

Crafts for the Early Grades



Oak Meadow

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Table of Contents

Craft Projects	2
Welcome to the World of Art!	2
Bean Bags	3
Bird Feeder	4
Bird Nest Supply Box	6
Blooming Bulbs	8
Braided Wheat Wreath	10
Building with Beans	12
Cereal Box Puppets	14
Circle Weaving	16
Clothespin Butterfly	17
Cobweb Balls	18
Cupcake Faces	19
Dried Apple Doll	20
Egg Carton Caterpillar	22
Everlasting Calendar	23
Fairy Gardens	24
Fairy Houses	25
Fan	26
Felt Hand Puppet	28
Finger Puppets	29
Fish Kite	30
Fish Wind Sock	32

Flower Chains	34
Flower Lei	36
Flower Preserving	38
Flower Stationery	40
Forest Art	41
Fork Weaving	42
Fruit and Vegetable Printing	44
Garden Markers	46
Garden Necklace	47
Glove Puppets	49
God's Eye	50
Gourd Bird Feeder	52
Grapefruit Bird Feeder	53
Heart Sachet	54
Homemade Bird Wreath	56
Homemade Wings and Tails	57
Ice Sculpture	58
Imprinting	60
Juggling Balls	62
Knitted Trivets	63
Leaf Place Mats and Coasters	64
Leaf Prints	66
Leaf Print T-Shirt	68
Leaf Print Tiles	70
Leaf Stencils	72
Lemon Pin Cushion	74
Magic Wand	75
Magical Cape	76
"Marble" Sculpture	77
Marbling Paper	78
Mask Making	80

Molding Paper	82
Mushroom Spore Prints	84
Nature Silhouette	86
Nature's Necklace	88
Orange Pomander Ball	90
Origami Animals	92
Painted Flower Pot	94
Painting on a Mirror	96
Pandora's Box	98
Paper Flowers	100
Paper Snowflakes	102
Pig Puppets	103
Pinecone Critters	104
Pinwheel	106
Popcorn and Cranberry Garlands	108
Popcorn Art	110
Pop-Up Card	112
Potato Prints	114
Potpourri	115
Pressed Flowers	116
Pumpkin Painting	118
Puppet Theater	120
Rainbow Stick	122
Rainy Day Spiral Mobile	123
Recycled Crayons	126
Rhythm Shakers	128
Ribbon Bookmarks	129
Sand Sculptures	130
Sand Village	132
Sewing Books	134
Shape Mobile	136

Sock Puppet	138
Spinning Snake Spiral	140
Sponge Prints	142
Stained Glass Window Hangings	144
Tire Weaving	146
Tree Bark Rubbings	148
Tree Saver Plastic Bag Holder	150
Twig Picture Frame	152
Twig Raft	154
Underwater Scene	155
Walnut Shell Critters	156
Walnut Shell Ships	158
Wind Chime Mobile	160
Wind Waver	162
Window Design	164
Winter Wreath	166
Woven Wall Hanging	167
Clay Fun	169
Animals	173
Beads and Buttons	174
Beehive Honey Pot and Bee Stick	175
Bell	176
Brontosaurus or Stegosaurus	177
Bunny Bank	178
Cornucopia	179
Dried Flower Pot	180
Dried Flower Wall Plaque	181
Log Cabin Box or Planter	182
Peacock or Turkey	183
Piggy Bank	184

Pinch Pot	185
Pterodactyl	186
Puzzle	187
Resting Rabbit	188
Royal Family	189
Sitting Bunny	190
Soap Dish	191
Toothbrush Holder	192
Troll Puppet Heads	193
Tyrannosaurus Rex	194

Welcome to the World of Art!

In this book, you will find a wide selection of creative ideas and projects especially designed for children in the early grades. Creating art together is immensely satisfying and fun, and a wonderful way to spend time with your child.

Art is an expression of our humanity, of our memories, emotions, experiences, and ideals. Engaging in art also supports a child's academic development. It can improve attention and focus, memory, patience and perseverance, and the ability to follow directions, as well as cultivate skills in problem-solving and decision-making, the integration of elements, and manual dexterity. Open-ended art projects, which are process oriented and encourage imagination, help a student integrate feelings, express emotions, and develop a discerning eye.

Perhaps the greatest benefits of all are the joy of sensory exploration and creative self-expression. Simply put, creating art enhances life, so we encourage you to enjoy creating art and sharing the artistic process with your child.

Tips to remember

- Many of the crafts in this book will require the assistance of an adult, so plan your arts and crafts time when you will be available to help as needed.
- Keep in mind that some projects require drying time during the process. This delay in the process can frustrate some children. Be sure to read the instructions all the way through before beginning so you and your child can be properly prepared.
- Create a place to make art and a place to store art supplies so they are easily found when needed. It is more enjoyable to become involved in a messy art project when you don't have to worry about damaging a table or floor.

Whenever possible, you are encouraged to create art alongside your child, sometimes creating your own project and sometimes working together on a single project. Not only will your own artistic efforts encourage your child to be more creative, but you can share ideas and learn from each other. This creative collaboration can establish a foundation that will benefit your child throughout life.

Bean Bags

What you need

- Felt or other sturdy fabric
- Needle and thread
- Small dried beans or lentils

What to do

- 1.** Cut out two round or oval pieces of brightly colored felt or other sturdy fabric. Be sure to cut the fabric larger than you want the resulting bean bag to be.
- 2.** Stitch the pieces together along the sides, leaving a hole big enough to stuff the bag.
- 3.** Use small beans to fill the bag.
- 4.** Stitch it completely closed.

Make three bean bags and try juggling them!



Bird Feeder

What you need

- String
- Large pinecone
- Spoon
- Peanut butter
- Birdseed
- Pie plate
- Newspaper

What to do

- 1.** Spread newspaper on the table.
- 2.** Tie the string very securely to the top stem of the pinecone for a hanger.
- 3.** Spoon peanut butter between the scales of the pinecone.
- 4.** Place birdseed in the pie plate.
- 5.** With your hands, sprinkle the birdseed onto the dabs of peanut butter and push them in if they don't stick easily. You can also roll the pinecone in the plate if you prefer, coating it heavily with seed.
- 6.** Hang the feeder in a tree and watch the birds enjoy their treat!



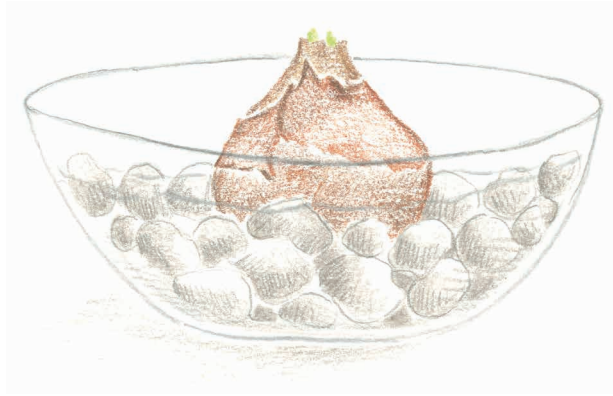
Bird Nest Supply Box

What you need

- Half-gallon milk carton, rinsed and dried
- Heavy string
- Scissors
- Ruler
- Hole punch
- Dryer lint, pet hair, pieces of yarn and string
- Twig, at least 8 inches long
- Hole punch

What to do

- 1.** Use the ruler to draw a square on two opposite sides of the milk carton. The squares should begin near the top of the milk carton and extend halfway down the sides.
- 2.** Use scissors to carefully cut out the squares.
- 3.** Use a hole punch to make an opening on each side of the carton about 1 inch below the cut-out portion.
- 4.** Insert the twig through the holes. The twig should extend a few inches beyond both sides of the box. This will make a perch for the birds.
- 5.** Thread a piece of string through the openings in the milk carton and tie the ends together.
- 6.** Fill the box with nesting materials for the birds. Pet hair, human hair, short pieces of string and yarn, and dryer lint are attractive to birds. A few pieces of brightly colored yarn will make the box more visible to the birds.
- 7.** Hang the supply box from a tree near a window, so you can watch birds gather supplies for a nest.



Blooming Bulbs

What you need

- Shallow bowl, about 6–8 inches in diameter
- Narcissus or hyacinth bulbs (these can be purchased at a nursery or garden shop)
- Marbles or pebbles, about $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch in diameter, to fill bowl
- Water



What to do

- 1.** Fill the bowl with marbles or pebbles to within an inch of the top.
- 2.** Place one or more of the bulbs on top of the pebbles with the pointed end facing up. Push the bulb down into the pebbles about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch, and arrange a few pebbles around the bulb to support it.
- 3.** Pour water into the bowl until it is just touching the bottom of the bulbs.
- 4.** Place the bowl in a dark cabinet or closet. Add water as needed to keep the bulbs just touching the water. Do not let the bulbs sit in the water.
- 5.** In about a week the leaves will grow an inch above the bulb tip. At this time, you should place the bowl near a sunny window, but not in direct sunlight. Water the bulbs frequently. The flowers will soon appear.
- 6.** The flowers will last longer if you put them in a cool place at night. Water the bulbs until the flowers die, then replant the bulbs outside to enjoy next year.



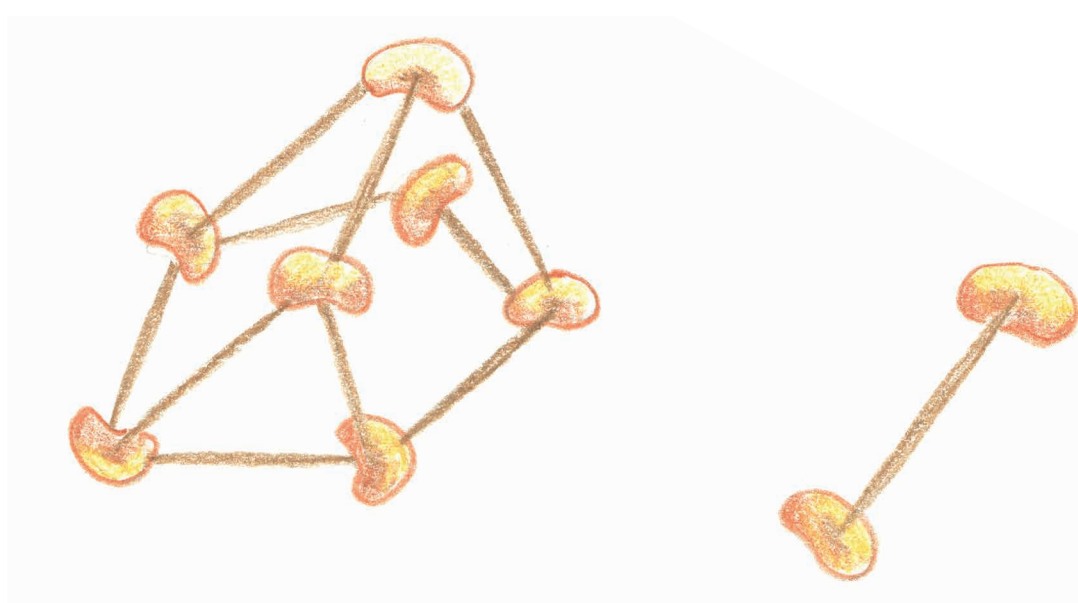
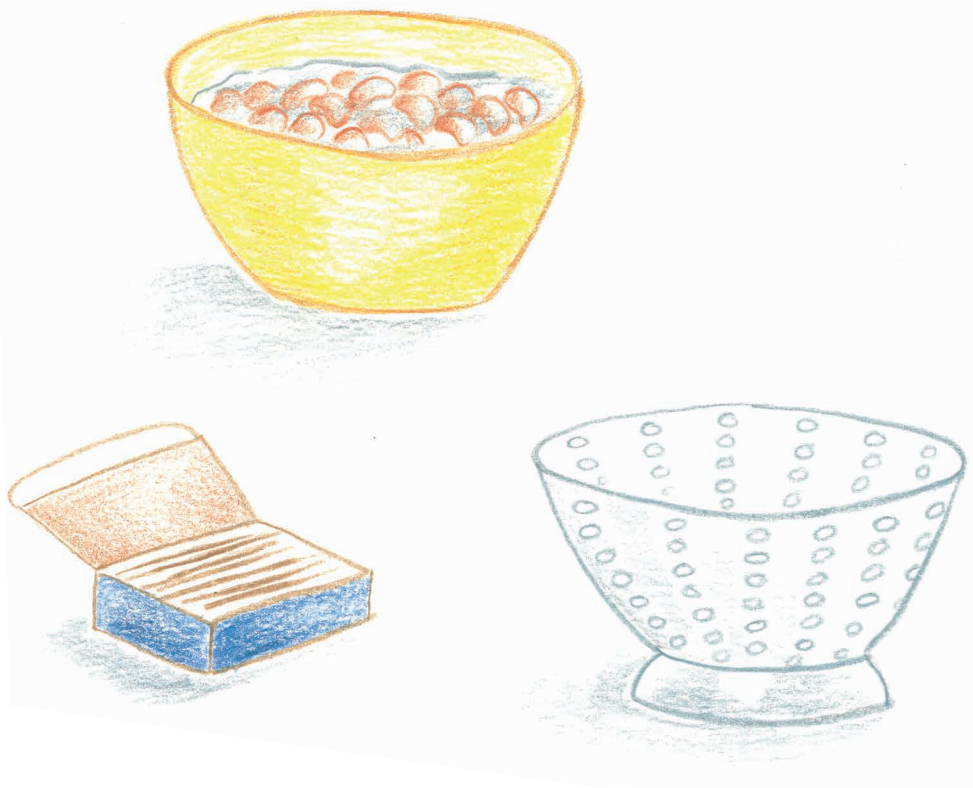
Braided Wheat Wreath

What you need

- Wheat on the stalk. This may be purchased from craft supply stores or from local farmers. Check with county extension offices for names of farmers who grow wheat in your area.
- Tub of water
- Yarn or ribbon
- Glue (optional)
- Seasonal items to decorate wreath, such as leaves or flowers.

What to do

1. Soak the wheat stems in a tub of water for about an hour. Be careful to keep the seed heads out of the water.
2. Work in pairs. One person takes three stalks of wheat and holds them near the seed heads. The other person braids the stems, beginning near the seed heads and continuing down the stalks. Keep the braid fairly tight.
3. Curve the end of the braid around to the seed head. Overlap the ends and tie with a piece of yarn or ribbon.
4. Decorate the wreath with seasonal items, such as brightly colored leaves in autumn or flowers in summer. Insert the leaf or flower stems into the braid or attach with glue.
5. Hang the wreath on the wall or door of your home.
6. To use as a centerpiece, arrange the wreath on a table and place a vase in the center.



Building with Beans

What you need

- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of dried beans (limas, pintos, kidney, etc.)
Safety Note: Red kidney beans are poisonous before being cooked.
- Bowl of water
- Colander
- Wooden toothpicks (round ones work best)



What to do

1. Put all the beans together in a bowl and add water to cover them by one or two inches and soak overnight.
2. In the morning, drain the beans in a colander.
3. Stick toothpicks into the beans to build a structure.
4. Allow to dry.