

Chautauqua Watershed Notes
From the Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy
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Natural Christmas Decorations
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for the Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy



Creative crafters can harvest a practically infinite supply of natural objects from the woods and fields of the Chautauqua Watershed and turn them into charming traditional Christmas decorations such as the angel and reindeer shown here.

Thanksgiving done
Christmas due to come
But before the celebration
We must buy the decorations
This store, that store fighting, traffic
Sure to find some thing fantastic

Every year so many of us plunge into the Christmas hype – buy, buy, buy! It's a high stress event; going from store to store; never enough time; traffic; etc. Not only are we encouraged to buy lots and lots of gifts but we also must purchase mounds of decorations. The ones from last year have mysteriously disappeared. We bring them home, plug them in, then watch the electric meter go 'round and 'round. Meanwhile the bank balance goes down and down.

Is all of this really necessary? This year, skip the arduous shopping. Make low cost decorations out of natural materials that you collect from around your home or nearby countryside. Use them to decorate your own home and give them as gifts. You can find an amazing variety of dried flowers (a.k.a. winter weeds), cones and boughs in the Chautauqua Watershed's woods and fields and along roadsides that, with a little

creativity, some ribbon and glue, can become charming Christmas decorations. The initial gathering of the materials provides many hours of entertainment. It's a simple matter of stepping outside with Stokes Field Guide to Winter in hand to help you identify and learn the natural history of the weeds, cones and boughs. How much more pleasurable and healthful it is to tromp through the snow wondering at nature than trudging through slushy parking lots worrying about your budget.

Here are a few weeds to look for and instructions for making them into decorations.

Corn Husk Angel

For materials gather corn husks and silk off the dry standing corn that remains because the early snow precluded its harvest and milkweed pods from the dry milkweed plants that can be found along roads and in fields. The only other materials you'll need are tacky glue and narrow ribbon. The one tool you'll need is a pair of scissors.

To make the angel;

1. (body) Fold an eight to ten inch long corn husk the long way to create a strip about one inch wide. Fold this strip in half.
2. (head) Tie a piece of ribbon around the folded husk about one inch below the fold. Trim off the excess ribbon.
3. (arms) Roll a five to six inch corn husk the long way. Slide this rolled husk between the folds of the body husk up to the head.
4. (waist) Tie a ribbon around the body husk just below the arms. Trim off the excess ribbon.
5. (hands) Tie a ribbon around the ends of each arm about half an inch from the ends. Trim off the excess ribbon.
6. (skirt) Fray the bottom of the body husk.
7. (wings) Glue two milkweed pods onto the angel's back with the open pod facing out.
8. (hair) Glue corn silk on top of the angel's head.
9. To hang your angel, slip an ornament hook through the ribbon for the head.

Teasel Reindeer

For materials gather teasel and twigs. Teasel is a European plant imported to America long ago, planted near wool factories and used to comb the wool. Now it grows wild in almost any old field or along roads. The other materials you will need are black oil sunflower seeds for the eyes and nose (or red berries for the nose to make Rudolph) glue and tooth picks. You'll need scissors.

To make the reindeer:

1. Select a large flower head for the body and a small one for the head. Glue the head onto the body (it helps to trim a place on the body for the head)

2. Glue two sunflower seeds on the head for eyes and a seed or red berry for the nose.
3. Glue two twigs on the head for antlers.
4. Stick four toothpicks into the underside of the body for legs (sometimes you need to experiment with the placement of the legs so that the reindeer will stand up)

Once you begin your explorations of Winter's Weed Garden you will surely see other Christmas decoration and gift possibilities so get out there and have a happy, natural Christmas!

The Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy is a private, not-for-profit, 501(c)(3) organization with a mission to preserve and enhance the water quality, scenic beauty and ecological health of the lakes, streams and watersheds of the Chautauqua region. Its urgent focus is to conserve the endangered natural shore lands of Chautauqua Lake, which provide fish and wildlife habitat and pollution filtering functions essential to a healthy lake. Only four miles (10%) of the lake's shoreline remains in a natural, undeveloped condition. The Conservancy is funded primarily through membership donations. Its 2008 annual membership campaign is currently underway. It is presently raising funds to conserve the Chautauqua Lake's most important remaining natural shoreline habitats, undertake programs to address the root causes of the conditions that fuel lake plant growth, and manage its preserves. It is the only local organization conserving lands in perpetuity for these purposes. Please contact the Conservancy at 664-2166 to join for 2008!