

Make a Horse Holiday Garland

Text and photos by Cindy Hale

Would you like to add some equestrian flair to your home décor this holiday season? It's fairly simple when you create a festive garland decorated with colorful horses.



Step 1: Start by rounding up several horses cut from unfinished plywood. If they're not readily available at your local craft store, look for them online.

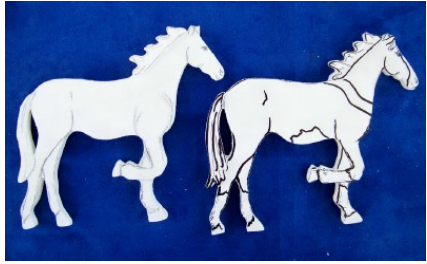
Step 2: Once you have your horses, choose a garland. Craft store aisles are over-grown with swaths of faux greenery this time of year, but resist those that feature pine cones and poinsettias that'll overwhelm your horses. Instead, select a minimalist garland so your horses can be the stars.



Step 3: While you're at the craft store, browse for other embellishments. What else might complement your horsey theme? Traditional shapes like hearts and stars are reliable choices. Blank tags will give you space to add your own holiday message. And don't neglect the ready-made wooden figures specially designed for kids' crafts. You might discover a pony!

Step 4: Besides your creative components, you'll also need some specific supplies. Every holiday garland needs at least one spool of ribbon. You'll also need an assortment of acrylic paint in traditional horse colors, including basic white. Make sure you also have paint brushes, a fine-point black marker and, unless you're a devoted fan of the hot glue gun, a tube of multi-purpose glue.





Step 5: It's time to go to work! Cover both the front and back sides of every wooden item in white acrylic paint. This acts as a primer or sealer on the raw wood. Then, once the horses are dry, use a pencil to outline their legs, hooves and face. Define markings like stockings, blazes and spots. When you feel confident with your sketch, go over the pencil lines with your black marker. These bolder lines will guide you as you paint. If you plan on labeling the horses with their names, draw the outline of a banner around each of their necks.

Step 6: Paint each horse so it resembles its real life color. When the coat color is dry, the original outlines of each horse's face and conformation points should still be barely visible. Trace over them again with the marker to add details to the fetlocks, mane, tail and face. Use a tiny paintbrush (or a fine-point paint pen) to write the horse's name on its neck banner. And since this is a holiday decoration, don't hold back on the glitter. If you have any handy, sprinkle it on the hooves for some extra sparkle.



Step 7: Use a ruler to draw light pencil guidelines on the little wooden tags; the lines will help keep your writing even and straight. Then print clever remarks or holiday greetings using your black marker. Finish up any other decorations. By adding these small elements you'll entice guests and visitors to approach the garland and see just what else hangs among the greenery besides the horses.

Step 8: The last task is to attach hangers to each element that will decorate the garland. While the little tags will hang by ribbon streamers, the hearts and horses will be tied to the garland with double strands of tan cord. Place a generous drop of glue on the back of each heart and horse. Then tie the strands of cord into a double square knot. Press the knot into the glue so that it lies flat. After about 10 minutes, the glue will set and hold the tie-strings firmly in place.



Step 9: Give some thought to the format of your garland. Lay the garland flat on the ground or on a wide table and play around with arranging horses, bows, hearts and tags. Once you've decided on a pattern, secure your garland in place and then add your decorations.

Step 10: Whether your horsey holiday garland hangs over your fireplace mantle, above your front door or outside on a patio fence, it's sure to be a conversation piece. Everyone will know you're filled with the holiday spirit, and that horses bring you joy throughout the year.

