



City-dwellers maintain they have advantages unavailable to people living in rural or suburban areas. They cite transportation systems, museums, theatres and other cultural opportunities as reasons they prefer the urban life.

None of these compensate for the disadvantages -- apartment living, over-burdened buses and subways, concrete sidewalks, polluted air, noise, crowds, and rampant crime -- to us lucky enough to live on the Cape.

We can enjoy theatre, concerts and art shows without driving off the peninsula or, if there's some particular thing we don't want to miss, chances are it will come to Boston where there's a constantly changing pattern of displays at the Museum of Art, shows at several theatres, and concerts at Symphony Hall.

The drive is short, and easy, compared to the time and effort involved for a Long Island suburbanite to reach New York City. Bus service to Boston is convenient and comfortable from Hyannis.

Isolation is not a problem for most people on Cape Cod nor is there any paucity of good local entertainment.

Opportunities for creativity are commonplace. For stimulation of imagination, craftsmen of every description work in our villages year round, and during summer months, Craftsmen's Fairs are common.

Schools offer classes in woodworking, ceramics and other creative arts throughout the winter; private classes are advertised in classified sections of most local newspapers.

Creativity is making something useful and, hopefully, attractive from raw materials. All around us, if we but look, are dozens of things to use. None of us need step more than a half-mile from home to find inspiration and possibilities.

Swamps are a rich source of bits of dead wood and weathered branches to form bases for driftwood lamps, for instance. Beaches are strewn with shells, stones and seaweeds waiting to be gathered for a montage, mobile or shadowbox.

Woodlands abound with tiny plants; many are suitable for making a delightful terrarium.

The oceans surrounding us give up seaweeds to decorate note paper or card stock; each can become a unique and beautiful illustration.

A battered and marred wooden table can be transformed into a tile-top table by setting in grout a collection of small colored stones to form a picture or pattern. A heatproof countertop next to a stove, for example, could be formed in this way.

None of these projects require special tools or great monetary expense. Some are simple enough for a child to do, but adults will enjoy them equally.

Take a bucket to the beach this summer and fill it half-full of seawater. While bathing or walking along at the water's edge, watch for tiny pieces of seaweed floating in the water or cast up on the sand.

Seaweeds come in a variety of colors, shapes and textures. There are red and pink ones that look, while floating in the water, like small feathery powderpuffs.

There are pale green ones resembling delicate tracery of twigs against the sky. Some yellow-green weeds appear like ribbons of lettuce. Some are feathery; some long and stringy. There are common brown knobby ones, thick and rubbery. For our purposes, these are the least desirable.

Scoop up small pieces of the more unusual weeds and put them in your bucket and take them all home with you. Depending on your purpose, you may want to include bits of shells or small claws or maybe a handful of beach sand.

Within a day or so, start experimenting with your decorating. Use fairly stiff paper, preferably white and not too absorbent, in small sizes. Float a piece of seaweed in a shallow basin of fresh water a few inches deep. Slip the paper under the seaweed in the water.

Wait until the weed forms an attractive design; if it helps, stir the

water with your finger. When you think the seaweed looks pretty against the paper, lift the paper up, holding it flat and level, with the seaweed on it.

The gelatinous quality of the seaweed makes it stick firmly to the paper as the water runs off. Now place the paper on a flat surface in a warm sunny place. Anywhere there's plenty of air circulation is good, but not where there's so much wind it blows away.

When paper and weed are thoroughly dry, you'll have a notepaper or greeting card with a unique design. After a bit of experimentation with different kinds of paper, you'll find the best for your use.

Once you become proficient at creating designs on small pieces of paper, you may wish to try a larger piece with several different weeds to create a picture on white poster stock.

Use a large tray with sides a couple of inches high, and work as quickly as you can, so the poster doesn't get soaked through. After it has dried, you can add shells, crab claws, a sand dollar, a bit of net, or a sprig or two of beach grass. Just glue them on. For texture, smear an area with a very thin coat of glue and sprinkle with dry beach sand.

Choose a natural wood or gray-painted frame at the dime store, and you've something you'll be proud to hang on your wall. A youngster who has helped with this project will enjoy having it in his room.

Terrariums are simple miniature gardens requiring little more care than occasional snipping. Any clear glass bowl with an open top large enough to accommodate your hand will do.

Place a layer of gravel or small white stones from the beach in the bottom of the bowl. Add a mixture of three parts each vermiculite, garden soil, and peat moss about an inch thick. Top off with moss you'll find in the woods at the base of shade trees, in a swamp, or in almost any lawn on Cape Cod.

Dampen the soil before starting to add small plants from the woods. Gather your plants carefully, choosing those that grow only an inch or two high and that produce colorful leaves, flowers or berries.

Use a pencil to help settle the plant roots in the soil below the moss. Once your miniature garden is complete, cover the top with a sheet of plastic wrap and leave it alone.

A terrarium will thrive best in a well-lighted location, out of direct sunlight. If moisture forms on the inside of the glass or the underside of the plastic covering, open, wipe with a paper tissue or cotton swab, and replace covering. Water sparingly only if plants start to droop.

Vacation days will soon be here, and children out of school. When they complain of nothing to do, start them creating something from the myriad of raw materials at hand.

Maybe a city kid has cultural advantages our Cape life doesn't offer, but for creative opportunities, the country life abounds.