

Add beads to needlepoint

Victorians loved beads:

They also loved feathers, trims, braids, laces, frills and ruffles — the more the better. The earmark of a Victorian lady was her needlework and she stitched it by the acre.

The industrial revolution had given money and leisure to masses of women who never had either before. To bolster their social status, they went into fancy needlework in a big way. The results, to put it as kindly as possible, were mixed.

One Victorian variation did produce delightful results, however. The incorporation of glass beads into woolen needlepoint gave a textural difference that was enchanting — when handled with restraint. Beads did decrease the utility of the needlepoint, however — who wanted to sit on a rough glass surface? These stitcheries usually ended up on valences or footstools.

BUT THE IDEA is worth considering today when much of what is stitched ends up framed on the wall. In such cases, the glittering three-dimensional quality of the beads can be very lovely when played against the soft colors of wool. Here's how to add beading to your needlepoint.

The most important criterion is fitting the beads to the canvas gauge so that they are not crowded, or so loosely packed that the canvas can be seen behind them. My favorite mat is 14 gauge canvas worked with seed beads. These are inexpensive, come in a wide range of colors, and cover the canvas as if they'd been designed to do so — which perhaps they were.

The next trick is to get the beads to lie flat on the canvas. Stitch them on with the Continental, never the Half Cross. The latter hasn't enough tension on the back to hold the beads in place on the front. Work beads from left to right only. Don't try to work back and forth along the rows as you would if you were



the lively needle

Mary Kay Davis

stitching. At the end of a row, bring your thread across the back to the left side and work your next row right over it. In this way, all beads slant in the same direction, which is important.

I'VE FOUND THAT I like working on interlock rather than floating canvas. Interlock is the flatter of the two and beads seem to stay in place better on it.

Stitching is simple, but constant tension is necessary to keep beads from falling out of place. I found it easier to work with a relatively heavy white thread and had my best luck with — you won't believe this — Johnson's waxed dental floss. It threaded the needle like a dream, was thick enough to fill the hole in the bead, and stayed in place after the stitch was finished. Whether it will survive the ages is a question, but for the here and now, it does very nicely.

Work with stretched canvas, using a No. 10 between quilting needle. It's small enough to pass through the beads and has an eye large enough to thread easily. Any pattern graphed for cross or tent stitch can be beaded — one bead equals one stitch. Work beads first and then stitch the wool background in around them. The results are smashing.

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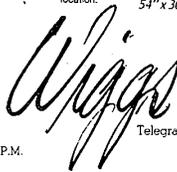


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Gardening for apartment dwellers

I would like to grow some of my own vegetables this year and although I live in an apartment I do have a small balcony that gets lots of sun. What are my chances of getting things to grow under these conditions?

Ellen T., Troy

Very good, thanks to Joann Kowalski, a Concern volunteer who is sympathetic to urban and apartment dwellers. Determined to encourage green thumbs wherever they may be, Ms. Kowalski gathered the information now found in a new publication called "Gardening in Containers." This well-timed brochure offers help in choosing the proper type and size of container, tips on soil, planting, care and feeding and specific plants that do well in this kind of environment. For a copy send 25 cents to Concern, Inc., Detroit, 1 Northfield Plaza, Troy. What is EPA?

M.K., Garden City

consumer mailbag

EPA Region V which serves Michigan can be addressed to EPA Region V, 230 S. Dearborn, Chicago, Ill., 60604.

GRACE R. GLUSKIN

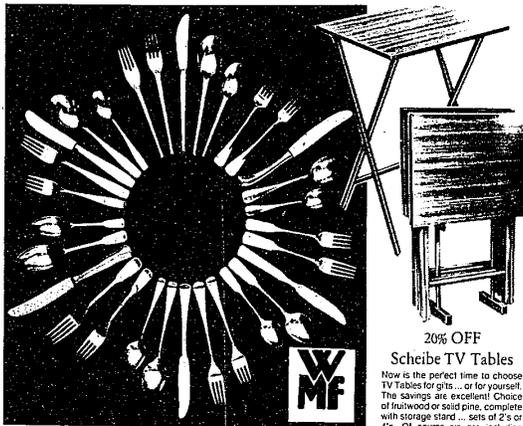
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