

## Winter Holidays Christmas Tree Ornaments



## Antebellum Tree Yarn Dolls

Christmas trees in Antebellum America were commonly placed on a table in the parlor, the most formal room in the house, following the fashion set by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. As commercially produced ornaments were not widely available, children and adults alike often made their own. Small gifts were often hung on the tree. Cookies, dried and preserved fruits, and gilded nuts made fashionable and tasty decorations. Yarn dolls, cornshuck dolls, snowflakes, and other cut paper ornaments decorated the tree. The tree was “lit” with candles in special holders that clipped to the branches.

### Materials

8 inch pieces of cardboard  
Yarn

Scissors

### Instructions

- Wind the yarn over and over a strong piece of cardboard eight inches long, until a thick amount is formed.
- Take a long piece of yarn, and tie all the yarn at the top of the cardboard together.
- Cut through the yarn at the bottom of the cardboard.
- Take another piece of yarn, placing it about 1” from the top and tie all strands of yarn together to form the doll’s head.
- Separate about ten strands on either side of the neck for the arms. Tie these about two and one half inches from the neck; then cut off a little beyond the tie to form the arms.
- All the other strands are tied about two inches down from the neck, making a waist.
- The rest of the yarn is the skirt.





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## *Victorian Tree Gumdrop Wreaths*

During the Victorian era, children were rarely given candy. Often times it was only a special treat for them during the Christmas season. Gumdrops were popular candies during this time of year. They are small, colorful, chewy, gelatin based candies that have a wide base which tapers into a cut-off shape cone. Besides eating, they were used for decorating gingerbread houses, Christmas cookies, and making Christmas crafts. Christmas crafts may include gumdrop rings used for decorating the Christmas tree. They come in many different flavors such as, red – cherry flavor, red spice – cinnamon flavor, green – lime or mint flavor, purple – peppermint or grape flavor, white – licorice or clove flavor, black – licorice flavor, orange – orange flavor, and yellow – lemon flavor. During the Victorian era, the tree would have been decorated with gumdrop rings, candles, painted nuts, roses, scraps, strands of pearls, cornucopias, sachets, and shapes of gingerbread houses.

### *Materials*

Gumdrops - 14 per wreath  
Fishing line - 20" per wreath

Scissors  
Needle - large eye

### *Instructions*

- Cut 14" of fishing line from the spool.
- Thread the needle with fishing line and tie knot so that thread will stay.
- Take the threaded needle and sew into the side center of the first gumdrop. (Do not push the gumdrop to the very end of the thread. Leave about 2" so that you will be able to tie the ends together at the end.)
- Repeat the process with the remainder 13 gumdrops.
- Leave 1-2" of line on each end.
- Tie both ends together and cut the remainder line.
- Push and adjust gumdrops around the line.
- Use the remaining 6" length of fishing line to make a hanging loop for the wreath.
- Hang on the Christmas tree



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### Depression Tree Promise Notes

During the Depression Era (1920s and '30s), Christmas tree decorations included colored lights – if the homes had electricity – and glass balls bought in a store, as well as ornaments made by hand, including paper chains and other paper decorations. The children would save up aluminum foil chewing gum wrappers and, when they had enough, ball them up to hang on the tree. They also strung popcorn garlands and painted sycamore gumballs and nuts to hang on the tree. At this time – a time when money was scarce – one family chose to decorate their Christmas tree with handmade gifts made of tissue paper, called “promise notes.” In these notes, the giver would write a promise to do something to help the recipient – a chore, babysitting, etc. – something that didn’t cost money, but was a true gift from the heart. You, too, can make a promise note for someone you love and make that person very happy.

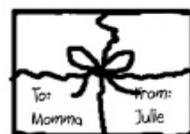
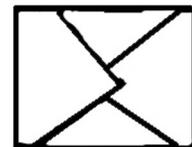
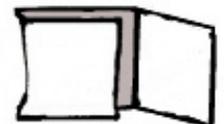
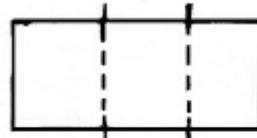
### Materials

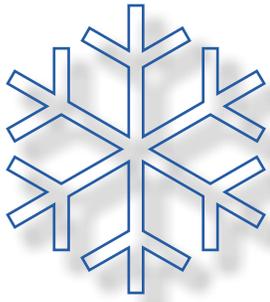
Red, green and/or white tissue paper  
Red and green narrow yarn

Scissors  
Pen, pencil

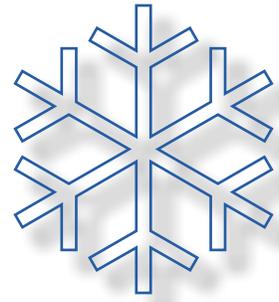
### Instructions

- \* Cut tissue paper sheet in half.
- \* Lay sheet sideways and fold into thirds.
- \* Open sheet and write promise note in the middle third section using a pen or pencil.
- \* Refold sheet.
- \* Fold each end side inward to meet at the middle, forming a point at each end.
- \* Fold each pointed end toward the middle, overlapping slightly so that the paper looks like an envelope.
- \* Cut length of yarn long enough to fit both ways around envelope and tie into bow.
- \* Wrap and tie yarn.
- \* Address envelope to loved one (ex.: To: Momma From: Johnny or Julie).





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### Post-War Tree Color Wheels

During the Post War Era (1950s and 60s), new technologies that were developed during World War II, such as nylon and plastics, came to everyday life in the United States. It was a time when families shifted from gathering around the radio to listen to their favorite programs to watching them on television. It was a time when space exploration was starting to take flight and take hold of the imagination. The future was something people speculated about with excitement and sometimes great fear. Change would come in the form of protest and examination of America and its practices that had been in place since the Civil War. Christmas was a joyful time to look to tradition, but make it more “modern.” The aluminum tree was one of those modern inventions. Sparsely decorated with bulbs, elves, and other ornaments to show off its branches, you could not use normal Christmas lights on the tree. You had to use a color wheel which rotated transparent colored glass or plastic in front of a light allowing colors to reflect off the metallic tree.

### Materials

5 inch construction paper squares  
Red, green, blue, yellow tissue paper

Scissors  
Glue

### Instructions

- Fold your square in half diagonally
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- Fold in half diagonally again
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- Use your scissors to round the points off the outer edges of the triangle, leaving the inner point alone.
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- Fold it in half again.
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- Starting on the folded side cut the center out leaving about an 1/8 of an inch on the other two sides.
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- Cut out small triangles of each color and glue them in place. One color is used for each hole.
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- Once the glue has dried, poke a hole in paper border of the wheel, string your thread through, and tie it into a loop.
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- Hang on your Christmas tree.

