

STRAW GRUMPS

Each year a local artist builds the Grump, who eventually becomes the scapegoat. Community members write their “grumps” – things they want to get rid of, grievances, gripes and complaints – on little pieces of paper and put them in Grump Boxes about town. When the Grump is burned, we as a community cleanse ourselves and our town of all these feelings of negativity, transforming them into a more positive future as we enter the winter season together. It is a cathartic experience to watch your grumps go up with those of your family, friends and neighbors.

This year, there is one Grump Box at the Fire Circle at the crossroads of the Four-Way Stop. Folks are invited to put their grumps there, and Vinotok will transform them, thereby offering the experience of our grumps burning collectively.

However, as there will be no public burning, folks may also wish to burn their grumps in their own personal fire – in a backyard fire cauldron, or out camping. Either way, we thought you might want to create your own Straw Grump Mini-Effigy to burn along with all those grievances, or keep it, whatever feels appropriate to you.



Instructions

This offering is based on the European harvest tradition of making a Corn Dolly. The Guide of Straw Craftsmen in the UK explain that in countries around the world that grew grains such as wheat, it was thought the Corn Spirit retreated before the oncoming reapers at harvest time, taking refuge in the last of the standing corn. These last few stalks would be fashioned into a Corn Dolly, a receptacle in which the Spirit could rest during the winter. In the spring, the Corn Dolly, together with its incumbent Corn Spirit, would be returned to the fields with the new planting. By giving the Corn Spirit a home during the dark and cold winter months, it was hoped to ensure that the forthcoming crop would be a bounteous one.

We don't grow wheat in Crested Butte, but we do have lots of native grasses to use in making your own Straw Grump. We recommend collecting these for your Straw Grump.

1. Begin by soaking grass to make it pliable
2. Use a piece of tough thread to tie four straws together with a clove hitch just under the heads. (If you're not familiar with the clove hitch knot, watch this: <https://www.animatedknots.com/clove-hitch-knot-using-loops>)
3. Plait until you have about 8cms of straw left (to braid with four strands watch this: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0pOefGKCKaY>)
4. Bring the four straws up to meet each other, and tie firmly at the end of the plaited section with another clove hitch.
5. Bring this tie down to meet the other tie just under the heads, to form a loop of plaited straw, and tie the two together.
6. Spread the wheat ears out between the wheat stalks and allow to dry flat, preferably under a weight.
7. When dry, you can clip the stalk ends decoratively, and add a ribbon bow or a small sprig of dried flowers.

- Adapted from *The Eden Project*