



Brief history of the pincushion

Step back in time and learn why tomatoes are best placed on the hearth, soldiers sewed the prettiest pincushions and why a pin pillow could increase the pain of childbirth!

Whether you're a sewing newbie or an established seamstress, you will undoubtedly have come across the classic tomato-shaped pincushion. It seems quite surreal that something so essential for storing sharp pins and needles would be modelled after a foodstuff! But it turns out there was a very good reason for the choice that dates back to Victorian times.

BEST OF LUCK

In a lady's parlour room a collection of pincushions would be displayed with pride, showcasing all different sizes and shapes, but the tomato would be the crown jewel of her collection. According to tradition, placing a tomato on the mantel of a new home ensured prosperity by warding off evil spirits. They made excellent housewarming gifts. When tomatoes were out of season, people weren't totally out

of luck: they simply improvised with red material, sawdust, and a little bit of ingenuity. The manmade talismans soon transitioned from good omen to useful tool, with the sawdust stuffing helping keep the pins bright.

While the tomato contains stuffing perfect for keeping the pins safe and upright when they are not being used the little

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strawberry contains emery powder designed to help polish your pins when stabbed. Emery (or corundite) is a dark granular rock used to make abrasive powder; you might know it better from emery boards used to file your fingernails. Over time your pins will tarnish and build up residue that can snag your fabric but, by twisting your pin as you pass it through the strawberry, the emery powder will work its magic! It's a commonly mistaken

assumption that the emery powder sharpens your pins but in reality it's only cleaning your pins and helping them last longer. You cannot salvage a truly blunt pin or needle as this means the tip has become damaged.

ESSENTIAL STORAGE

In the 1300s needles were carried around in leather pouches, before being



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