



December 7, 2021

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EVERGREEN HANGING BALLS

Growing up in an old colonial home in New England, the outdoors was the go-to garden center for holiday decorations. We would go foraging, clipping and collecting greenery – pine, spruce, cedar, mountain laurel, running pine, etc., placing it on a canvas tarp that was dragged along. The greenery would be stashed in a protected spot under the shrubbery by the kitchen all ready to decorate door, mantle and table. Sometimes, some of the collected greenery would be used to make an evergreen hanging ball.



Evergreen hanging balls are a fun decoration to make, some call them kissing balls. Today as then, mine consists of a 3 – 4 inches diameter, roundish potato or turnip for the center and greenery from what is available in the yard. In collecting greenery, I always collect more than I think will be used and keep all the clippings to about 5 inches in length. Everything, including the center potato goes into a pail to soak for a couple hours, then dried off.

Other materials include: clippers, 2 inches long paperclip with one end straightened to insert into the potato, needle-nosed pliers, floral wire, bamboo skewers to make holes in the potato to insert the greenery stems, ribbons, pinecones (optional), and newspaper to cover the work station.

Begin by inserting the bamboo skewer from *top to bottom* through the potato, then pull it out. Insert the straightened end of the paperclip, *bottom to top* with the looped part of the paperclip partially pushed into the potato bottom. Using the needle-nosed pliers, bend over the top, straight end of the paperclip, making a loop where the hanging ribbon is attached.

Attach ribbon, pinecones, etc., with floral wire to the bottom and top paperclip loops. The top hanging ribbon should be about two feet in length, tied to make a loop through top hook.

Beginning at the bottom of the potato, use the bamboo skewer to poke a $\frac{3}{4}$ inch deep hole into the potato. Using the clippers, snip the greenery stem at an angle to create a point and insert the now 4 – 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches piece of greenery into the pierced hole. Continue covering and filling in around the potato to the top, piercing it (about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch spacing) and inserting greenery, making sure the potato is hidden.



Final notes: An additional bow may be attached to the top or bottom. I have also made these using only one type of greenery such as holly or boxwood. Since this one was made so early in the season, I have placed it in a protected spot outdoors to stay fresh. Before bringing it in, it will be submerged into a pail of water for a few minutes (keeping top ribbon above water) then drip dried. It may be sprayed with Wilt Pruf to help keep it fresh. Online there are lots of DIY videos for making holiday evergreen or kissing balls, though most use the floral foam for the center. To make a true kissing ball – add some mistletoe! Happy decorating!

