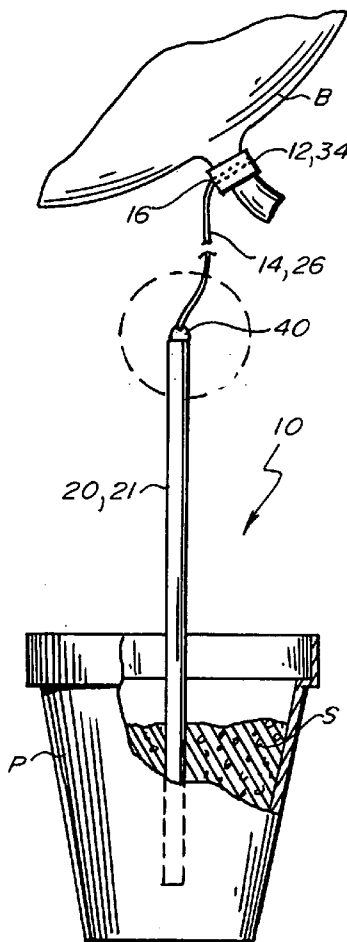




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Sifferlin et al.(10) **Pub. No.: US 2007/0007424 A1**(43) **Pub. Date: Jan. 11, 2007**(54) **HELIUM BALLOON RIBBONED MOUNTING STICK**(76) Inventors: **Mark S. Sifferlin**, Edina, MN (US);
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A47B 97/00 (2006.01)(52) **U.S. Cl.** **248/506**(57) **ABSTRACT**

An apparatus for tethering a lighter-than-air balloon. The apparatus has a connector attachable to the balloon; a tether with a first end attached to the connector and a second end; and a hollow, elongated anchor with an interior core. The tether is contained in the interior core and is extendable outside the core. The tether is secured to the elongated anchor at a point between the first end and the second end. Preferably, the anchor is a straw. The apparatus includes a decorative card attached to the straw. The connector includes a tab attached to the card by perforations. The tab has an adhesive for attaching the tab to the balloon. A method of merchandizing a helium balloon, consisting of threading an end of a ribbon through a slot in a plug at an end of a straw; making a knot or placing another stop in the ribbon at a desired ribbon length; and attaching an end of the ribbon to a tab that has a covered adhesive, with the tab attached to a card which is in turn attached to the straw. This prepares the straw and balloon for shipment. When the straw and balloon are desired to be set up at the end user's location, the user then removes the tab from the card by tearing the tab at the perforations in the card; exposing the covered adhesive on the tab and adhering the tab to the balloon; and pulling the ribbon through the slot until the knot encounters the slot. The straw may then be inserted into soil in a flower pot.



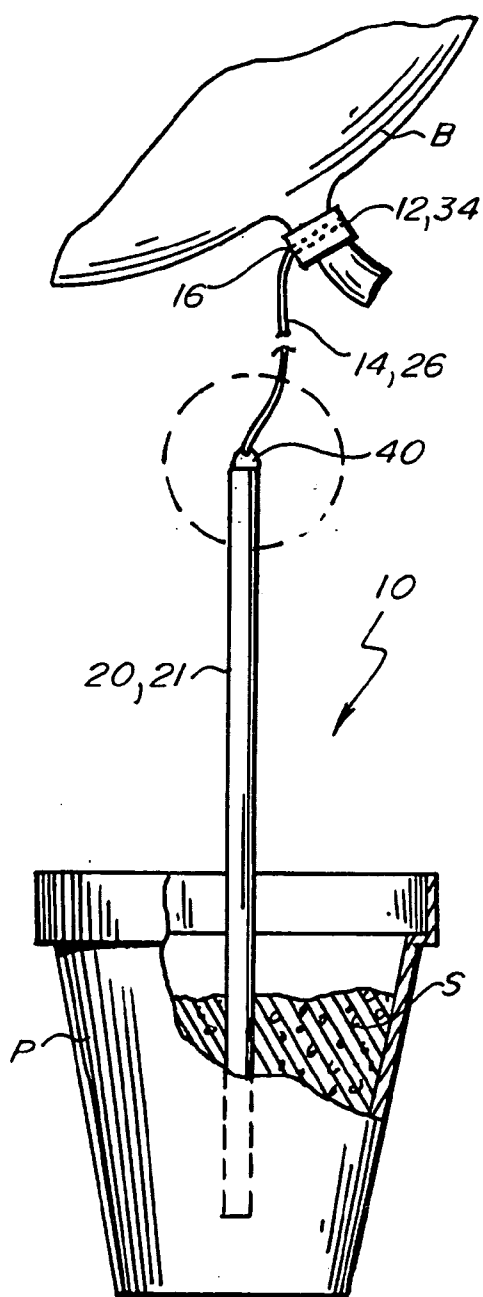


Fig. 1.

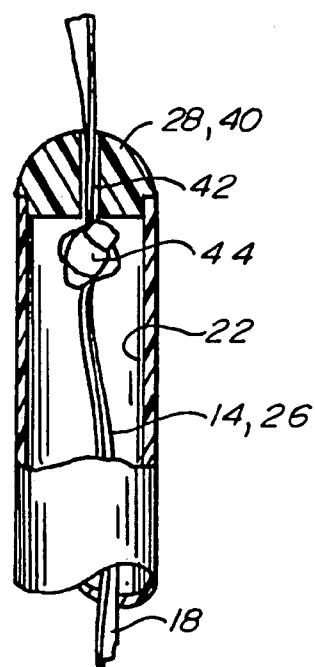


Fig. 2.

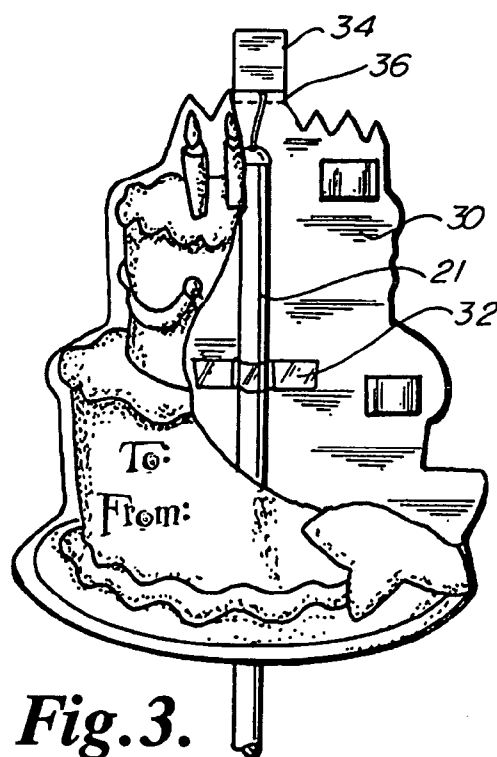


Fig. 3.

HELIUM BALLOON RIBBONED MOUNTING STICK

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The use of balloons as a “favor” or at parties, celebrations, and other events is now extremely well known. Millions of balloons are so used each year. Generally such balloons are attached to either a stick and a cup or a ribbon so that they can be restrained by the user. Additionally, the balloons are typically filled with helium gas to provide a “lift”, allowing them to stay aloft at the end of the tethered ribbon. Of particular concern of many localities is assurances that such inflated balloons are restrained from free flight into electrical power lines and transformers as well as the atmosphere. Particular concern exists with respect to Mylar or metallic balloons, which pose a threat to electrical transmission wires, and which are not biodegradable. Many municipalities and other governmental agencies consider such balloons to pose at least some threat to the environment. Accordingly, many governmental agencies require that such metallic balloons be tethered to a weight, with the weight being sufficient to prevent the balloon from free flight into the atmosphere.

[0002] Alternatively, helium balloons may be tethered to some immovable object. For example, the balloon may be tethered to a stake or stick that is embedded in soil, either in the ground or in a flower pot.

[0003] Most often, there is a necessity for the retail clerk to cut a length of ribbon, attach one end of it to the stake or stick, and to knot or otherwise attach the opposite end to the balloon. The operation is extremely time consuming, and occasionally ineffective. To hasten the operation by the retail clerk, some balloon weights have been provided with a pre-attached length of ribbon, such that the retail clerk need only attach the opposite end to the balloon. At least one known design employs a spool for windably storing the ribbon. Once the ribbon is secured to the balloon, the ribbon unravels from the spool as the balloon travels aloft. Without restraint, the balloon will unwind the entire length of ribbon. To control the height of the balloon, the length of ribbon is cut. Often, balloons are used to make balloon bouquets using several balloons suspended at differing heights. To achieve this effect, a different length ribbon must be cut for each height. As can be appreciated, this process is quite labor intensive.

[0004] There is a need for balloon mounting stick that addresses the above problems.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0005] Apparatus for tethering a lighter-than-air balloon, comprising:

[0006] (a) a connector attachable to the balloon;

[0007] (b) a tether having a first end attached to the connector and a second end; and

[0008] (c) a hollow, elongated anchor having an interior core, the tether being contained in the interior core and extendable outside the core, the tether being secured to the elongated anchor at a point between the first end and second end.

[0009] A method of merchandising a helium balloon, comprising the steps of:

[0010] (a) threading an end of a ribbon through a slot in a plug at an end of a hollow straw;

[0011] (b) placing a stop in the ribbon at a desired ribbon length;

[0012] (c) attaching an end of the ribbon to a tab having a covered adhesive; and attached to a card attached to the straw.

[0013] A principal object and advantage of the present invention is that it permits a seller of a balloon and mounting stick to sell the balloon un-mounted to the stick.

[0014] Another principal object and advantage of the present invention is that it permits merchandising of a balloon at or with a floral device at a level wherein the balloon does not become entangled with other products and can be transported successfully without getting in the way of other objects.

[0015] Another principal object and advantage of the present invention is that it permits easy set up of the balloon and mounting stick at the point of sale or use.

[0016] Another principal object and advantage of the present invention is that it permits a balloon to float at a pre-determined distance above a floral arrangement.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

[0017] FIG. 1 is an elevational view of the present invention.

[0018] FIG. 2 is a detail of the circled area of FIG. 1, with some structure cut away to show internal structure.

[0019] FIG. 3 is an elevational view of a second embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

[0020] In one aspect, the present invention is an apparatus 10 for tethering a lighter-than-air balloon B, comprising a connector 12 attachable to the balloon; a tether 14 having a first end 16 attached to the connector 12 and a second end 18; and a hollow, elongated anchor 20 having an interior core 22, the tether 14 being contained in the interior core 22 and extendable outside the core 22, the tether 14 being secured to the elongated anchor 20 at a point between the first end 16 and the second end 18. Preferably, the anchor 20 is a straw 21.

[0021] The connector 12 preferably further comprises an adhesive portion (not shown) bonding to the balloon.

[0022] Preferably, the tether 14 further comprises a ribbon 26.

[0023] The apparatus 10 further comprises a stop 28 preventing the ribbon 26 from coming loose from the anchor 20.

[0024] In a second embodiment (FIG. 3), the apparatus 10 further comprises a decorative card 30 attached to the straw 21. The card 30 may be attached to the straw 21 by any suitable method, as for example, adhesive strips 32.

[0025] In the preferred embodiment, the connector 12 further comprises a tab 34 removably attached to the card 30. The tab 34 further comprises adhesive (not shown) for attaching the tab 34 to the balloon B. The tab 34 is preferably attached to the card 30 by perforations 36, with the tab 34 being integral with the card 30.

[0026] In either embodiment, the stop 28 is most preferably a plug 40 inserted into the straw 21, the plug 40 having a slot 42 through which the ribbon 26 exits the straw 21. A knot 44 may be tied into the ribbon 26 to prevent the ribbon 26 from slipping through the slot 42. The knot 44 may be tied at any point between the first end 16 and the second 18 of the ribbon 26, to set an appropriate length for the ribbon 26 outside the straw 21. Alternatively, any other suitable device may be used to prevent the ribbon from exiting the slot, such as an enlarged portion, a staple, or other object that will not fit through the slot.

[0027] As shown in FIG. 1, the straw 21 may be inserted into soil S in a flower pot P.

[0028] In a second aspect, the present invention further comprises a method of merchandising a helium balloon, comprising the steps of: threading an end 18 of a ribbon 26 through a slot 42 in a plug 40 at an end of a straw 21; making a knot 44 or placing another stop in the ribbon 26 at a desired ribbon length; and attaching an end 16 of the ribbon 26 to a tab 34 having a covered adhesive, the tab 34 being attached to a card 30 which is in turn attached to the straw 21. This prepares the straw and balloon for shipment.

[0029] When the straw and balloon are desired to be set up at the end user's location, the method then further comprises the steps of: removing the tab 34 from the card 30, preferably by tearing the tab at perforations in the card 30; exposing the covered adhesive on the tab 34 and adhering the tab 34 to the balloon; and pulling the ribbon 26 through the slot 42 until the knot 44 encounters the slot 42. The straw 21 may then be inserted into soil S in a flower pot P.

[0030] Unless otherwise defined, all technical and scientific terms used herein have the same meaning as commonly understood by one of ordinary skill in the art to which this invention belongs. Although methods and materials similar to or equivalent to those described herein can be used in the practice or testing of the present invention, suitable methods and materials are described below. All publications, patent applications, patents, and other references mentioned herein are incorporated by reference in their entirety to the extent allowed by applicable law and regulations. In case of conflict, the present specification, including definitions, will control.

[0031] The present invention may be embodied in other specific forms without departing from the spirit or essential attributes thereof, and it is therefore desired that the present embodiment be considered in all respects as illustrative and not restrictive, reference being made to the appended claims rather than to the foregoing description to indicate the scope of the invention.

What is claimed:

1. Apparatus for tethering a lighter-than-air balloon, comprising:

- (a) a connector attachable to the balloon;
- (b) a tether having a first end attached to the connector and a second end; and
- (c) a hollow, elongated anchor having an interior core, the tether being contained in the interior core and extendable outside the core, the tether being secured to the elongated anchor at a point between the first end and second end.

2. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the connector further comprises an adhesive portion bonding to the balloon.

3. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the tether further comprises a ribbon.

4. The apparatus of claim 3, further comprising a stop preventing the ribbon from coming loose from the anchor.

5. The apparatus of claim 4, wherein the anchor further comprises a straw.

6. The apparatus of claim 5, further comprising a decorative card attached to the straw.

7. The apparatus of claim 6, wherein the connector further comprises a tab removably attached to the card and a side attachable to the balloon.

8. The apparatus of claim 7, further comprising adhesive on the side.

9. The apparatus of claim 5, wherein the stop further comprises a plug inserted into the straw, the plug having a slot through which the ribbon exits the straw, the ribbon having a second stop between the first end and second end preventing complete passage of the ribbon through the slot.

10. Apparatus for tethering a lighter-than-air balloon, comprising:

- (a) a connector attachable to the balloon;
- (b) a ribbon having a first end attached to the connector and a second end; and
- (c) a hollow straw having an interior core, the ribbon being contained in the interior core and extendable outside the core, the ribbon being secured to the straw at a point between the first end and second end.

11. The apparatus of claim 10, further comprising a stop preventing the ribbon from coming loose from the straw.

12. The apparatus of claim 11, further comprising a decorative card attached to the straw.

13. The apparatus of claim 12, wherein the connector further comprises a tab removably attached to the card and a side attachable to the balloon.

14. The apparatus of claim 13, further comprising adhesive on the side.

15. The apparatus of claim 11, wherein the stop further comprises a plug inserted into the straw, the plug having a slot through which the ribbon exits the straw, the ribbon having a knot between the first end and second end preventing complete passage of the ribbon through the slot.

16. Apparatus for tethering a lighter-than-air balloon, comprising:

- (a) an adhesive tab attachable to the balloon;
- (b) a ribbon having a first end attached to the adhesive tab and a second end;
- (c) a hollow straw having an interior core, the ribbon being contained in the interior core and extendable outside the core;
- (d) a plug inserted into the straw, the plug having a slot through which the ribbon exits the straw, the ribbon

having a knot between the first end and second end preventing complete passage of the ribbon through the slot; and

- (e) a decorative card attached to the straw, the adhesive tab being removably attached to the card.

17. The apparatus of claim 16, wherein the tab is integral with the card and further comprising perforations permitting separation of the tab from the card.

18. A method of merchandising a helium balloon, comprising the steps of:

- (a) threading an end of a ribbon through a slot in a plug at an end of a hollow straw;
- (b) placing a stop in the ribbon at a desired ribbon length;

- (c) attaching an end of the ribbon to a tab having a covered adhesive and attached to a card attached to the straw.

19. The method of claim 18, further comprising the steps of:

- (a) removing the tab from the card;
- (b) exposing the covered adhesive and adhering the tab to the balloon; and
- (c) pulling the ribbon through the slot until the stop encounters the slot.

20. The method of claim 19, further comprising the step of inserting the straw into soil.

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