

Vintage Christmas Ornaments

– No, its not too early!



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October 26th, 2021

I know many of you think it's too early to be talking about Christmas. But to enthusiastic collectors, it isn't. True collectors add to their collections any time of the year. Anyway, the first frost isn't far off, so collectors are ready to talk about ornaments.



Drums and Strings



Cones

In Europe, when glass ornaments first became a thing, the initial question must have been something like “What kind of ornaments would be suitable?” The obvious answer was what one normally saw on evergreen trees—cones. From that, it was a short step to other natural items like fruit, flowers, nuts, vegetables, and birds—all things found in the natural world. Many of these ornaments are still

being manufactured, but we've been scouting about for the old ones, and we have a number for you to consider. The pine cones, symbols of fertility, were first made in Europe, where it was a cottage industry. Later the USA and Japan began making them and other ornaments on a grand scale. All these pine cones have their own virtues and are highly collectible. Size, shape, and color range are all broad, so there are plenty of choices, and we continue to find new variations.



Natural Ornaments

Along with the glass cones, we have a nice collection of various berries, fruit, and nuts. When they first made fruit ornaments, all were unsilvered. That is, transparent, but with colored glass. The great thing about all these ornaments is that they don't look all that Christmassy. It's not unusual for some collectors to display them year 'round. Perhaps not on a tree. Maybe in a bowl, or on a cake plate.



Berries

Mushrooms were common in European woodlands, and everyone was familiar with them. Soon they too found their way onto Christmas trees in the form of ornaments. While some would hang on the tree in the traditional way, many were held on with clips. Today we search for any and all mushrooms. Nearly all have the familiar red cap, often with white spots. Sometimes the tops of Christmas tree branches can look bare, so clip-on ornaments can help fill that void.



Birds



Birds

Glass birds have always been popular ornaments. They were considered a symbol of spiritualization. Even now, it's one of the best selling categories in new ornaments. Birds were most often held onto the tree with clips, but there are some that are meant to hang from

hooks. Unfortunately the clips are frequently rather worn out, so they don't function as well as they once did. I usually use some thin wire to help attach the birds. Pipe cleaners work well too, and are less likely to scratch the paint. Some birds are quite large, up to 6" long. Birds come in many colors, but silver is the color we see most often. With this color, there are usually accent colors on the wings, head and tail. The tail is most often made of another material, sometimes called spun glass. I don't know where that term originates, because the material the tails are made of is something else entirely, not glass. Some kind of synthetic, hair like material. This has been in use probably prior to 1900. We also see artificial feathers used for the tails. It's not unusual for the tail to be missing when we acquire the ornaments. We replace them and they look just like the original. With the exception of larger birds like storks, swans, and parrots, most of the smaller birds are not meant to resemble real creatures. They are the fanciful designs of the glass blowing artist. It's only with the birds that are being manufactured today that we see any attempt to replicate nature. Old and new mix nicely together, and all are fun to collect.



Smaller Horns



Larger Horns

Please email me (kevin@milaegers.com) with your questions and comments!

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