

SPRING TIME!!

CITIZEN CANE—A Personalized Walking Stick

Get your child geared up for a family hike this fall with a walking stick she can design herself. All she'll need is a dry (not green) fallen branch from a hardwood tree--such as maple, ash or hickory--acrylic paints and twine. When you're looking for a stick, the key is to find one that feels comfortable to your child. Generally, it should be about the same height as a ski pole--a little higher than her waist--and easy to grip.

Once you've got the right one, peel away the bark. If it still feels rough, smooth it with some fine sandpaper. Then, your child can paint on bold patterns, or try putting different colors on paper plates and rolling the stick in them to create a swirled effect. For a personalized touch, she can use twine to tie on feathers and pinecones, or other treasures found along the trail. (Consider sealing with varnish)

<http://familyfun.go.com/crafts/season/feature/famf97project/famf97project23.html>



Eggshell Ships

With a tissue paper sail, this boat is kitchen sink-worthy (as long as the wind remembers not to blow too hard).

Materials

- Eggs
- White glue
- Tempera paint and brushes
- Toothpick
- Air-drying clay
- Tissue paper

1. Crack the egg in half and gently break off pieces to get a boat shape. Paint the shell.
2. When the shell is dry, gently glue a 1-inch ball of clay into the bottom of the boat. Use a toothpick to make a hole in the center of the clay.
3. For the sail, cut a rectangle out of tissue paper, about 4 by 3 inches. Apply glue to one side, lay the toothpick in the center and fold paper in half to make a triangle. Dab glue onto the end of the toothpick mast and insert it into the clay.

<http://familyfun.go.com/crafts/buildmodel/craft/shellships/>



Hummingbird Bath

This carrot birdbath is just the thing to refresh little visitors and slow them down long enough for some awesome observation.

Materials: Thick carrot, vegetable peeler, bamboo skewer and red yarn

1. Cut an inch off the top of a thick carrot and then, starting in the center, use the tip of a vegetable peeler to hollow out a well approximately 2 inches deep and 1 inch wide (a parent's job). (This shallow bath is plenty big enough for birds accustomed to bathing in tiny puddles or on dew-laden leaves.)
2. Push the pointed end of a 4- to 6-inch-long bamboo skewer (sold in grocery stores) through the walls of the carved well about an inch from the top.
3. Tie a piece of red yarn (hummingbirds are attracted to bright colors, especially red) around each end of the skewer. Then tie the loose ends of the yarn pieces together over a low branch or clothesline. Keep the well filled with water and be sure to check it often for visitors.

Tips: Hummingbirds are attracted to the color red. To up the odds of viewing a visitor, hang a pot of red flowers near the bath or tie a few red ribbons on nearby branches.

<http://familyfun.go.com/crafts/season/craft/hummingbrd/>



Homemade Energy Bars

1 egg, 1/2 cup brown sugar, 1 tsp. vanilla extract, 1 cup granola, 1/2 cup raisins (or any chopped dried fruit) 1/2 cup chopped hazelnuts (or your favorite nut), 1 1.69-oz. pkg. M&M's chocolate candies

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Generously butter or oil an 8- x 8-inch square pan (preferably nonstick). Crack the egg into a medium-sized bowl. Add the sugar and vanilla extract and mix thoroughly. Stir in the granola, raisins, hazelnuts and M&M's and mix until combined. Transfer to the pan and distribute evenly over the bottom, pressing firmly with your hands. Bake for 25 minutes. Cool and cut into bars or squares.

Climbing Critters

Kids can stage a rematch between the tortoise and the hare with this pair of string-climbing critters -- or they can break new ground by facing off the animals of their choice.

Materials

- Crayons or markers
- Paper plate
- Scissors
- Drinking straw
- Stapler
- String
- Paper towel tube
- 2 wooden beads



1. Use crayons or markers to draw an animal on the paper plate. Cut out the drawing with scissors and then color the flipside.
2. Cut two 1-inch pieces off the straw. Roll the end of each foreleg of the animal over one of the straw pieces and staple the edge of the paper in place.
3. Cut two 4-foot lengths of string and tie them around the ends of the paper towel tube.
4. Thread the strings through the straw pieces. Then, tie a bead to the end of each string.
5. To make the animal climb, first use a short piece of string to hang the tube overhead--from a cupboard knob perhaps. Then, slide the cutout to the bottom of the strings. Using the beads as handles, pull the strings gently, alternating from side to side, and the animals will scoot to the top.

<http://familyfun.go.com/crafts/buildmodel/craft/climbcritr/>

Pocket Place Mats

With just a few snips and a quick press, Dad's old shirts turn into colorful place mats -- with a pocket to tuck a napkin into.

Materials

- Thin cardboard
- Fabric scissors
- Buttoned shirt
- Thick fusible webbing
- Chalk
- Clothes Iron



1. Create a pattern by cutting an 18- by 14-inch rectangle from thin cardboard. Then spread flat a buttoned shirt and set the pattern on top of it so that the place mat will include a row of buttons and a pocket. Trace around the pattern with chalk.
2. Using fabric scissors (adults only), cut along the chalk line through the shirt front and back (you should end up with two cloth rectangles).
3. Fold under 3/8 inch of fabric and press the edges of both cutouts (a parent's job). Lay the back side of the place mat wrong side up and set strips of thick fusible webbing (sold at most fabric stores) along the edges.
4. Cover with the place mat top and iron according to the webbing maker's directions. For a more permanent seam, machine stitch the mat edges.

<http://familyfun.go.com/crafts/sew/craft/pocketmats/>