

Pine Needle Heart by Margaret Fichtner



Symbol: Heart represents Love

“My family lives on a little fiber farm in the Sierra Foothills of CA. The El Dorado National Forest is just around the corner and beautiful pine trees of every shape and size are our neighbors. Pine needles are abundant and although I had seen many elaborate baskets made from this craft medium, I wanted to make something simple so that my youngest child could help. This ornament can be made by a child as young as 6 (with a little help from a parent). The heart symbol is a simple, timeless expression of love, which embodies the season.”

Materials

6 bundles of pine needles with sheaths still attached
a long piece of raffia approximately 36” (or ribbon for a more colorful variation)
a clothespin or metal clip
ribbon or string for hanging.

Note: Mature pine needles turn brown by the summer sun, and fall from the trees in early autumn. This is the best time to collect needles for projects, as the surface of the needle is hard and glossy and the color is rich brown. Choose needles that are 6-12 inches long. The following trees have needles 5 to 18 inches long: Digger pine, Coulter pine, Jeffrey pine, Ponderosa pine, Long leaf pine or Loblolly pine. You can also buy long pine needles online or at craft stores.

To prepare the needles: Boil water in a large pot. Turn off the heat and place your needles in the hot water. Let them soak for 30-60 minutes until they become very pliable. Transfer them to a plastic bag or wrap them in a wet dish towel to keep them moist.

Select 6 soaked pine needle bundles all of the same length. Arrange the needles with the sheaths pointing down.

Fold the raffia in half and tie the needles together just above the sheaths.

Divide the pine needles into two equal sections.

Begin wrapping one piece of the raffia around the bundle of needles on the diagonal and very carefully (this is where the needles might break if they aren't soaked long enough), bend the needles to form one half of the heart.

Use the clothespin or clip to hold the end in place while you wrap the other half.

Wrap the other piece of raffia around the remaining section of needles in the same manner.

Tie the raffia tightly, first in a double knot, and then in a bow around both ends at the bottom of the heart.

Finish your ornament by adding a hanger. Use ribbon, yarn or embroidery string. Cut a 10" piece of ribbon and thread through raffia wrap from each half of the heart. Secure with a double knot, then tie the loose thread ends together in a bow to make a loop for hanging.