

Beijing park goes high tech to save toilet paper

A park in the Chinese capital, Beijing, has found a high-tech solution to stop people from using excessive amounts of toilet paper. The Temple of Heaven Park has equipped public washrooms with a paper dispenser that uses facial recognition technology to record each user and then roll out a strip of about 70 cm of paper for one trip to the bathroom.

The same user will have to wait for nine minutes before they can get another strip of toilet paper. "This machine was actually designed in order to stop people from wasting toilet paper,"

said Lei Zhenshan, a designer and sales executive for dispenser maker Shoulian Technology. "If the paper was put in an uncontrolled device, then people will waste it endlessly," he told Reuters Television.

This month, Chinese media reported that visitors to the park's washrooms were taking unnecessarily large amounts of toilet paper from dispensers. — Reuters



Photo shows two Easter eggs decorated with designs cut from paper napkins. — AP photos



Photo shows two Easter eggs made by covering Styrofoam forms with scraps of fabric.

Instead of dyeing Easter eggs, try decoupage

When it comes to Easter eggs, dipping them in dye is fine, but for a more decorative and longer-lasting result, try decoupage. I tried three DIY techniques for adding colors and patterns to eggs using decoupage glue - Mod Podge is a popular brand. One technique paired vintage book pages with plastic eggs, another used printed napkins with real eggs, and the third involved fabric and Styrofoam. All three methods were fairly messy given the glue, but at least I didn't end up with fingers dyed blue from food coloring. And unlike hard-boiled dyed Easter eggs, these will last for years to come. Here's what I found, with each method rated from 1 to 10, with 10 indicating the least expensive, easiest and best results:

Book pages-plastic eggs

This tutorial comes from a blog called "SewforSoul" and was published in "Reloved" magazine. While it was the most time-consuming technique I tried, it yielded the most impressive results. To make these eggs, small strips of plain paper are glued to plastic eggs to serve as a base layer that hides the colored plastic. Once that layer has dried, the egg is buffed by rubbing it with the back of a spoon to smooth out any rough edges. The eggs are then covered with small strips of paper torn from an old book, overlapping the strips at random until the egg is completely covered. More drying and buffing, and then additional designs cut from paper napkins are glued to the eggs. A wash of watered-down craft paint gives the eggs a distressed, antique look. The original version of this method featured black-and-white images, but I used napkins featuring colored illustrations of Peter Rabbit to brighten them up a bit. I loved the pastel, shabby chic result.

Napkins-real eggs

Craft maven Martha Stewart's website features multiple techniques for decoupage eggs, including one that involves

real eggs and decorative paper napkins. To try this method, pierce holes into either end of the egg and blow out the contents. Cut around designs from a paper napkin - I chose a floral pattern - and separate the layers to work with just one layer of tissue. Apply decoupage glue to the egg and adhere the designs, and then cover the entire egg with a coat of glue. This technique was inexpensive, especially if you scramble up the egg's contents for breakfast, and produced very pretty, elegant results. Real eggs are fragile, however - I cracked one open trying to enlarge one of the holes - so this method wouldn't be the best to do with young children.

Fabric-styrofoam eggs

I found this technique on Crafts 'n Coffee, a blog created by the company that makes Styrofoam brand foam craft products. The foam eggs I purchased were significantly more expensive than either the plastic or real eggs used in the other projects, and while I had scrap fabric on hand, purchasing the fabric would have made this even more pricey.

For this project, fabric is cut into 1-inch wide strips and then trimmed into triangle shapes. The eggs are covered with glue in sections, and the fabric is stuck on in a random, overlapping manner. A final coat of decoupage glue seals the edges. I found this method fairly fussy - bits of fabric kept peeling off as I manipulated the eggs - and I had trouble smoothing them down. The finished result was a bit too bumpy and rustic-looking for my taste. On the plus side, using Styrofoam means the eggs can easily be pierced and strung on baker's twine to make a garland. Because both the eggs and the fabric are fairly sturdy compared to the paper used in the other methods, or the real eggs, this would be an easier method for children to try. — AP



Photo shows plastic Easter eggs covered with strips of paper torn from book pages, while designs cut from paper napkins add a bit of color.



Photo shows a variety of decoupage Easter eggs.