

Create a Valentine Horseshoe

Follow these directions for a fun and crafty project that you can complete in just one evening.

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There's a popular saying: "Horses leave hoof prints on our hearts."

This Valentine's Day, why not make something to express that sentiment? You can do it in one evening with just a few crafty items.

First, you'll need a clean horseshoe. Either grab one that your horse has cast off or visit your local farrier supplier and buy a pony-sized shoe. Other necessities include Rustoleum paint (white is the Valentine's Day color of choice), various pink, red and burgundy glass beads (include some small "E" beads for spacers) and a roll of red 20-gauge or 22-gauge jewelry wire. The beads and wire are available at any craft supply store. To help you twist and cut the wire, have a pair of wire cutters and some needle nose pliers handy.

Start by spraying your clean shoe with the rust-proofing paint. Cover both sides and allow it to dry. Since the shoe will hang with its ends pointing up, you'll need to create a hanger. To do that, cut an 8-inch piece of wire and thread one end of it through the top nail hole of the shoe on one side. Twist the wire together at the back of the shoe to secure, and nip off any excess with your wire cutters. Make a fancy loop or two in the wire and then feed the end through the top nail hole on the other side, securing it in back as you did with the other end. Now you have a hanger for your project and you can proceed with the beading. Get started by cutting six 6-inch segments of wire and preparing an assortment of E beads and their larger companions.

Now you can begin beading. Push the end of your first wire segment through the top nail hole on one side of the shoe (push it in right alongside the hanger wire), wrap it once around the shoe, and then twist that end around the remainder of the segment at the back of the shoe. This will hold it taut. Then add beads in whatever order you like, continuing to wrap the beaded wire around the shoe until you're about one inch from the end of the wire. With your needle nose pliers to help with your grip, twist the end of the red wire under a neighboring loop and pull it tight. That will hold that band of beads tightly against your shoe. Continue on, cutting more segments of wire as necessary.

You'll discover that the craft wire is very malleable, and it's easy to twist and knot as required. Thankfully the beads cover a multitude of not-quite-perfect efforts! In the end, you'll have a lasting memento of Valentine's Day and a reminder that the horses you love do indeed leave a lasting hoof print on your heart.