

The Urge to Embellish

Natural Materials Wreath Project



Match the Materials Game

1. Identify the objects in the exhibit that are made of the materials illustrated here.
2. Nominate a 'weird' natural material to be used in embellishing an object. Tell how you would use it, perhaps with a sketch.



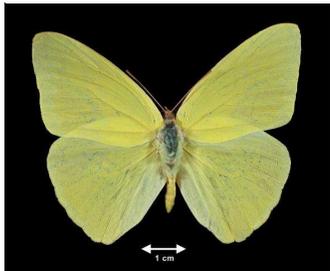
Porcupine Quills



Wool and Wool Yarn



Hair



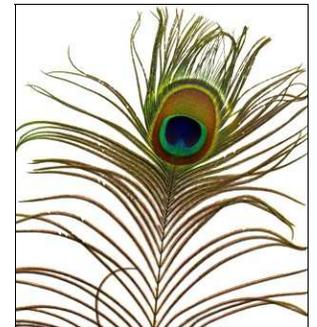
Butterflies



Natural Fiber Cloth Scraps



Wood



Feathers

I nominate

To use to embellish a

Natural Materials and Wreaths

Special points of interest:

- Game
- Wreaths
- Visual Arts Learning Standards

Saving mementos to commemorate a special moment in the lives of loved ones or to honor their passing is an age-old tradition. In Victorian households, it was an obsession shaped into embellished objects proudly displayed in parlors.

Wreaths were popular objects of embellishment found in many parlors. Ensnconced in deep, beautifully framed shadow boxes, the wreaths predominantly imitated flowers and were customarily shaped like a horseshoe, open at the top, in contrast to the

modern concept of a closed, circular arrangement. Though constructed of various materials and found hanging on parlor walls in both upscale urban and rural settings, all bore witness to the accomplishments of a family member.

Feather Wreaths

Eighteen-year-old Ida Henrietta Wilhelmina Bischoff Kolmeier (1873–1929) around 1891, created this feather wreath.



The soft aqua-blue satin that lines the box and the delicate white feathers lovingly shaped, cut, arranged, and tinted with pastel colors suitably frame and reflect the innocence found in the maker's photograph placed in the center.



Ida Henrietta Wilhelmina Bischoff Kolmeier (1873–1929)
Feather Wreath Box, c. 1891
 feathers, photograph of maker, thread on satin, shadow box
 Museum Purchase

Plushwork Wreaths

This plushwork wreath fashioned by Temperance Jones Campbell uses the bulkier materials available to the maker: the wool of sheep from her Sangamon County, Illinois, farm which she sheared, carded, dyed, and formed by hand.



Paper-wrapped wire is used for the stamens and stems of the flowers. She made the wreath in the popular horseshoe shape.



Temperance Jones Campbell (1832–1922)
Plush Wreath, c. 1850–60
 hand-dyed wool, metal wire, shadow box
 hand sheared, carded and dyed sheep's wool, floral plush work wreath formed by hand

Hair Wreaths

Saving mementos to commemorate a special moment in the lives of loved ones or to honor their passing is an age-old tradition. In Victorian households, it was an obsession shaped into embellished objects proudly displayed in parlors. Hair wreaths were a common manifestation, with their extremely intricate flowers, leaves, and tendrils constructed from the hair of departed family members.

Eunice Rodgers, the maker of this example, instead formed her unusually large, elaborate wreath by wrapping hundreds of fine wires with the locks and tresses of students whom she taught at Talbott School near Bradfordton, Illinois.

Below: Details of the woven hair. Read how the hair was woven on its gallery page (You Used WHAT? Gallery; click on title of hair wreath detail image)

<http://art.museum.state.il.us/exhibits/urge/hairwreathdtl>



Eunice L. Rodgers (?–1930)
Hair Wreath, c. 1900
human hair on plush fabric, shadow box
Gift of Mr. & Mrs. William A. Steiger



Do It Yourself Wreath Project

Today many people hang wreaths on the front door of their houses all year around. The most popular natural materials for these are grapevines as the base, embellished with dried or silk leaves, flowers, fruit, and nuts attached in a harmonious pattern, with ribbons.

Christmas wreaths use evergreen boughs as a base, with pinecones, berries, dried mistletoe, and other natural materials. Take a look at your current wreath — can it be jazzed up using natural materials?

Get adventurous and create a natural materials wreath from unusual natural materials. On Page 4 there is a list of some of the materials Victorians used to make crafts. Use one or more of them, or find your own!

**List of Example Natural Materials Used
in Victorian Crafts**

Seashells and coral
Dried seeds (corn cobs, pea pods, pine cones, milkweed pods)
Dried weeds, moss
Leather, tooled
Preserved leaves
Pressed flowers
Flowers from cotton balls or batting
Dried gourds
Knitted flowers, pods, cones, and leaves from Wool, bamboo, or cotton yarn
Quilted flowers from cotton cloth, batting, and thread
Clay ornaments or tiny pots
Pebbles and rocks
Woven cotton sashes or belts (such as Guatemalan)



Learning Standards

STATE GOAL 25: Know the language of the arts.

B. Understand the similarities, distinctions and connections in and among the arts.

Early High School: 25.B.4: Analyze and evaluate similar and distinctive characteristics of works in two or more of the arts that share the same historical period or societal context.

STATE GOAL 26: Through creating and performing, understand how works of art are produced.

B. Apply skills and knowledge necessary to create and perform in one or more of the arts.

Early High School: 26.B.4d: Demonstrate knowledge and skills that communicate clear and focused ideas based on planning, research and problem solving.

STATE GOAL 27: Understand the role of the arts in civilizations, past and present.

B. Understand how the arts shape and reflect

history, society and everyday life.

Early High School: 27.B.4b: Understand how the arts change in response to changes in society.

National Arts Standards, Grades 9-12: Content Standard 4: Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures

Achievement Standard: **Proficient:**

- Students differentiate among a variety of historical and cultural contexts in terms of characteristics and purposes of works of art
- Students describe the function and explore the meaning of specific art objects within varied cultures, times, and places
- Students analyze relationships of works of art to one another in terms of history, aesthetics, and culture, justifying conclusions made in the analysis and using such conclusions to inform their own art making