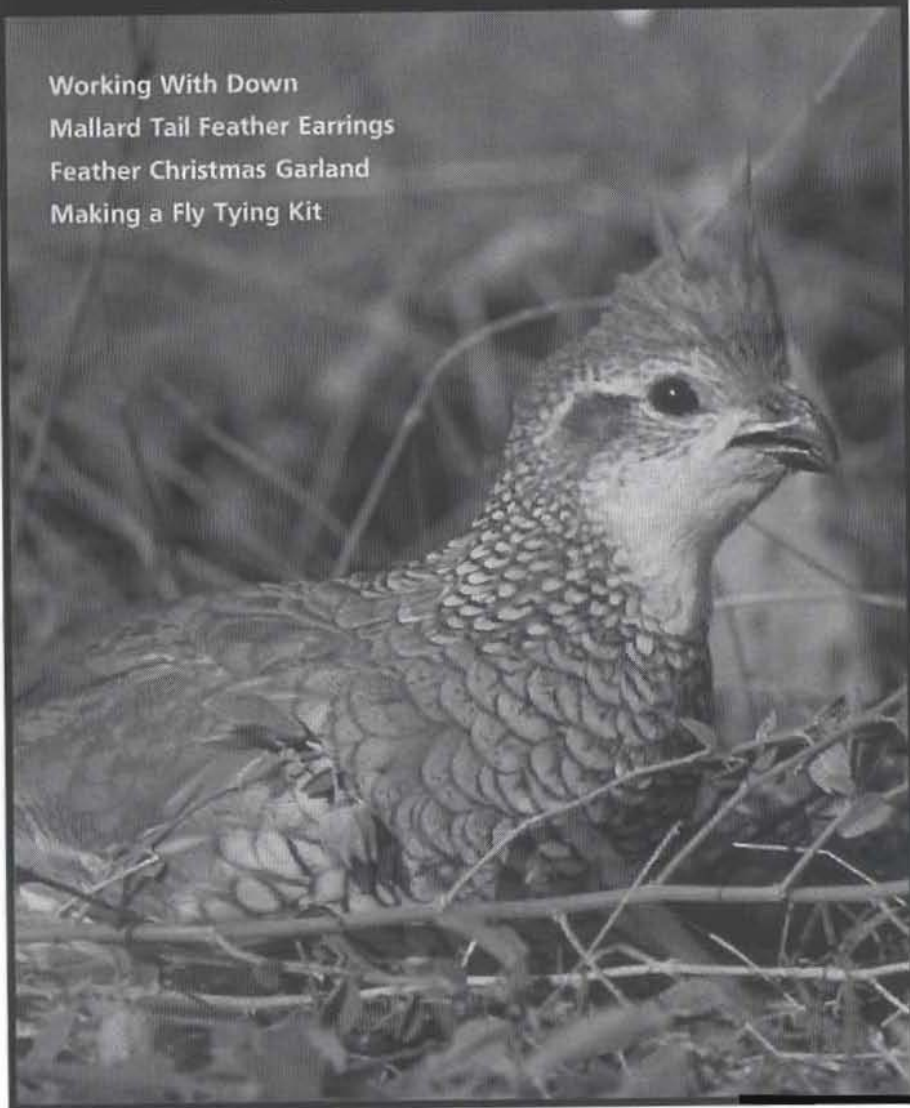
# Ducks, Geese, Quail & Doves

### Working With Down

Mallard Tail Feather Earrings

Feather Christmas Garland

Making a Fly Tying Kit



## Working With Down

I admit it—I don't know how all those pioneer ladies managed to have the patience to keep up with all the down and feathers needed to make something like mattresses and such, but apparently they did. I'm not as choosy with my down. Down is down. It matters not whether it came from a duck, a goose or a turkey. It all works the same way. The itty bitty feathers from doves and quail can also be added to the mix of down to help you get enough to start working with.

The hardest part about working with down is storing it until you have enough. It always seems to be going everywhere except where I'm trying to put it. I'm partial to large zip lock bags because it's easier to transfer the down from the bag to the project. Notice I didn't say it easy—just easier.

A hand-warmer isn't a major deal, but it's a good place to start and doesn't require huge amounts of down—although it may seem as if it does while you're making it.

### MATERIALS

#### Inner Core:

1/2 yd of 300 thread count cotton fabric (twin bed sheets will work if you have trouble finding this type of cotton fabric)

#### Outer Cover

1/2 yd of fabric of your choice  
About 2-3 large zip lock bags of down

### DIRECTIONS

#### Cutting the Fabric:

Cut from each fabric two pieces that measure 12" x 20"

#### Assembling the Hand-warmer:

The basic idea here is to make two envelopes, one inside the other. The inner one will contain the down, while the outer one helps to prevent the down from escaping. Stitching through both these layers creates "baffles" that keep the down evenly distributed.



1. Right sides together, sew the two pieces of cotton together on three sides, leaving one end open. Do not turn right side out.
2. Repeat this with the fabric to be used as the covering. Make your seam allowance  $1/8$ " smaller so that the cover will slip easily over the inner "envelope." Turn right side out and press.
3. Slip the inner envelope inside the cover. Smooth out any wrinkles to make the fit as flat as possible. To know where to sew the hand-warmer closed, fold over to the inside  $5/8$ " and press.

*Now comes the "fun" part—adding the down!*

4. No good suggestions on how to do this, except to warn you not to do it outside, and don't let the cats help you—they will if they can. Push the down as far down to the bottom as you can.
5. As carefully as possible, sew the hand-warmer closed. It should now look like a small, skimpy pillow. The next step is to make the "baffles" that will keep the down from shifting.
6. Distribute the down as evenly as possible. With a large basting stitch, sew down through the middle of the hand-warmer. You should now (hopefully!) have half the down on one side of the seam, and half the down on the other side of the seam.
7. Repeat this, going through the middle in the opposite direction. You should now have four squares, each filled with approximately the same amount of down.
8. Stitch through the middle of each of these squares going in each direction. You should have 16 squares—four rows of four squares.
9. Finally, fold your hand-warmer in half, overlap the two ends just enough to stitch them together to form a circle.

To wash, use cold water on a gentle cycle. Dry in the dryer on low heat. Add a tennis ball to the dryer. This speeds up drying by keeping the down from clumping.

## Mallard Tail Feather Earrings

*Now these are really, really easy to make and you sure don't have to worry about how many other ladies will be wearing them when you put them on to go somewhere.*

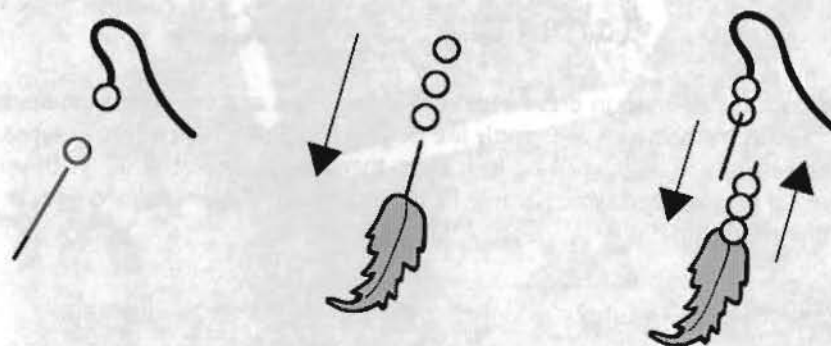
### MATERIALS

2 curly Mallard drake tail feathers  
Pair of earring wires  
2 eye-pins  
2-6 beads, depending upon size  
Jewelry pliers or small needle-nose pliers  
Scissors

### DIRECTIONS

1. Attach the eye-pin to the earring wire. Cut off all but about  $1/2$ ".
2. Slide enough beads on the quill point of the feather to cover it up.
3. Starting from the top, slide the eye-pin down through the beads to secure the feather to the ear-wire.
4. Put a drop of glue at the top and at the base of the beads to hold everything in place. Repeat with the other earring.

*Now see, that really was easy, wasn't it!*



## Feather Christmas Garland

This project started out a few years ago when I stumbled upon some gorgeous (and very pricey) feather garlands. The feathers looked like they might have been pheasant, but in reality were probably just rooster feathers. I decided I could make one myself cheaper. I can, but now that I have, I'm not going to. After making one myself, the price seemed a whole lot more reasonable.

### MATERIALS

An assortment of feathers: primarily pheasants, ducks and geese  
5 feet of macramé cord or similar twine  
Thin jewelry or florist wire  
Hot glue

### DIRECTIONS

1. Form a loop on both ends of the cord using the wire to tie it into shape. This forms loops for hanging.
2. Starting at one end, carefully spread a circle of hot glue around about an inch worth of the cord. **Carefully**, because of course hot glue is hot, press feathers into the glue. Feathers should point **towards** the loop on the end you are working from.
3. Move up the cord a short distance and repeat this procedure. These feathers should be close enough to cover the quills of the previous row of feathers.
4. Keep adding rows of feathers until you have the entire cord covered.

## Making a Fly Tying Kit

Wood duck feathers are in great demand for tying flies and are quite high dollar items. Quail feathers look amazingly like bug wings. Put all the different types, including deer hide, into small zip lock bags, then into a decorative tin. With very little effort on your part, your favorite fly tying fan will be overwhelmed with your marvelous gift.

## Chapter 5 The Finishing Touches

Shotgun Shell Christmas Lights  
Camo Pillowcases  
Making a Camo Skirt  
Camo Placemats and Napkins



Keep snapshots of all your projects. You can share them with beginners and inspire them to explore wild-crafting!



## Shotgun Shell Christmas Lights

*We've all seen these in the various sporting goods catalogs and specialty stores. And they're always at a very high dollar price, so most people just get one or two strings as a gift or novelty to put up in the office. Now, with a little cooperation from your favorite duck, goose, pheasant and/or turkey hunter, you can have enough for the entire house.*

### MATERIALS

Cleaned, dried shotgun shell hulls (one per light)  
String of clear Christmas lights long enough to use all your hulls  
(test the string first to make sure all the lights work)  
Multi-tool or small pair of pliers

### DIRECTIONS

#### Preparation:

1. The first step is to make sure your hulls are clean and dry. You can clean them in a number of ways, including one at a time by hand.

The best way is to put the hulls into a pillowcase, secure it, and put them into the washing machine. If you can stand the racket, you can also put them into the dryer on low heat, but it's probably not worth it unless you're going out for dinner.

An alternative method of cleaning the hulls is to put them into the dishwasher. Using only the top rack, put one hull over each prong. Don't use the bottom rack because the water pressure from below will send them all over the dishwasher. Not fun!

2. Using a silver cleaning cloth, brass cleaner, or a wire sanding brush, polish the metal end on each one until it's shiny.

#### Assembling the Lights:

3. If you're lucky enough to have access to a re-loader, then 90% of your work is already done. Just "re-load" the hulls without anything in them.

4. If however, you're like me and don't have access to one, then you'll have to close up the tops by hand. To do this, use the multi-tool or pliers to squeeze the crimps back into the top of the hull. Once you have them pretty much back into shape, you can turn the hull upside down on a cutting board and push it the rest of the way in.
5. Carefully take the tip of the multi-tool (or heck, a pencil will also work) and push the top crimping down inside the hull *just enough* to slip over the light bulb on the string of lights. Repeat this until you have a hull over each of the lights.
6. To replace a bulb, push the plastic crimping down just a bit more until you can pull the light out of the hull.



Shotgun shell Christmas lights and feather garland

## Camo Pillowcases

I've learned over the years that there are some things in life for which you should just smile and pay the asking price. But then there are others for which there really is no reason you can't make them yourself and for a lot less! Pillowcases are definitely one of those items. They're just too easy not to make yourself. While camo fabric is obviously the fabric of choice, you shouldn't limit yourself to just that. Other fabrics look just as nice. This project is also a great way to use up scrap fabric.

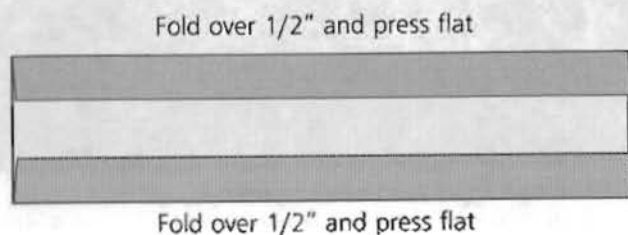
### MATERIALS (per pillowcase)

1 yd fabric of your choice  
1/3 yd. Contrasting fabric

### DIRECTIONS

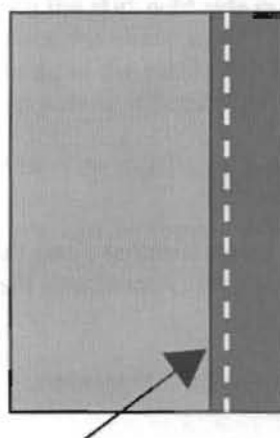
1. From the main piece of fabric, cut one piece that measures 40" wide x 23" long. I think it's easier to cut this by leaving the fabric folded and cutting it 20" x 23", but it really doesn't matter. If you're making more than one pillowcase, use this piece as the pattern to cut the rest.
2. From the contrasting fabric cut one piece that measures 40" wide by 12" long. Again, I find it easier to leave the fabric folded and cut it 20" x 12". If making more than one pillowcase, use this to cut your other pieces before you start sewing.
3. At the ironing board: Take the piece of contrasting fabric that is going to be the "cuff" on your pillowcase and lay it out flat, wrong side up. Fold over and iron 1/2" on both of the 40" sides. See Figure 1.

Figure 1



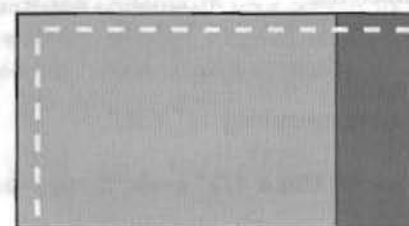
4. Next, with wrong sides to the inside, fold this piece in half so that it measures 40" x 5 1/2". Press.
5. Carefully, carefully, carefully pin this cuff to one edge of the main pillowcase piece, overlapping it by about 1/2". The pieces should be the same width. If they aren't, adjust your pins so that they are.
6. Before sewing, fold the pillowcase in half to make sure the cuff will match on both ends. If it doesn't, adjust it so that it does.
7. From the right side: with a 1/8" in seam, carefully sew the cuff onto the main pillowcase, removing the pins as you go. See Figure 2. When finished, turn the pillowcase over to make sure you caught both sides of the cuff. If you missed a spot, go back and catch it in.
8. Press the pillowcase and fold it in half, right sides together. Using a 1/2" inch seam, sew along the bottom and the side. Turn right side out and press. See Figure 3.

Figure 2



Overlap cuff 1/2" onto main fabric. Pin. Stitch 1/8" from edge.

Figure 3



Fold

Fold pillowcase in half, right sides together. Stitch along bottom and side with 1/2" seam. Turn right side out and press.



## Making a Camo Skirt

Trust me, making your own broomstick skirt isn't hard. You don't need a pattern, which is a good thing since you can't find one anymore in any of the pattern books. Turning my very favorite broomstick skirt inside out and measuring all the pieces developed this particular pattern. It's a whole lot easier to make this skirt from the bottom up!

### MATERIALS

4 yards of 45" fabric  
1 package of 1-1/2" waistband elastic  
Matching thread

### DIRECTIONS

#### Cutting the Pieces:

##### Bottom Tier

5 pieces measuring 15" x 45" (conveniently, this is the width of the fabric)

##### Middle Tier

3 pieces measuring 14" x 34"

##### Top Tier

2 pieces measuring 12" x 30"

#### Sewing: Use a 1/2" seam throughout.

1. Starting with the bottom tier: sew each of the 5 pieces together along the 15" side to form one large circle. Press the seams open. Repeat with the other two tiers
2. To make working with the bottom two tiers easier, fold it into quarters, marking each quarter with a pin.
3. Machine baste 1/2" from the top edge of the tier. Break the thread at each point where you are 1/4 of the way around the tier. Repeat this 1/8" in closer to the edge. Again, break the thread at each pin.

4. Match up the pins that mark each quarter of the lower tier to those that mark the four quarters of the middle tier.
  5. Next, carefully pull your machine basting to gather the top of the bottom tier to match up with the bottom of the middle tier. Pin the two pieces together, right sides facing, as you go. Stitch. Remove the basting. Turn right side out and topstitch 1/8" away from the seam.
  6. Repeat this procedure to sew the middle tier to the top tier.
- #### Making the waistband:
7. At the ironing board, fold under 1/4" to the inside along the top edge. Fold again so that the casing measures 1-3/4". Pin and press.
  8. From the wrong side, very carefully stitch the casing down with a scant 1/8" seam. Be sure to leave an opening through which to run the elastic.
  9. Run the elastic through the casing, pulling to fit. Once you are satisfied with the fit, sew the elastic, cut off the excess and sew the casing closed.
  10. With the skirt right side out, slip the waistband underneath your presser foot. Pulling the elastic so that the fabric is (relatively) smooth, stitch down the middle of the band. This will hold the elastic in place as well as give your skirt a more finished look.
  11. To hem the skirt, turn under and stitch a 1/4" seam. Press.

Now, you can accessorize with your deer antler necklace and mallard feather earrings.



## Quilted Placemats and Napkins

Let's face it—as long as you're going to have a wildlife theme, you might as well include the dinner table. Camo fabric is the preferred choice, of course, but other nature-themed prints will look just as unique and special.

### MATERIALS (per set of 4)

3 yds (more or less) 45" fabric

Matching thread

Ruler

Tailor's chalk

Batting (crib quilt size)

Cutting board

### PLACEMAT DIRECTIONS

1. Cut eight 14" x 17" pieces of fabric

2. Cut four 14" x 17" pieces of batting

3. Layer a piece of batting between two pieces of the fabric. Make sure the edges are as even as possible, smoothing out all wrinkles on both top and bottom fabric layers. See Figure 1.

4. Pin the layers together in the middle and around the edges. It's critical to check to make sure you have no puckering or wrinkles on either side.

### Marking the Quilting Lines:

1. Start at one corner, and with the ruler and tailor's chalk, draw a line that is perpendicular (at right angles) to the corner. Extend this line to the opposite edge of the placemat. The lines will not go corner to corner! See Figure 2.

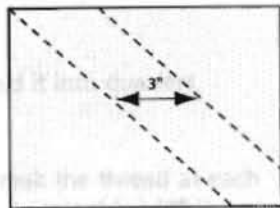


Figure 2

2. Mark the next line 3" from the first line. Repeat this until all the lines are marked for that direction. See Figure 3.

3. To mark the lines in the opposite direction, place the ruler at right angles to the first set of lines, and three inches down from one corner. Draw a line across the placemat.

4. Using this first line, and making certain you are at right angles to the lines in the opposite direction, mark your next line 3" down from the first. Repeat this until all the lines are marked. See Figure 4.

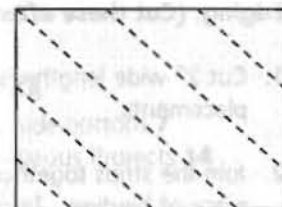


Figure 3



Figure 4

### Quilting:

1. Set your machine to "baste" (6 stitches/inch) so that when you sew you won't pucker the fabric. The stitches will end up looking smaller and closer together than they are.
2. Choose a line in the middle and sew across the placemat. Check the backside for wrinkles. If you've got any puckering, remove the stitches from about 2" of the seam and re-stitch it.
3. Stitch one line on either side of this original seam. Again, be careful you don't end up puckering the fabric on the backside.
4. Now, change directions and stitch a seam across the middle that is going in the opposite direction.
5. Stitch one seam on either side of this seam.
6. Alternate directions until all lines have been quilted. By alternating the direction you reduce the likelihood of catching fabric in the stitching that you'll later have to remove.



**Edging (Cut these after you've cut out the napkins):**

1. Cut 2" wide lengthwise strips from the fabric not used for napkins or placements.

2. Join the strips together to form a single piece of binding. To make the seams at an angle, sew the pieces together at right angles (See Figure 5) and trim the corners.

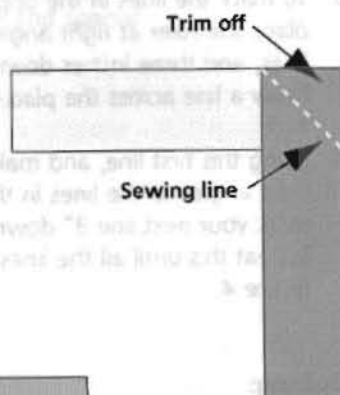
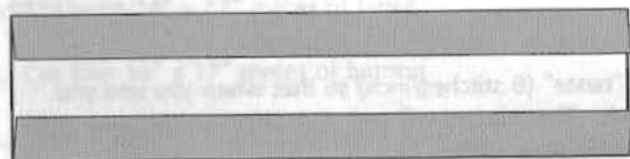


Figure 5

3. Turn under 1/4" on both sides of the binding to form seam tape. Press into place. See Figure 6.

Fold and press flat



Fold press flat

Figure 6

4. Starting at the middle of one side, wrap the seam tape binding around the edge of the placemat and stitch into place. End by turning under the raw end of tape and overlapping with the starting edge. Stitch securely. Press.

**NAPKIN DIRECTIONS (Cut these out before you cut the binding)**

1. Carefully cut four squares measuring 20" x 20". You can fold the fabric up and cut these out two at a time.
2. Hem all four sides with a 1/4" handkerchief hem.

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Wreath 21, 25  
    Pheasant feather 25  
    Turkey feather 21