

A quick guide to May Garland making

The most widespread and best-known May Day activity in the 19th and early 20th centuries was the children's garland custom. This involved groups of children visiting houses in their community showing a garland, singing a song, and collecting money. It is traditional to hide a small doll inside your garland. Garlands usually take one of three forms:

1) A vertical pole topped with a colourful flowery sphere carried by one person.



This type of garland can be made by decorating a pole, such as a broom handle or branch and mounting a garland on top of it. You can create your garland by making a sphere out of two wire coat hangers, or a rockpool style fishing net, and decorating it with flowers, ribbons and beads. Fix your garland onto the pole using wire and tape, it does not matter if any parts look messy as you can cover it over with decorations.

2) A horizontal pole carried between two people with the flowery sphere usually in the middle of the pole.



This type of garland is similar to the vertical pole garland, but can be carried between two people. Decorate a broom handle or branch and mount your garland in the centre of the pole. Create a sphere using wire coat hangers or by lashing twigs together, decorate it with flowers, ribbons and beads and thread it onto the centre of your pole. You may want to use rope to ensure that your garland sits in the centre of your pole without moving about.

3) A hoop or half-hoop decorated with flowers and colourful symbols of spring.



A half hoop garland is perhaps the easiest garland to make and is more suitable for younger people. Cut a hula hoop in half using a craft knife to form the base of your garland, or keep a whole circle if you like. Decorate the hoop by twisting ribbons and vines, such as ivy, around the hoop until you have covered the base. Weave and fold flowers and decorations in between the ribbons and stick on decorations.

Garland materials

Garlands can be made out of almost anything! The main point is that they should look bright and colourful; they were traditionally covered in flowers. Here are some materials that you may find useful when creating a garland, you may also want to create some of your own.

Raffia - An inexpensive garland can be made from strands of raffia. Raffia is extremely useful for tying things on to your garland or filling in any gaps.

Vines - Long natural vines can be used as a garland if they are thin and flexible enough to be worked around the pole. Vines can look wonderful on a garland and give it a natural feel. Do consider the wildlife and make sure that you only take vines from places where they will grow back quickly and not disturb any animals or insects.

Chains - Homemade chains of paper strips or ribbon lengths can be made in any size or colour you desire! You could even decorate them with May Day images?

Beads - Beaded garlands can create very intricate designs, wooden or plastic beads can be bought or you could make your own stringing paper, foil, dried fruit or coloured popcorn together.

Trimmings - There are many craft and fabric materials that can be creatively used as garland. Look for cording, trimmings, artificial leaf garlands, tassels, upholstery trims, and more.

Twine, Rope - Twist, braid, knot, or loop twine or rope into your garland.

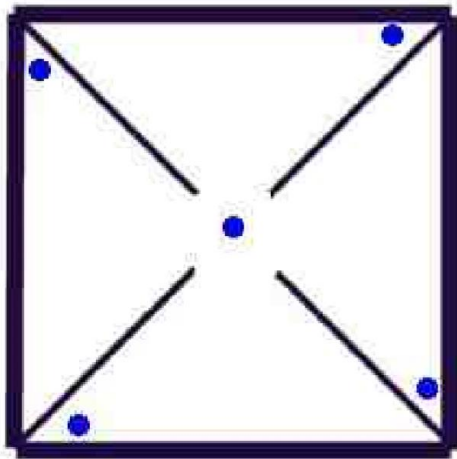
Fold Your Own - Almost any paper decoration can be folded in to shapes to decorate your own garland. Think about using colour copies of photos, folded paper flowers, construction paper hearts, cardboard shapes, etc.

Flowers - flowers and leaves form the basis of most traditional garlands and can be bound together and tied on to any part of the garland.

Pinwheel

Cut a square of paper. Draw lines using a ruler, from corner to corner. Cut halfway along each line. Fold alternate corners into the middle. Overlap the points. Pin them to the straw or stick, with the bead behind them. This will help the pinwheel spin.

You can decorate your pinwheels however you like. You could include pinwheels in your garland design and thread them together with string? For a more durable pinwheel flower (though likely to spin in the wind), make them from felt, rather than paper



Flowers

Cut out flower shapes from cardboard egg cartons or cake cases; punch a hole in the middle and cut zig zag edges along the top. Paint your flowers whatever colour you would like and let them dry. Push a pipe cleaner or garden rod through the hole. Make a little knot at the end of the pipe cleaner or put blue tack on the end of the garden rod so that it will not separate from the egg cup. You could also attach leaves to your stem.

Trace four handprints onto colourful paper. Cut out the handprints and then glue all the bases of the hands together in a circular pattern to form a flower. Cut out a circle out of yellow paper and paste it in the middle. You could make curled petals by wrapping the finger part of your handprint around a pencil. Twist two pipe cleaners together or use a garden rod to make a stem and attach with a staple. Alternatively you could staple or glue your flowers on to paper and draw the stem and scenery.

Take several sheets of colourful tissue, lay them on top of each other and accordion fold them. Fold in the middle and tie it with a pipe cleaner. Then fan out the accordion and separate the layers.

Traditional garland songs and rhymes

The First of May is Garland Day

The first of May is Garland Day
so please remember the garland.
We don't come here but once a year,
so please remember the garland

May is Here - sung to "Frere Jacques"

I see daisies, I see daisies
Bloom in May, bloom in May.
May's the month for flowers,
No more April showers.
May is here, May is here.

May Basket

Did you ever see a May basket,
A May basket, a May basket?
Did you ever see a May basket that looked so good?
I worked for hours,
then filled it with flowers.
Did you ever see a May basket That looked so good?

See our Maypole

See our Maypole filled with flowers, From above, the blossoms tower,
Fragrance rich, and perfume rare, pretty scents that fill the air.
Violets blue and daisies white, you are here for our delight;
Daffodils and roses, too, pretty flow'rs for me and you!
Tell us what the flowers say, as we sing and dance and play.
Tell us what the flowers say, on this special day!
This is what the flowers say, as we sing and dance and play.
This is what the flowers say: It is bright May Day!

A German May Song

Grün, grün, grün, sind alle meine Kleider,

Grün, grün, grün, liebt jederman.

Darum lieb' ich alles was so grün ist,

Denn mein Liebein Jäger ist.

Blau, blau, blau, sind, alle meine Kleider,

Blau, blau, blau liebt jederman.

Darum lieb' ich alles was so blau ist,

Denn mein Lieb ein Matrose ist.

Weiss, weiss, weiss, sind alle meine Kleider,

Weiss, weiss, weiss liebt jederman.

Darum lieb' ich alles was so weiss ist,

Denn mein Lieb ein Bäcker ist.

Schwarz, schwarz, schwarz, sind alle meine Kleider,

Schwarz, schwarz, schwarz liebt jederman.

Darum lieb' ich alles was so schwarz ist,

Denn mein Lieb ein Schornsteinfeger ist.

English Translation:

Green, green, green are all of my dresses,

Green, green, green loves everyone.

So I love everything that's green

Because my love is a hunter.

Blau: blue Matrose: sailor

Weiss: white Bäcker: baker

Schwarz: black Schornsteinfeger: chimneysweep

Garland song

I been a-rambling all this night, And some time of this day;
And now returning back again I brought you garland gay.
A garland gay I have brought you here, And at your door I stand,
'Tis nothing but a sprout, but 'tis well budded out, The work of Our Lord's hand.

So dear, so dear, as Christ loved us, And for our sins was slain,
Christ bids us turn from wickedness, And turn to the Lord again.
Why don't you do as we have done, The very first day of May,
And from my parents I have come, And would no longer stay

Hurray for May Day!

May Day's here with sun so bright, sun so bright, sun so bright.

May Day's here with sun so bright.

Hurray for May Day!

May Day's here with flowers in bloom, flowers in bloom, flowers in bloom.

May Day's here with flowers in bloom.

Hurray for May Day!