

Popcorn and Cranberry Ornaments

Supplies Needed:

24-gauge beading or floral wire

1 12-oz. bag fresh cranberries

½- inch wide decorative ribbon

Craft wire cutters and pliers

2-3 cups popped popcorn

Directions:

Cut a 12” piece of wire. Bend one end of the piece of wire into a simple hook for hanging. String cranberries onto wire, alternating with beads and popcorn in any desired pattern. Continue stringing cranberries, popcorn and beads, leaving a ¼” free at end. Using pliers, bend end of wire under the base of hook to create a circle. Trim with decorative ribbon bow at the top and hang with the hook.

Dispose of the ornament before the berries get soft. To prolong the life of the garland, try spraying shellac on the cranberries after stringing them. To avoid staining, do not place the garland directly on lightly-painted surfaces or linens. Caution: for the safety of wildlife and birds, do not use shellac if you plan to hang ornaments outdoors.

Cranberries are one of only three fruits native to North America —the other two are blueberries and Concord grapes. This tasty little berry was a staple in the diets of American Indians long before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock. Today, there are about 150 cranberry marshes in Wisconsin, occupying a total of 110,000 acres in 18 counties. Today, cranberries are big business in Wisconsin. Gross annual grower returns from the crop exceed 64 million dollars on an annual cranberry harvest of a million barrels. Plants in Kenosha, Babcock, Eagle River, Warrens, Tomah and Cranmoor process and package the berries. Fresh fruit, canned sauce, bottled juice, frozen concentrate, jams, sauces, relishes and special low-calorie products are just a few of the many ways cranberries are now processed. Although cranberry products are now available year-round, sales still spurt at the traditional holiday seasons of Thanksgiving and Christmas.

There were 13 farms with 374 total acres of popcorn in Wisconsin in 2002. The production equaled 1,050,488 shelled pounds. The average American eats 68 quarts of popcorn each year!