

FAMILY CRAFT

Add LIGHT to the season

Inside or out, luminaries can brighten your dark winter

By Mary Rasch
For the News Tribune

Want to add a little light to a season that hushes the sun's glow quite early in the evening? I tested two ways to make luminaries — with balloons and water. One requires a lot of heat, and the other requires a lot of cold. Test both techniques to bring a little light and a lot of fun to these long winter nights.

ICE LUMINARIES

- Materials:**
- Balloons
 - Water
 - Container
 - Flameless Candles

***** Remember how to create water balloons? If you are a pro from your younger days, you will have an easy time with this project.

Instructions:

You may want to use the laundry tub faucet to fill up your balloons with water — or any that you can fit the opening of a balloon around. If you blow up your balloons with air first, it will help them to stretch. Place the balloon on the faucet and turn it on keeping your fingers around the mouth of the balloon so it doesn't slip off.

When your balloon is the size that you would like your ice lantern, shut the water off. Slip the mouth of the balloon off the spigot to tie it in a knot. Repeat these steps for as many luminaries as you would like.

Place the balloons with the knots up in the snow overnight. If the temperatures won't support freezing, you may want to place the balloons in the freezer. I put my balloons in a plastic bin to help them stay upright.

The goal is to freeze the balloons long enough to have a thick outer shell but not solid all the way through. You will want to break the ice in one spot to allow water to run out. This will allow a cavern for the candle to reside.

To test one of your lanterns, snip the balloon at the knot and continue cutting so the balloon slips off around the ice as shown in the picture.

You will find that the luminaries last longer if they aren't melting with the heat from a flame. So, I recommend using a flameless, battery-operated tea-light.

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Photos by Mary Rasch / For the News Tribune

It's the little things we miss

When I can't find them, I wonder where they go. Did some barefoot alien with cold feet or a bad virus sneak into the bedroom in the middle of the night and spirit them away? Or was it my granddaughter's imaginary buddy George, who lives in the basement with the mice, invading our walk-in-closet upstairs? At any rate, where do handkerchiefs and socks go?

I like the idea of not being Kleenex-dependent. With the influenza season upon us, it seems every time we drive by the nearest big box store, we have to make a stop and load the back



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of the van with a dozen or more boxes of throwaway tissues. The use of paper products like these is a convenience. It avoids repeated trips to the basement to unload a dryer full of clothes and bedding, pawing around in a tumbled mess. When I can't find any handkerchiefs, could it be there's something in the laundry chute that snatches them away before they hit the basement floor?

I have found handkerchiefs in the garage where they are subject to unusual uses. Need to check the oil or wipe dirt off a headlight? Never met a dipstick or headlamp that didn't like a soft touch. How about wiping Super Glue off your fingers in an emergency before it sets up? It's my understanding that a thumb and forefinger are not normally mated to each other permanently, right? There are choices that must be made in a crisis — clean the fingers quickly or have a tough time finding gloves that fit your hands the next time it gets cold.

We gave up a long time ago the idea of multi-colored socks. Trendy patterns are for special occasions only. In the morning rush to get to work or appointments, sorting "what goes with what" is a luxury we couldn't afford. Argyles? A touch too elegant. Figuring out the patterns in a crunch? No way.

Toe socks, while cute, strangle old toes. Even socks that can be turned into monkeys are usually available only to kids with patient grandmothers with lots of time on their hands. So it's one color fits all. Black is fine. But did you ever see a woman or man running in black socks? I know it happens, but it is jarring to older sensibilities. If God had wanted us to exercise in black socks, he would have put them on top of our running shoes as a hint. Either way, the issue remains, where do socks and handkerchiefs go?

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