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(54) **CONTAINER FOR DECORATIVE GRASS**

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which is a continuation of application No. 09/343,925, filed on Jun. 30, 1999, now Pat. No. 6,065,601.

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

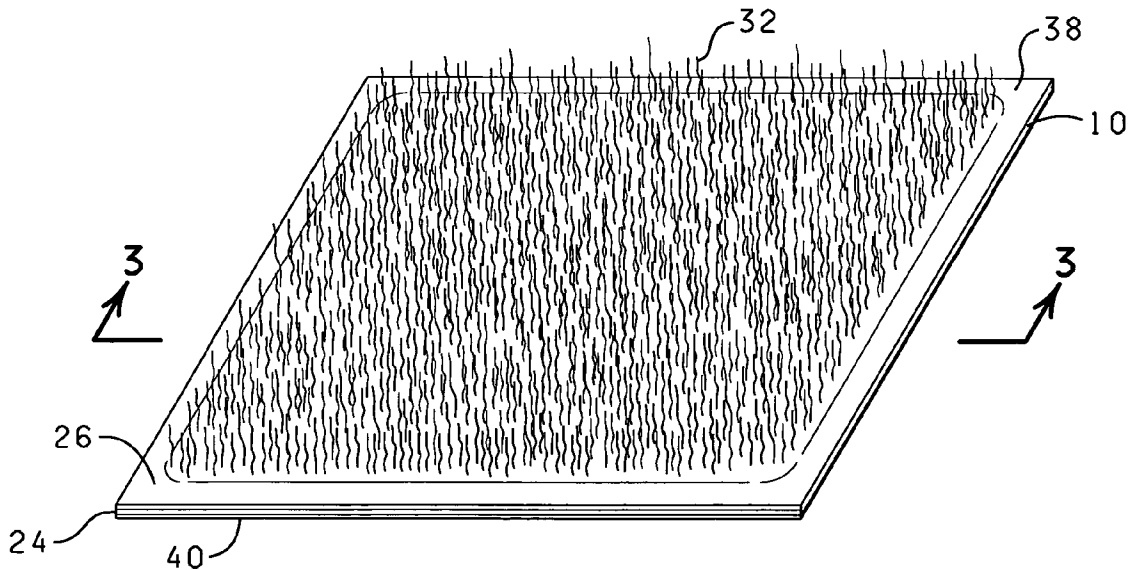
A container liner comprising a backing, a porous covering, a seed carrier interposed between the backing and the covering, and a plurality of seeds embedded in the seed carrier such that upon germination the seeds will sprout through the porous covering to form a soft, natural, protective cushion for objects, such as candies or Easter eggs. The container liner is sufficiently flexible so that the container liner can be easily manipulated to substantially conform to the interior contour of the container.

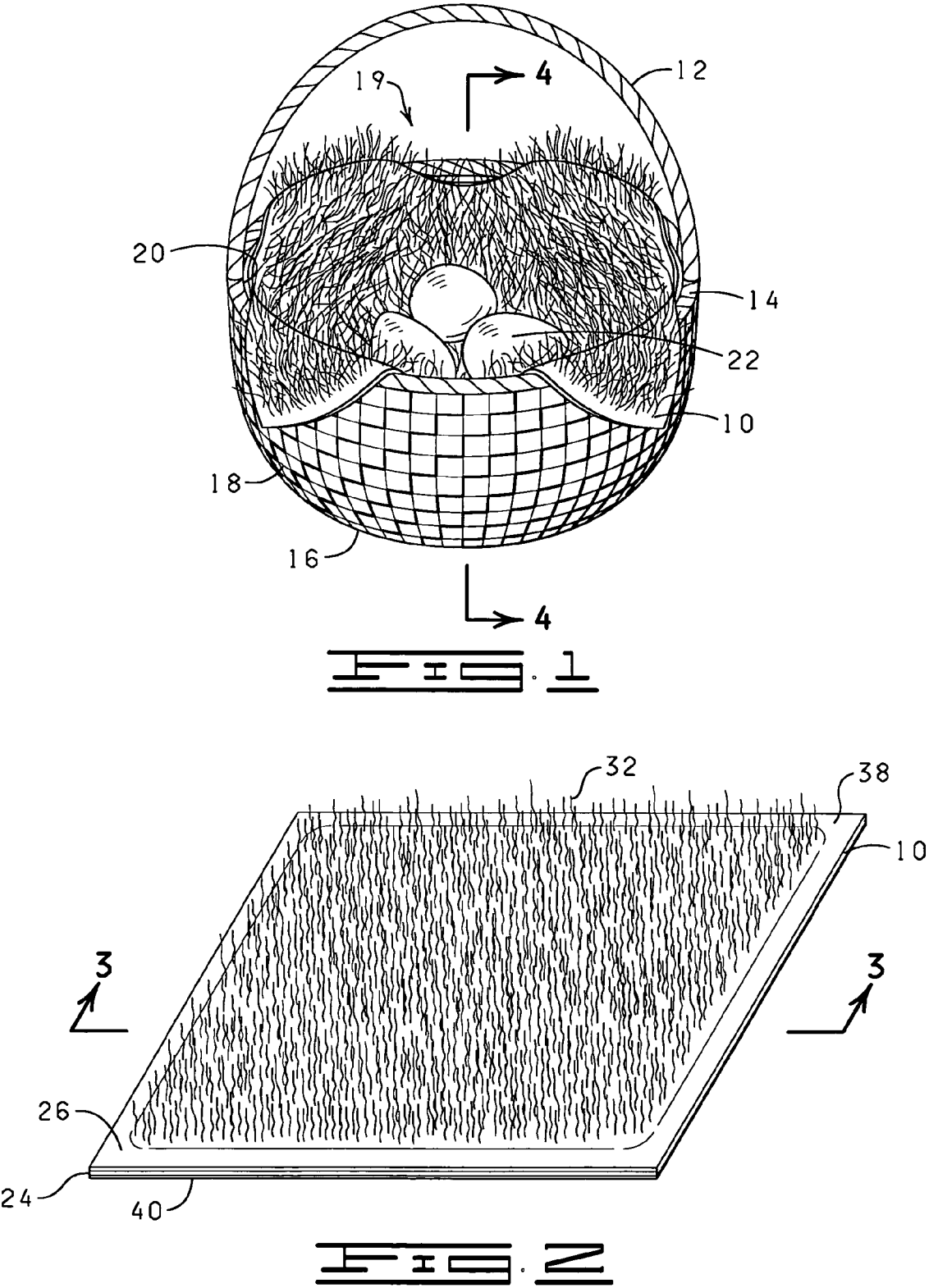
(21) Appl. No.: **10/715,581**

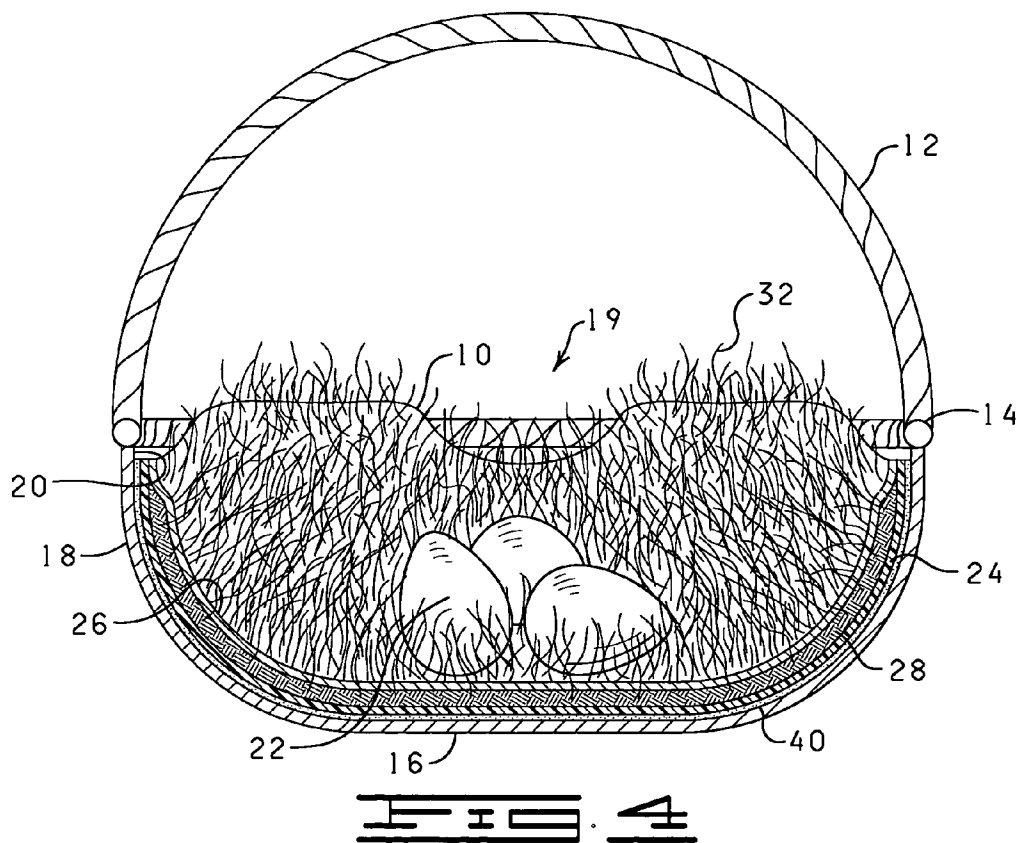
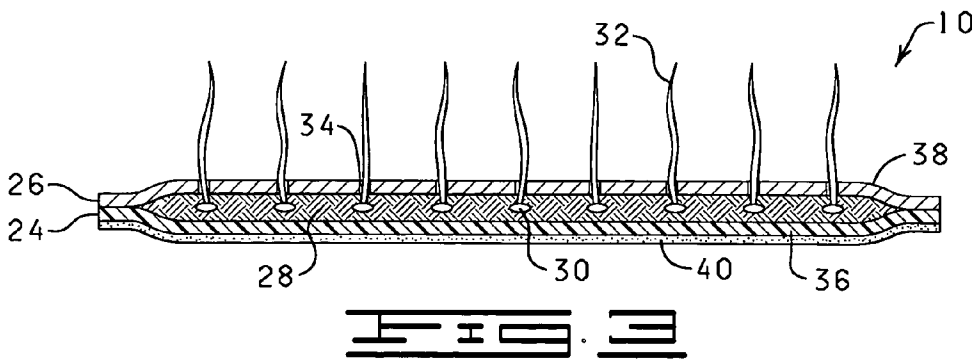
(22) Filed: **Nov. 18, 2003**

Related U.S. Application Data

(60) Continuation of application No. 10/315,426, filed on Dec. 10, 2002, which is a continuation of application No. 09/800,407, filed on Mar. 5, 2001, now abandoned, which is a division of application No. 09/533,878, filed on Mar. 22, 2000, now Pat. No. 6,293,401,







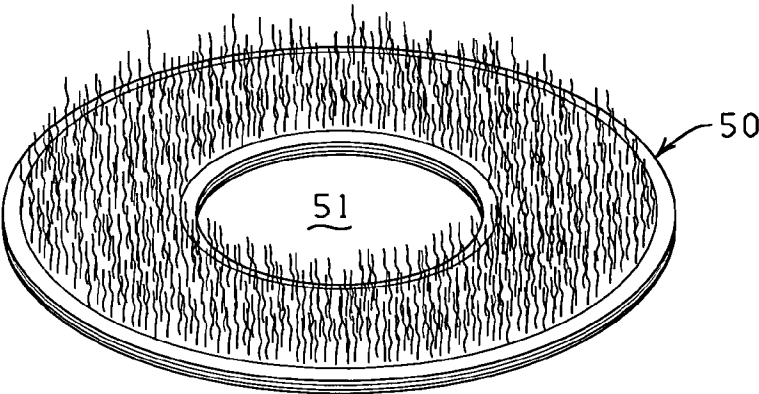


FIG. 5

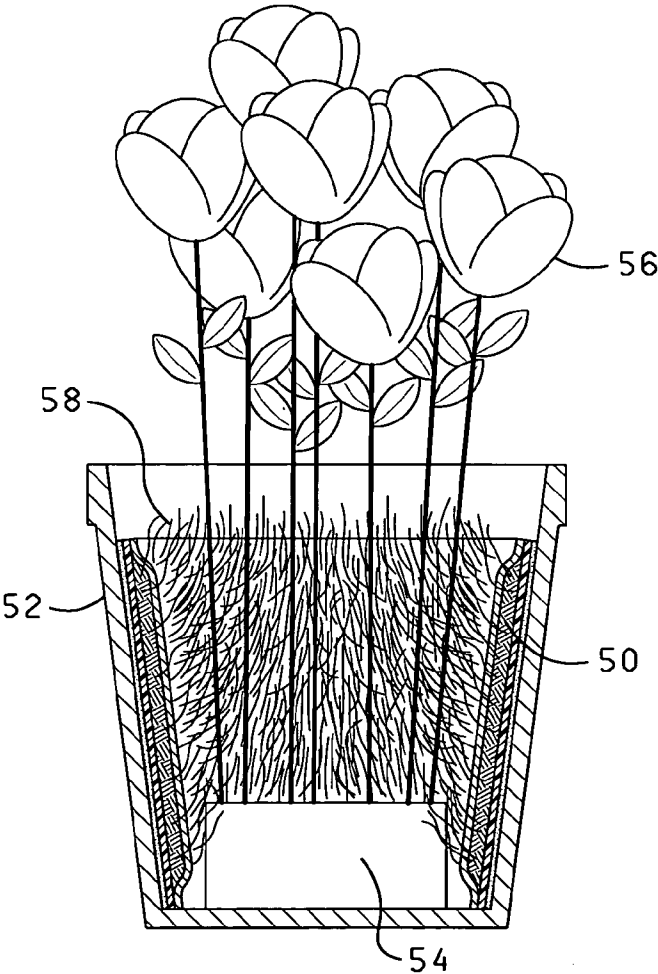


FIG. 6

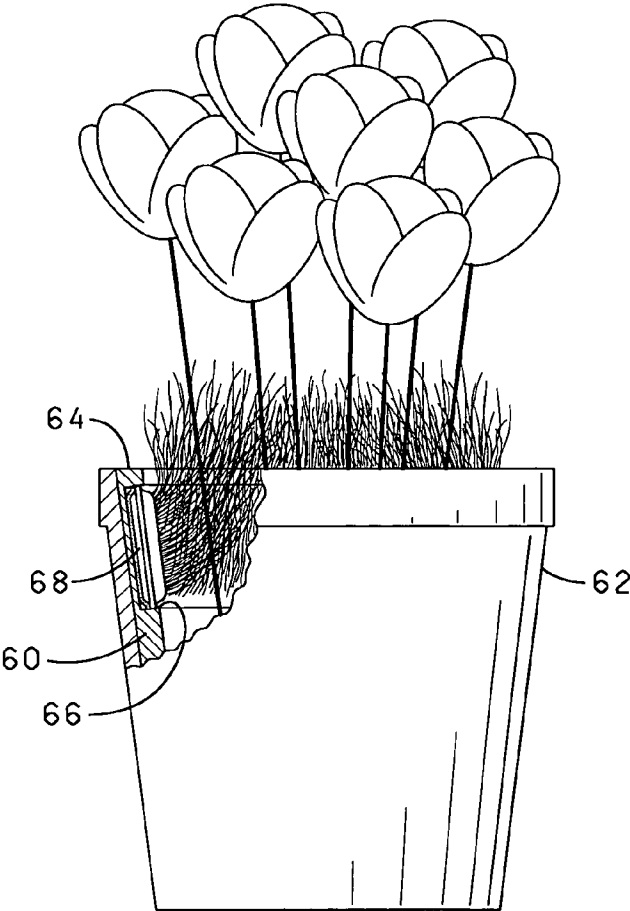


FIG. 2

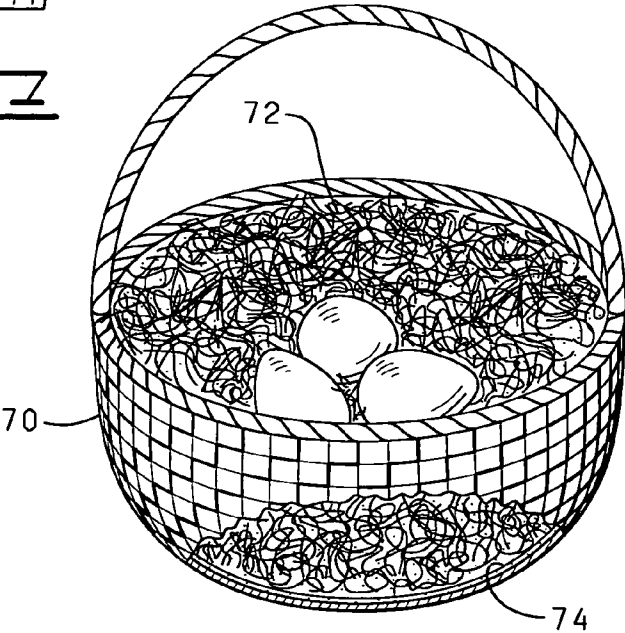


FIG. 3

CONTAINER FOR DECORATIVE GRASS

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application is a continuation of 10/315,426, filed Dec. 10, 2002, which is a continuation of U.S. Ser. No. 09/800,407, filed Mar. 5, 2001, which is a divisional of U.S. Ser. No. 09/533,878, filed Mar. 22, 2000, now U.S. Pat. No. 6,293,401, issued Sep. 25, 2001, which is a continuation of 09/343,925, filed Jun. 30, 1999, now U.S. Pat. No. 6,065,601, issued May 23, 2000, which claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application Serial No. 60/093,954, filed Jul. 23, 1998, the contents of each hereby expressly incorporated herein by reference.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] 1. Field of the Invention

[0003] The present invention relates generally to liners, and more particularly, but not by way of limitation, to a container for decorative grass.

[0004] 2. Brief Description of the Related Art

[0005] Strips of sheet material formed into tufts have been used for many years. More specifically, material known as decorative grass has been used in fruit baskets, Easter baskets, picnic baskets and other containers and receptacles for decorative and cushioning purposes. The decorative grass of the prior art has been produced by numerous methods and from a variety of materials such as polymeric materials, paper, cellophane or the like. Typically, such materials are cut and shredded to produce individual segments having predetermined dimensions.

[0006] A problem associated with decorative grass is that it can easily fall out of the container in which it is disposed or cling to other objects, and therefore is inconvenient to clean up and to dispose of.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SEVERAL VIEWS OF THE DRAWING

[0007] FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a basket having a liner constructed in accordance with the present invention disposed therein.

[0008] FIG. 2 is a perspective view of the liner of the present invention.

[0009] FIG. 3 is a cross-sectional view taken along line 3-3 in FIG. 2.

[0010] FIG. 4 is a cross-sectional view taken along line 4-4 in FIG. 1.

[0011] FIG. 5 is a perspective view of another embodiment of a liner constructed in accordance with the present invention.

[0012] FIG. 6 is a sectional view of the liner of FIG. 5 shown disposed in a basket.

[0013] FIG. 7 is a partially cutaway, elevational view of another embodiment of a liner constructed in accordance with the present invention shown disposed in a container.

[0014] FIG. 8 is a partially cutaway, perspective view of a basket constructed in accordance with the present invention shown with a quantity of decorative grass disposed therein.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0015] Referring now to the drawings, and more specifically to FIG. 1, a liner 10 constructed in accordance with the present invention is shown disposed in a container, such as a basket 12. The basket 12 has an upper end 14, a lower end 16, and an outer surface 18. An opening 19 is formed in the basket 12, with a portion of the basket opening 19 intersecting the upper end 14 of the basket 12 forming an inner surface 20. The basket opening 19 is sized and shaped to receive a plurality of objects 22, such as candies or Easter eggs, for display. It will be appreciated that the liner 10 described below is not limited to being used with Easter baskets, but can be used to line fruit baskets, picnic baskets, as well as other containers and receptacles.

[0016] Referring to FIGS. 2 and 3, the liner 10 includes a waterproof backing 24, a porous covering 26, a seed carrier 28 (FIG. 3) interposed between the backing 24 and the covering 26, and a plurality of seeds 30 (FIG. 3) embedded in the seed carrier 28, such that upon germination, the seeds 28 will sprout through the porous covering to form a soft, natural, cushioning tuft 32. The liner 10 is sufficiently flexible so that the liner 10 can be easily manipulated to substantially conform to the interior contour of the basket 12.

[0017] The seeds 30 can be any seed or a combination of seeds. However, winter wheat seeds have been found to be a suitable seed in that winter wheat seeds tend to sprout within about three to four days after being exposed to moisture, and produce a thin dark green blade. In addition, such blades are relatively rigid enabling them to remain substantially erect up to a height of about three to four inches and thereby provide a soft, natural, protective cushion for objects displayed in the basket 12. Rye seeds are also preferable seeds for the purpose of this invention.

[0018] Alternatively, plant material that is capable of being stored for long periods of time in a dry condition and which becomes rejuvenated upon exposure to moisture can be implanted in the seed carrier 28. An example of such a plant is selaginella lepidophylla, or more commonly referred to as the dinosaur plant. The seed carrier 28 is fabricated of a material capable of holding moisture to the seeds 30 to foster germination and subsequent growth. Any material capable of holding the seeds and retaining moisture may be utilized. For example, the seed carrier 28 may be fabricated of a sponge material, a tissue, a cloth, a gel, soil, or the like.

[0019] The backing 24 serves as a barrier to prevent moisture in the seed carrier 28 from leaking into the basket 12. To this end, the backing 24 is constructed of a flexible, waterproof sheet of material, such as a polymer film. The term "polymer film" as used herein means a synthetic polymer such as a polypropylene or a naturally occurring polymer such as cellophane. The backing 24 may be constructed of a single layer of material or a plurality of layers of the same or different types of materials. Any thickness of the backing 24 may be utilized in accordance with the present invention.

[0020] The covering 26 serves to hold the seeds 30 in position and permit the seeds 30 to emit their sprouts. The covering 26 can be any suitable porous sheet material, such as cloth with a coarse weave or with openings formed

therein, or a piece of film or paper or other flexible material provided with openings **34** to permit the seeds to emit their sprouts.

[0021] In assembly, the seed carrier **28**, together with the seeds **30**, is encased between the backing **24** and the covering **26** with the seeds **30** positioned to permit the sprouts of the seeds **30** to grow up through the openings **34** of the covering **26**. The backing **24** and the covering **26** are secured to one another along the periphery in a suitable fashion such as by bonding the backing and the covering together with an adhesive or stitching.

[0022] In an assembled condition, the backing **24** defines a lower surface **36** of the liner **10** and the covering **26** defines an upper surface **38**. Further, the liner **10** is illustrated herein as having a square configuration. However, it will be appreciated that the liner **10** can be formed into any other desired geometric shape, such as circular, triangular, or rectangular.

[0023] The backing **24** and the covering **26** of the liner **10** may vary in color. Further, each may consist of designs which are printed, etched, and/or embossed. In addition, the backing and the covering may have various colorings, coatings, flocking and/or metallic finishes, or be characterized totally or partially by pearlescent, translucent, transparent, or the like, qualities. Each of the above-named characteristics may occur alone or in combination. Moreover, each of the backing **24** and the covering **26** may vary in the combination of such characteristics.

[0024] A bonding material **40** may be disposed on the lower surface **36** of the liner **10**. The bonding material **40** covers substantially the entire lower surface **36** of the liner **10**. The bonding material **40** is disposed on the lower surface **36** of the liner **10** by spraying or painting it thereupon.

[0025] The bonding material **40** imparts sufficient adhesion to permit the liner **10** to be disposed in the basket opening **19** with the lower surface **36** of the liner **10** disposed adjacent the inner surface **20** of the basket **12** so that the bonding material **40** on the lower surface **36** of the liner **10** contacts the inner surface **20** of the basket **12** for connecting the liner **10** to the inner surface **20** of the basket **12**. The bonding material **40** also causes the liner to conform to the contour of the inner surface **20** of the basket **12**. That is, the lower surface **36** of the liner **10** adheres to the inner surface **20** of basket **12** and it adheres to overlapping portions of itself. In this manner, a customized fit of the liner to the inner surface **20** of the basket **12** is obtained. The liner **10** is preferably sized to that when the liner **10** is placed inside the basket **12**, the liner **10** covers substantially the entire inner surface **20** of the basket **12**.

[0026] The term "bonding material" when used herein means an adhesive, frequently a pressure sensitive adhesive, or a cohesive or any adhesive/cohesive combination, having adhesive qualities (i.e., qualities of adhesion or adhesion/cohesion, respectively) sufficient to effect the connection between the lower surface **36** of the liner **10** brought into engagement with the basket **12**, a box or other container. It will be appreciated that both adhesives and cohesives are well known in the art, and both are commercially available.

[0027] The bonding material **40** may also comprise at least one strip of bonding material **40** extending over the lower surface **36** of the liner **10**. Alternatively, the bonding material **40** may comprise at least one spot of bonding material **40**

extending over the lower surface **36** of the liner **10**. The bonding material **40** may comprise a variety of designs, both geometric and fanciful (for example, hearts, flowers, slogans, and the like). The bonding material **40** may also comprise a variety of colors.

[0028] The bonding material **40** on the lower surface **36** of the liner **10** may be covered with at least one release strip (not shown). The release strip is used to protect the bonding material **40** before the lower surface **36** of the liner **10**, and the bonding material **40** thereon, is disposed adjacent the inner surface **20** of the basket **12**.

[0029] A plurality of liners **10** can be stacked and formed into a pad. Also, the liners **10** can be formed into a roll of material. In this instance, an elongated liner would be perforated so as to define individual liners, rather than cut completely, so that the individual liners **10** remain connected to one another and yet can be easily separated from an adjacent liner when desired.

[0030] Referring now to FIGS. 1 and 4, the liner **10** is shown disposed in the basket **12**. The seeds **30** are activated by exposing the seed carrier **28** to moisture. The seed carrier **28** can be exposed to moisture in any suitable fashion, such as submerging the entire liner **10** in a body of water or applying water to the porous covering **26** only. The liner **10** is next positioned in a container, such as the basket **12**, so as to line the interior surface **20** of the container. After several days the seeds **30** will emit their sprout from the covering **26** whereby the soft, natural, cushioning tuft **32** is formed in the basket **12**. In the alternative to placing the liner **10** in the basket **12** immediately after the seed carrier **28** has been exposed to moisture, the liner **10** can be set aside to permit the seeds **30** to sprout prior to the liner **10** being positioned in the basket **12**.

[0031] In positioning the liner **10** in the basket **12**, the liner **10** is placed through the basket opening **19** in the upper end **14** of the basket **12** with the lower surface **36** of the liner **10** disposed adjacent the inner surface **20** of the basket **12**. The liner **10** is shaped to substantially conform to the contour of the inner surface **20** of the basket **12**. Unless the liner **10** is precisely sized to fit the inner surface **20** of the basket **12**, overlapping folds (not shown) are formed in the liner **10**. The overlapping folds extend at different angles and over different lengths.

[0032] In the case where the liner **10** is provided with the bonding material **40**, the release strip (not shown) is removed from the lower surface **36** of the liner **10**. Then, the liner **10** is placed through the basket opening **19** in the upper end **14** of the basket **12** with the lower surface **36** of the liner **10** having the bonding material **40** thereon disposed adjacent the inner surface **20** of the basket **12**. The liner **10** is spread over the inner surface **20** of the basket **12** to permit the bonding material **40** on the lower surface **36** of the liner **10** to contact the inner surface **20** of the basket **12**, bondably connecting the liner **10** to the inner surface **20** of the basket **12**. The connections of the liner **10** to like portions thereof due to the formation of the overlapping folds and to the inner surface **20** of the basket **12** produce a customized fit of the liner **10** to the inner surface **20** of the basket **12**.

[0033] FIG. 5 shows another embodiment of a liner **50** constructed in accordance with the present invention. The liner **50** is similar in construction to the liner **10** described

above, with the exception that the liner **50** is shown to have a circular configuration and a central opening **51** extending therethrough.

[0034] FIG. 6 illustrates the liner **50** disposed in a container, such as a flower pot **52**. The central opening **51** of the liner **50** provides the advantage of allowing the liner **50** to be inserted into the flower pot **52** so as to line the interior surface of the flower pot **52** while maintaining the bottom of the flower pot **52** unobstructed. As such, use of the liner **50** facilitates the positioning of a floral holding material, such as a block **54** of floral foam, which is adapted to support a floral grouping **56**. The term "floral grouping" is used herein to mean cut and fresh flowers, artificial flowers, a single flower, other fresh and/or artificial plants, or other floral materials. The term "floral grouping" may also include other secondary plants and/or ornamentation which add to the aesthetics of the overall floral grouping.

[0035] The liner **50** is positioned in the flower pot **52** to line the interior walls of the flower pot **52**. The seeds of the liner **50** will emit their sprouts whereby a natural tuft **58** is provided in the flower pot **52**. The tuft **58** will accentuate the aesthetics of the floral grouping **56**. It will be appreciated that other objects such as Easter eggs, potted plants, or toys can be accentuated by the tuft **58** of the liner **50**.

[0036] FIG. 7 shows another embodiment of a liner **60** disposed in a flower pot **62**. The liner **60** includes a pre-formed liner portion **64** which is sized and shaped to be received in the flower pot **62**. The liner portion **64** is fabricated of a polymeric material which is thermal or vacuum formed or injection or blow molded so as to have a substantially rigid quality. The liner portion **64** can be formed to have an internal annular groove **66**, preferably near the upper end thereof. The annular groove **66** is adapted to receive an insert **68** which is similar in configuration to the ring-shaped liner **50** shown in FIGS. 5 and 6. The inserts **68** are secured in the groove **66** whereby the inserts **68** may be periodically removed and a new insert positioned within the groove **66** when desired. Again, the natural tuft of the insert **68** will serve to accentuate the aesthetics of a floral grouping disposed in the liner **60** or to support objects disposed in the liner **60**.

[0037] Referring now to FIG. 8, a container, such as a basket **70**, is shown with a quantity of decorative grass **72** disposed therein. As mentioned above, decorative grass, also known as Easter grass, is well known and has been produced by numerous methods and from a variety of materials such as polymeric materials, paper, cellophane or the like. Typically, such materials are cut and shredded to produce individual segments having predetermined dimensions. As also mentioned above, a problem associated with decorative grass is that it can easily fall out of the container in which it is disposed or cling to other objects, and therefore is inconvenient to clean up and to dispose of.

[0038] To overcome this problem, the interior of the basket **70** is coated with a bonding material **74**. As such, when the decorative grass **72** is disposed in the basket **70** in contact with the interior surface of the basket **70**, the decorative grass **72** is caused to bondably connect to the interior surface of the basket **70**. By connecting the decorative grass **72** to the interior surface of the basket **70**, the decorative grass **72** is prevented from falling out of the basket **70**.

[0039] The bonding material **74** may be applied to the interior surface of the basket in a conventional manner. In addition, a release strip may be applied to the bonding material **74** to protect the bonding material **74** prior to placing the decorative grass **72** in contact with the bonding material **74**.

[0040] From the above description it is clear that the present invention is well adapted to carry out the objects and to attain the advantages mentioned herein as well as those inherent in the invention. While presently preferred embodiments of the invention have been described for purposes of this disclosure, it will be understood that numerous changes may be made which will readily suggest themselves to those skilled in the art and which are accomplished within the spirit of the invention disclosed and as defined in the appended claims.

What is claimed:

1. A liner for a container, comprising:
 - a backing having a first side and a second side;
 - a porous covering connected to the second side of backing;
 - a seed carrier disposed between the backing and the covering, the seed carrier fabricated of a moisture retaining material; and
 - a plurality of seeds embedded in the seed carrier such that, upon germination, the seeds will sprout through the covering so as to form a natural tuft.
2. The liner of claim 1 wherein the backing has a bonding material disposed thereon.
3. The liner of claim 1 wherein the porous covering is a film provided with a plurality of perforations.
4. The liner of claim 1 wherein the porous covering is a cloth.
5. The liner of claim 1 wherein the seed carrier is a spongy cellulose material.
6. The liner of claim 1 wherein the seed carrier is a gel.
7. The liner of claim 1 wherein the seeds are winter wheat.
8. The liner of claim 1 wherein the seeds are fern seeds.
9. The liner of claim 1 further comprising a central opening extending therethrough.
10. The liner of claim 1 wherein the bonding material is an adhesive.
11. A container in combination with a liner for lining an interior surface of the container, the liner comprising:
 - a backing having a first side and a second side;
 - a porous covering connected to the second side of backing;
 - a seed carrier disposed between the backing and the covering, the seed carrier fabricated of a moisture retaining material; and
 - a plurality of seeds embedded between the backing and the porous covering such that, upon germination, the seeds will sprout through the porous covering so as to form a natural tuft.
12. The combination of claim 11 wherein the backing is bondably connected to the interior of the container.
13. The combination of claim 11 wherein the backing is a film.

14. The combination of claim 11 wherein the porous covering is a film provided with a plurality of perforations.

15. The combination of claim 11 wherein the porous covering is a cloth.

16. The combination of claim 11 wherein the seeds are embedded in a seed carrier disposed between the backing and the porous covering, the seed carrier fabricated of a moisture retaining material.

17. The combination of claim 16 wherein the seed carrier is a spongy cellulose material.

18. The combination of claim 16 wherein the seed carrier is a gel.

19. The combination of claim 11 wherein the seeds are winter wheat.

20. The combination of claim 11 wherein the seeds are fern seeds.

21. The combination of claim 11 further comprising a central opening extending therethrough.

22. The combination of claim 21 further comprising:

a floral holding material disposed within the central opening of the liner whereby the liner extends about the floral holding material.

23. The combination of claim 11 wherein the bonding material is an adhesive.

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