

Starting to think ahead

When I turn the calendar to October, and see all the holiday seasonal displays popping up in all the stores, noting the chill in the air and the 90 degree days behind us, thinking of cool nights, maybe a bit of frost on the pumpkins, wood smoke drifting through the air and fireplaces started to ward off the chill, I can't help but start to think of my holiday Department 56 display. Every year I vow to start early to enjoy the building of my display. Last year, like many others, I usually forget something. So this year I wanted to start early, naturally thinking of what I missed last year. This year it's flicker bulbs. For some unknown reason I pack my flicker bulbs separated the year before, so they were the last detail to be unpacked last year and you guessed it. I didn't have one outlet to spare. I let it go and many people who saw my display commented that the "fires were missing". This goes to show you how much these little details make a village. Multiple flicker bulbs should be the mainstay of every display owner's bag of tricks. Not only do they create motion, casting wonderful shadows on the walls, but create very soft glows to any interior of your building, making one believe there is a roaring fire keeping everyone warm inside. Put an orange flicker bulb into a black film canister, insert the canister into your Styrofoam so only 1/3 is showing add a pulled piece of 1/2 small cotton ball around the bulb (inside the canister) and some very small wood shavings and put the "Ashley Pond Skating Party" or "Violet Vendor/Carolers/Chestnut Vendor" (both from Dickens Village) around it. Well I hope you are getting the idea. I have seen this used in many different villages using a different container. I use the film container for the Chestnut Vendor, but I use a flicker bulb, set in the Styrofoam, but I build my own bonfire with twigs from an outside bush or small tree. Just cut them up to build (teepee style) around the bulb. A spot or two of hot glue will save your patience doing this. It is also good to have a little dirt or something that resembles ashes. For that I use very dry coffee grounds. I have even gone as far as use a small piece of floral wire, hot glue it to the hand of one of the people in "Bringing Home the Yule Log". On the other end of the floral wire insert a piece of Styrofoam or a tiny piece of cotton (that I sprayed with hair spray) to look like a marshmallow, then stand the person near the bonfire with the marshmallow extended over the fire! I also use a flicker bulb in my Holy Land display. My hubby had an idea one day of putting an incense burner inside the Innkeeper's

Caravansary! It looks awesome! and smells good too. You can also use the flicker bulb under a pile of rubble (with a stick of incense to create a lot of smoke. Stick a long tail of blackened cotton stiffened with wire into the smokestack and send your firemen to the scene with a crowd gathered around. This will make your display into a significant event, looking so real you might even set off your smoke alarm! Highlighting with white flicker bulbs also gives the outdoor areas more interest. If you insert them into a wooded area, behind buildings or against mountains you can create more intense shadows while helping to highlight certain areas. They act as a great spotlight with more visual interest. No matter how you use flicker bulbs, what color or shape, do use them. They invite your viewers to linger longer and use their imaginations more! I was watching a coworker viewing my display one year and smiled to myself when she lean over to see the people warming their hands over the bonfire at the Ashley Pond when she pulled her hair back so it would fall into the "fire"!