



Rustic votive & tealight holders

Michael T Collins shines a light on the millennia-old tradition of using candles

Candles have been around for centuries – the earliest known candles were first seen in China around 200BC and appeared in Europe after 400AD. These first candles were generally made of natural fat and wax, with paraffin revolutionising candlemaking in the 1830s. These days candles are a scented luxury found on mantelpieces in ‘hygge’ homes (pronounced hue-guh, meaning cosy,

kinship, special time, nice) across the globe, and no longer principally used for illumination. As a child in the '70s, I can recall the frequent power cuts we experienced in the evenings, and remember with fondness doing jigsaws by candlelight.

There's something about candles – they create subtle lighting and bathe your home with texture and colour. Studies have shown that soft light has a

calming effect on the body and relaxing with candlelight can help reduce stress. Plus, putting on a candle-light dinner will always win extra brownie points. In this article we rummage through the scrap wood bin for pieces which will make candle holders that can be used as attractive table centrepieces or given away as gifts. One year I made candle holders for friends out of offcuts from wood they had given me. ➤

You will need

- Wire brush
- 38mm & 50mm Forstner bit
- Table saw and/or bandsaw
- Cut list/supplies
- Any scrap wood
- Candles



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Making a holder

1 There are no hard and fast rules when it comes to making candle holders, but you will need to make sure that the candle support is solid and the construction is not top heavy, for obvious reasons. Start by selecting the wood and laying out the location for each candle or votive to give the most pleasing look.

2 I have used two types of candles: standard tealights and long burn votive candles. For the tealights, use a 38mm Forstner bit and drill down to the depth of the Forstner – this is approximately 12mm and is a perfect fit for the candle.

3 The glass votive holders will also fit this size hole. However, the design can be enhanced by using a 50mm Forstner bit. This will allow the votives to hang below the holder. I ran the router, with a small chamfer bit, around the top edge of the holes. Be aware that adding this chamfer will cause the votive to drop slightly.

4 With the votive holders dropping below the surface the holder will need to be raised to allow the glasses to hang just above the surface on which the candle holder is placed. Over the years I have used many items, including old light pulls, draw pulls, door knobs, and custom-made legs. In this example I used the pieces cut off when I tidied up the ends of the holder.

5 Secure them to the underside of the holder using long panel pins.

6 Experiment with different ideas to give your 'candelabra' different heights and character. I used an angle grinder to give the ends an old handsaw effect. A rasp would also have achieved a similar result.



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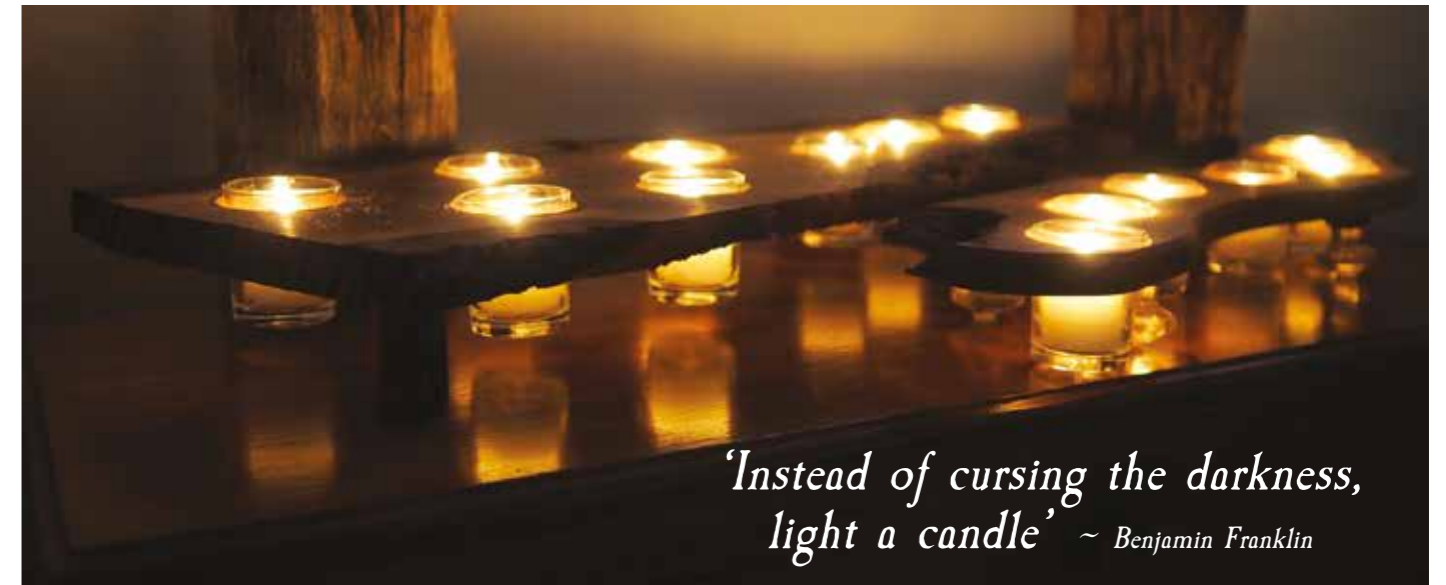
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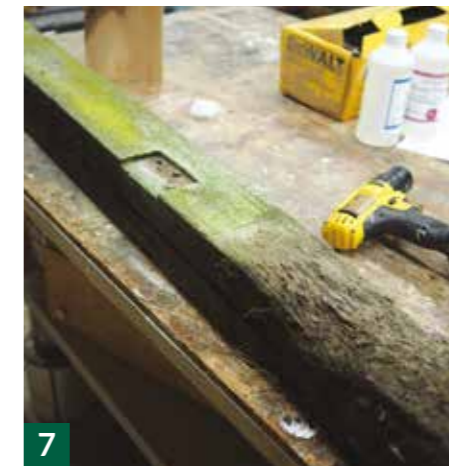
'Instead of cursing the darkness, light a candle' ~ Benjamin Franklin

Old fence post candle holders

7 My neighbour was removing an old fence that had been standing for 50-plus years and I grabbed a couple of the fence posts.

8 Once all the crud was removed and the two pieces cut to length...

9... it was clear that the wood was beautiful white oak – it made two lovely, rustic tealight candle holders.



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Note: When working with old wood that has had a utilitarian use outdoors beware that it may be full of metal, so check thoroughly with a metal detector before running through a table saw or planer. Better still – just use hand tools.



The finish

By now you probably know that my go-to finish is natural Danish oil. This brings out the natural beauty of the wood and if several coats are applied (sanding lightly between) a beautiful lustre can be achieved.

For safety's sake I like to apply the Danish oil on holders where the

votive glasses are used – the glass adds an extra barrier between the flame and the wood. For the natural finished holders I very rarely apply any finish.

And there you have it – beautiful creations that add light and atmosphere to the soul. ■