



Newsletter

Valentine's Heart

In the small country schoolhouse where I attended elementary school, my classmates and I prepared for Valentine's Day days in advance. As was traditional, we each decorated a shoe box with strips of colored paper, hearts, and cherubs, and then cut a slit in the lid as an opening to receive our friends' cards. Purchased Valentines were relatively new, so while a few children gave prefabricated hearts, most of us spent an evening cutting out red, pink, and white construction paper hearts. We decorated them with markers, strips of paper lace doily, and bits of paper and tiny hearts. Inside we wrote a message appropriate to each recipient. The real challenge was writing to the boys. We girls tried to write friendly phrases that wouldn't be misconstrued as being—too friendly.

And then there were those people, like parents and best friends, to whom I wanted to give something special. I put a little extra work into their Valentines. This fragrant heart is reminiscent of such a one.

What You Need:

Pink or red felt, scissors, embroidery thread in contrasting color, embroidery needle, craft stuffing or cotton balls, potpourri or fragrant oil. Decorative craft items, such as sequins, beads, buttons, and more embroidery thread.

☆ **Activity:**

This activity uses a needle and small items, so be sure to supervise closely. Younger children should use a blunt needle and use larger decorative items, to prevent choking. Older children can follow these steps. Give help where required:

1. Cut two 4-inch squares of felt.
2. Cut two identical hearts from the felt squares.
3. Decorate one heart by sewing on buttons or beads, gluing on sequins, or stitching “I love you” with embroidery thread.
4. Sew the two hearts together with two strands of embroidery thread. Choose thread that contrasts with the felt. Make the first stitch from inside the hearts, to hide the end. Overstitch around the edges, pushing the needle up from the bottom to the top of the felt layers. Stitch almost all the way around, but leave a hole for stuffing.
5. Lightly stuff the heart with pillow stuffing, pulled out cotton balls, or sweet smelling potpourri. Add a couple drops of fragrant oil.
6. Finish stitching around the heart. Secure the thread by running the needle in and out several stitches back. Cut the embroidery thread.
7. Keep the fragrant heart in a clothing drawer, or sew a piece of ribbon or embroidery thread on the back and hang it on the wall.

