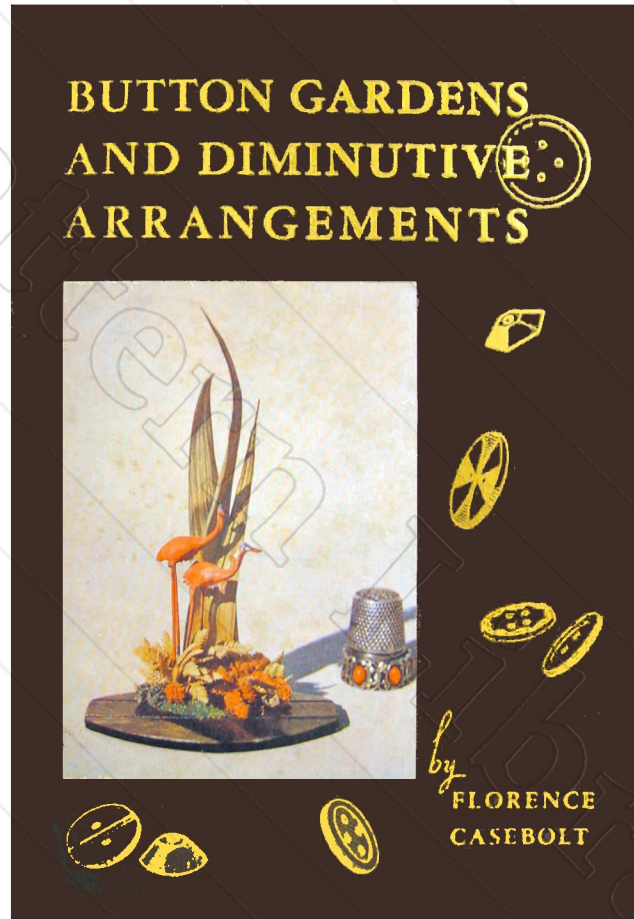


“Button Gardens and Diminutive Arrangements” by Florence Way Casebolt. (c) 1952. The Button Garden Studio, Berkeley, Ca.

Book review and ideas for modern use
By Hope Wright
Springfield IL USA 2020

To the best of my knowledge, this book is under copyright, and only a few copies are available in the secondary market. The photo on the cover will give an idea of her masterpieces, which are always in scale.



This could be a project with appeal to many who are in quarantine, or sheltering in place, during the pandemic. Florence made many of her gardens and arrangements for hospitalized soldiers after WWII, and I think many people have family members who would welcome something similar, whether they are at home or in hospital or long-term care facilities. Involve children or anyone who remembers how to play in the collection and creation. There are 3 parts needed for arrangements: base, figurine, floral settings. Ideas follow (from both Florence and Hope), don't feel limited to these.

Besides large coat buttons, other potential materials can serve as the base and/or as a backdrop: belt buckles, small rocks, crystals, broken jewelry, bark, driftwood, shells, bottle caps. The intention is for arrangements that would be suitable for bedside tables or for a shadow box, so keep them small, which is much of the charm.

Potentials for small figures: charms and novelty buttons, miniature toys, knickknacks, model railroad or doll house accessory pieces, ornaments for miniature Christmas trees, fairy gardens (although most items are too large).

Small succulents, cacti, moss, lichens, and air plants are all possibilities for a living garden (to water with an eye dropper). Consider also dried plant materials (including flowers, weeds, reeds, seeds, seed pods): if you are able to take walks outdoors, keep your eyes open for creative possibilities (wash and place in an oven at low heat to kill any critters). Other ideas: small artificial flowers; flowers you make from paper, ribbon, other arts and crafts materials such as flocking materials and corks; supplies from miniature landscaping for railroading or doll houses.

Florence's arrangements are all perfectly in scale, creating a miniature scenic illusion, and I do love them and will undoubtedly make some myself. I also anticipate a certain naive charm of compositions that are not perfect scale or simply cute. Adjust placement while assembling, then glue in place. Tweezers are useful.

I first used the idea to create a setting for a miniature nativity scene, where the figures were made of pinto beans. The base is a 55mm (2¼ inch) button form, intended to be covered, while I painted it. Florence wrote live plants can survive a year in such a miniature garden, so I planted some succulents in a bottle cap, and will keep an eye on it!







