Recycled Art: Plastic Bag Coasters

Paper or plastic? The dilemma of choosing plastic bags at the store is what can be done to keep those bags from becoming part of the landfill. Learn how to turn plastic bags into "plarn" (plastic yarn) that can be used to create many useful and beautiful household items.

Kansas College and Career Ready Standards for Visual Arts

4th grade - VA: Cr2.1.4 Explore and invent art-making techniques and approaches.
5th grade - VA: Cr2.1.5. Experiment and develop skills in multiple art-making techniques and approaches through practice.
6th grade - VA:Cr2.1.6. Demonstrate openness in trying new ideas, materials, methods, and approaches in making works of art and design.
7th grade - VA:Cr2.1.7. Demonstrate persistence in developing skills with various materials, methods, and approaches in creating works of art or design.
8th grade - VA:Cr2.1.8. Demonstrate willingness to experiment, innovate, and take risks to pursue ideas, forms, and meanings that emerge in the process of art-making or designing.

Classroom teachers will need to provide:

- Three plastic grocery/Walmart bags per student. Any color is fine and they don't have to match.
- Scissors, one pair per student
- Heavy book, one per student
- Low temp glue guns and glue, several for the class to use or one for the teacher to use if your district's Covid protocol prevents sharing of supplies.

Additional lesson resources have been provided for your use but are not mandatory for this lesson.

Program Connection Information

Please use an external microphone (conference style) rather than the integrated one in the computer for the audio for your class and locate it centrally in the room. It can be difficult for the Greenbush teacher to hear the students using the computer microphone and therefore it reduces the interactive nature of the lesson. It is fine to use the computer webcam for your video source.

All classes will take place using Zoom desktop video. If your building is already set up to use a desktop video application with a computer, simply open a browser and enter https://zoom.us/j/3662120241 in the URL space. You may need to download Zoom launcher software (free download) if you don't already have it. This needs to be done in advance of the lesson.

If using a Polycom video conferencing unit (or any legacy type video conferencing unit) to connect to a ZOOM conference, make sure the unit is in "encrypted mode" then dial the following IP on the internet: 162.255.37.11 or 162.255.36.11 and once connected, they will ask for a MEETING ID: enter 3662120241 (for Sharon at Science Center).

It's always a good idea to touch base with your district technology facilitator prior to your program to make sure all systems/equipment are in place and operational and that there aren't any firewalls in place that might prevent you from connecting to Zoom.

Once you connect, you will enter a Zoom waiting room. Your Greenbush teacher will admit you into the final meeting room.

If you have questions, please call Sharon Bertolio at Greenbush, 620-724-6281, or email at sharon.bertolio@greenbush.org (best method of contact).

Additional Lesson Resources

Going Green with Wrapped Baskets

http://radmegan.com/2012/03/going-green-with-wrapped-baskets.html

Full disclosure: This photo is what our laundry room shelf has looked like for almost two years. This week, I went to grab one bag and the entire shelf almost came down on me because there were SO MANY PLASTIC GROCERY BAGS stuffed into a teeny tiny space.

In a fit of rage and craftiness, I pulled the entire bundle down and decided to make SOMETHING USEFUL from the bags that had been cluttering up our hall for so long. In a wild moment of clarity, I flashed back to a small woven pot that I had made during my brief stint as a Girl Scout. I grabbed my cutting mat, a cutting blade, a ruler, some masking tape, a heavy yarn needle and crochet hook. I was going to weave a basket out of all these plastic bags.

The plan started coming together rather quickly. Plastic grocery bags are easy enough to smooth out. I used my ruler to cut each bag into three strips. The two handles became long strips, and the middle section became a third.

I arranged the strips of plastic into piles according to color and size. Since the plastic bags are so prone to static electricity, I placed several dryer sheets between the piles so that they would stay in place.

I decided that since I had so many white plastic bags, I would use those at the inner cord of my basket. I really wanted my entire project to be made of recycled materials. I took un-cut plastic bags and twisted them in my hands until they were about a half an inch in diameter. Then I took masking tape and put small pieces (about an inch of tape) around the twisted plastic to keep it from unraveling, and to help keep the size relatively consistent.

To add length to the cord, I would simply twist more bags together and tape them down. The inner cord got pretty long, pretty fast.

Once I had about five feet of white plastic cord, I took the strips of tan and brown plastic and started to tightly wrap them around the end of the inner cord.

To begin the basket shape, I wrapped strips of brown plastic around the white center cord. When I had about 3-4 inches of inner cord wrapped in brown, I bent my center cord until it was shaped like a lowercase letter “g”. I tried to keep the hole inside the g-shape as small as possible.

I threaded pieces of brown plastic through my heavy yarn needle and wrapped the coil of white plastic with the brown plastic. As I did this, I wrapped the coil around the g-shape so that a spiral began to form.

To keep the outer coil connected to the inner coil, I would wrap the white plastic in the brown about 5 times, and then use my needle to push it through the layer below. It took a while for this to feel natural again (it's been a LONG time since I was a Girl Scout) but eventually I got in a rhythm. Wrap, wrap, wrap, wrap, thread over and through the layer below, wrap, wrap, wrap, wrap, thread over and through the layer below…

I used trace amounts of masking tape to hold the brown plastic down on the white cord when I needed to re-thread my needle. To prevent the tape from showing, I would wrap a little more brown over the taped area before continuing.

As my basket base progressed, I started to incorporate additional colors into the design.

I also had to keep adding length to the inner cord as my basket grew in size.

When the base of my basket was as large and I wanted it to be, I wrapped the next coil in the same way as I had all the rest, only starting on TOP of the previous coil, instead of next to…

In about four hours, I had a medium sized basket!

When the basket was the size I wanted, I taped off the end and tightly wrapped my last few layers of plastic over it and the layer below.

I tucked the end of the brown plastic under one of the previous loops, hiding the loose end, AND allowing me to re-open the basket if I ever want to add more size to it!

I have to say that I am really pleased with this basket! Since it's made entirely of plastic bags, it is a terrific companion in the garden, great green gift for your little one (hello homemade Easter Basket!!), and it's just a really fun craft to help un-clutter your life! I used mine to harvest a few odds and ends in the garden…

Turn Bags into Beads

http://thenewnew.blogspot.com/2009/04/how-to-turn-bags-into-beads.html

I've become somewhat of a curator of plastic bags. In fact, there are some doors you shouldn't open in my house because you will be buried under an avalanche of interesting plastic. Primarily, I fuse these bags into collages and turn them into other things like: BEADS.

If you would like to transform your own collection of plastic bags into beads, follow these instructions:

Materials

- Clean plastic bag
- Parchment paper
- Iron
- E6000 or similar glue
- Toothpicks
- Scissors
- Ruler

Fusing the Plastic

Place two layers of plastic between two sheets of parchment on a hard surface and iron them together using a low setting with the steam set to off.

That will leave you with a sheet that looks like this:

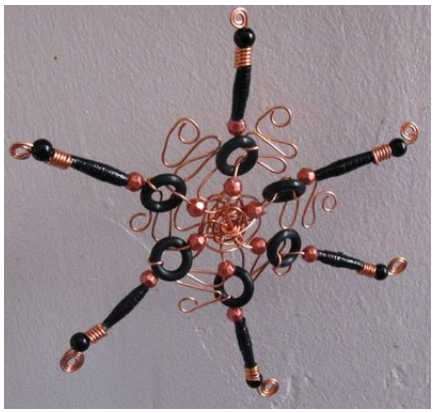
Making the Bead

Cut out a triangular shape that is about 4 inches long and ½ inch wide at the bottom. You can play around with the sizing. The wider the triangle, the longer the bead and the longer the triangle, the fatter the bead.

With a toothpick, apply a thin layer of E6000 or similar glue to one side of your triangle. Leave a small strip free of glue at the base of the triangle. Place a clean toothpick at the base and roll up the triangle around the toothpick so it shapes an oval bead. Jiggle the toothpick a little to make sure that it doesn't stick to the bead.

Leave the toothpick in the bead and stick it into something to dry overnight. I used a dried out bit of Model Magic clay, but any kind of Styrofoam, etc. will work as well.

Once your bead is dry you can lacquer it or leave it as is and use it in a project like this:



or this:

Happy Recycling!