

# Do-it-yourself Gifts

## Frugal Local Wonderful

by Judi Burton

**G**ift giving and receiving should be fun. It should be a happy affair that is not harmful to anyone. Unfortunately, we tend to make it “un-fun” when we rack our brains and bite our nails, pushing shopping carts through throngs of sales in large department stores. It can also be harmful when what you end up buying with your hard-earned money is made in China in a sweatshop by a child who won’t be getting anything under the tree on Christmas day. Will you let the gift you buy for your beloved friend or family member be just another thing that will eventually get tossed out? Wouldn’t you rather make something that you put your heart and soul into? Something that is made from recycled items or natural materials you found around your neighborhood. Or maybe you could do something useful for someone. You don’t have to be Martha Stewart to hand make a wonderful gift, and I’m going to show you how, with minimal money and lots of love.

### Antique Teacup Candles

Finding the teacups is a lot of fun. Habitat for Humanity often has pretty ones, and there are many antique stores on the Grand Strand that carry them. They don’t have to be perfect. You can get better deals on the teacups that are discolored or slightly chipped. You can make a lot of these and give one to each person, or you can make an entire set as one big gift.

#### Things You Will Need:

**Teacups and saucers**  
**Soy, beeswax or paraffin wax**  
**Essential oils (optional)**  
**2 old pots (different sizes) or a double boiler**  
**Funnel**  
**Old newspaper**  
**Hot glue gun**  
**Candlewicks with aluminum base**  
**Water**



Hot glue your teacups to the saucers so they won’t tip over or somehow get separated. Line them up next to each other on top of the old newspaper for less of a mess. Put the larger pot of water on the stove and let it come to a low boil. Place the candlewicks with the aluminum base on the bottom of the teacup and make sure that each wick

is sticking straight up in the air. Put the wax in the smaller empty pot that is not boiling. Place the wax pot inside the larger boiling pot and wait for the wax to melt. Add the essential oil you have chosen. Once it is melted, give it a few stirs. You usually only need a few drops of essential oil per teacup. Take the wax pot out of the boiling pot and begin to slowly pour into each teacup by using the funnel. Let them sit and cool.

### Raw Carob Peppermint Bark in a Mason Jar

If you have a friend or family member who is on a raw food diet, this is a perfect gift. It takes very little time and they will be impressed with your knowledge of raw food.

#### Things You Will Need:

**1 cup raw coconut oil**  
**¾ cup raw carob**  
**1 tsp peppermint oil**  
**1 cup raw nuts**  
**2 different-sized bowls**  
**Cookie sheet**  
**Wax paper**  
**Large Mason jar**  
**Ribbon**  
**4”x4” cloth pieces**  
**2”x2” thick paper**



Place the hot water in the larger bowl. Pour coconut oil in the smaller bowl and put it in the big bowl, so that the hot

water is touching the bottom of the smaller bowl. When the coconut oil is melted, stir in the carob. Now, stir in the peppermint and the nuts. Taste to make sure you like the amount of peppermint with carob. Spread across the cookie sheet with the wax paper on it. Stick the cookie sheet into the freezer for 10 minutes. Take it out and break into pieces. Take the desired amount of pieces and put them in the Mason jar. Put the cover on and then take the cloth you have selected and place it on top of the cover. Punch a hole in a piece of paper and write your message on it. Loop the ribbon through the hole of the paper and wrap it around the cover. Tie it up and you're done.

## Wine Cork Coasters

Have a favorite restaurant where you can ask the servers and bartenders to save wine corks for you? Maybe you already have a collection and are not sure what to do with them. This gift is great for men and women.

**Things You Will Need:**  
**Hot glue gun**  
**Lots of corks**  
**Sturdy ribbon**  
**Knife**  
**Cutting board**



Using a sharp knife, slice the corks through their center widthwise so that you have twice as many smaller corks. You can do this again to make them even thinner. Hot glue gun the sides together to make a round coaster. Start with a center cork and glue corks around it, then glue more corks to the outside of that circle and so on until desired size is achieved. Take the ribbon and hot glue it around the outside of the coaster to hold them together. Make five per set. Wrap them together with ribbon and a bow for presentation or put them in a box. If you have extra corks remaining and you are feeling adventurous, try making a hot pad for a casserole dish or even a bath mat. Just use a non-adhesive shelf liner as a base.

## Promise Coupons

These are the cheapest and most wonderful gifts you can give. They cost you no money, only your promise of time and energy, and you have to mean it. Have a neighbor with a dog that always has to be put in the kennel when he or she goes on vacation? Know someone who can never seem to keep up with his or her housework, but will never ask for help? Maybe you have a spouse in need of a relaxation

An advertisement for Inlet Culinary Garden. The top part shows a photograph of a white building with a porch, surrounded by greenery and flowers. Below the photo, the text reads: "Cold hardy Edible Plants for Your Winter Garden". Underneath, it lists "Cold Weather Annuals", "Pansies", "Violas", "Pottery and Soils for Container Gardens", and "Fresh Herbs", "Lettuces". It also says "Gift Certificates Available" and "Inlet Culinary Garden". At the bottom, it says "Knowledgeable Staff, Friendly Service, Tasty Plants" and provides contact information: "Mon-Sat 9am - 4pm ~ 843.357.1194" and "5071 Hwy. 17 Bypass South Murrells Inlet". The entire advertisement is framed by a decorative border of green pine needles and red berries.

night with a foot rub, a bubble bath and a glass of wine, free of commotion.

## Things You Will Need:

**Pretty paper (recycled is the best)**  
**Scissors**  
**Ribbons**  
**A nice pen**  
**Your word of honor**

Just sit down and write out promises on a nice piece of paper, roll it up like a scroll and tie it with a nice ribbon. Do not put an expiration date on them. It is a promise pure and simple. People often say, "It's the thought that counts." With this gift, they will be very impressed with your thoughtfulness and how well you know them and understand their needs.



## Knitting and Crocheting


For those of you who already know how to knit or crochet, you are well on your way to making a wonderful gift for a loved one. It will be very hard to pick up a project now, this late in the season. But for those of you struggling on a certain project and need help, I will let you in on a little hint : Prena Knits in Georgetown has master knitters and

crocheters who can help you get out of any type of mess you might have put yourself in. There are workshops every Tuesday and Thursday, and if you call ahead you can join in for only \$5 an hour. The shop also has a wide array of sustainable and locally produced yarns that will knock your stockings off. If you know a knitter, this is the place to get their gift.

## Dress-Up Box

The little kids in your life will never forget the day you gave them a box filled with props and clothes to wear while they let their imaginations run wild. Far better than the newest Xbox game, because they get to play out their fantasies on their own. This is not just for girls. You can give a box to boys, too, with cowboy hats, handkerchiefs, old camouflage, etc. Just call it a "boy box," instead of a "dress-up box." Girls will love your old prom dress and costume jewelry, feather boas from past Halloweens, old-fashioned gloves, scarves and fancy hats. Make sure you give two of everything, so their best friend will also have something to wear. Put it all in a big box with plenty of room to add more and let them decorate it themselves with crayons or markers, stickers or even wallpaper, depending on their age. When they are being good, you can use it as a reward by adding more things to it that you might have found at a thrift store.





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## Swamp Wreath

The Lowcountry has a lot of areas where swamp vines are available and holly trees grow on the side of the road. Instead of buying the grapevine wreath at the craft store and decorating it with plastic leaves and ornaments, make a nature wreath from things you can find in your own neighborhood.



### Things You Will Need:

- Small pair of hedge clippers**
- A large canvas bag**
- Floral wires**
- Ribbon**

Find an area where you know swamp vines hang and you won't be trespassing. If it is on someone else's property, ask before you cut. Find thick and thin vines that bend, but don't break, and cut them as high up as you can. They should be at least 8 feet long or longer. Find a tree with lots of Spanish moss hanging, and from your easiest reach, collect as much of it as you can. *(This is where the large bag comes in.)*



**Clip off low branches from a holly tree, making sure you get lots of good berries.**



**Begin the wreath by taking the thicker vine and making a circle with it. The vine will usually tell you what size it wants to be by how well it bends.**

When you've made the circle, hold the beginning end of the vine and the section that meets the beginning together with one hand. In the other hand, take the tail end of the vine and loop it under the beginning of the circle and over, and then under again. If you do this over and over, the vine will wrap around itself and become strong.





Finish it by taking the end and wedging it in between a gap in the wrapped vine, making sure it's secure and cannot un-wedge.

Take a thinner vine and wrap it around again. To make sure it won't unravel, wrap a few floral wires in different places around the wreath and twist at the ends. Fold the points down into the wreath so you won't get poked when handling it.



Take the Spanish moss and wrap it around the wreath.



Place the holly branch ends in the wreath

and use floral wires to secure them. Tie a pretty ribbon if you like around it or place a bow at the bottom. You can make a variation without the Spanish moss, or use herbs instead of berries, or branches from fir trees to make it a traditional wreath.

## Donations

Give your loved one the gift of compassion. Adopt an animal in their name at SC-CARES or donate to Habitat for Humanity. There are thousands of different organizations you can donate to, but the best ones are right here on the Grand Strand.

## Memberships

These gifts usually last all year long and can be used over and over again without the fear of material waste. A season membership to Brookgreen Gardens is a perfect example of a gift that will be remembered above all of the Snuggies and bath baskets. Long Bay Symphony has series tickets available for the music lover, or how about a one-year gym membership for the loved one who loves to work out.

## Gift Certificates

For the person tight on time, but hates to buy from big-box stores, gift certificates from nearby are very much appreciated. Keep your local economy going by spending your money in small mom-and-pop restaurants, shops and spas. Look closely at the ads in this month's edition for gift certificate offers by many of our wonderful advertisers who keep this magazine up and running.

*For more info on Prena Knits, visit [JOYfilledGifts.com](http://JOYfilledGifts.com). For more info on SC-CARES, visit [SC-CARES.org](http://SC-CARES.org). For more info on Habitat for Humanity, visit [Habitat.org](http://Habitat.org). For more info on Brookgreen Gardens, visit [Brookgreen.org](http://Brookgreen.org). For more info on Long Bay Symphony, visit [LongBay-Symphony.org](http://LongBay-Symphony.org).*

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