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(54) **DECORATIVE COVER FOR FLOWER POT OR FLORAL GROUPING FORMED OF POLYMERIC MATERIALS HAVING A TEXTURE OR APPEARANCE SIMULATING THE TEXTURE OR APPEARANCE OF PAPER**

of application No. 09/098,898, filed on Jun. 17, 1998, now abandoned, which is a non-provisional of provisional application No. 60/050,867, filed on Jun. 26, 1997.

Publication Classification

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(52) **U.S. Cl.** **428/35.7; 428/141; 428/194; 428/34.1**

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

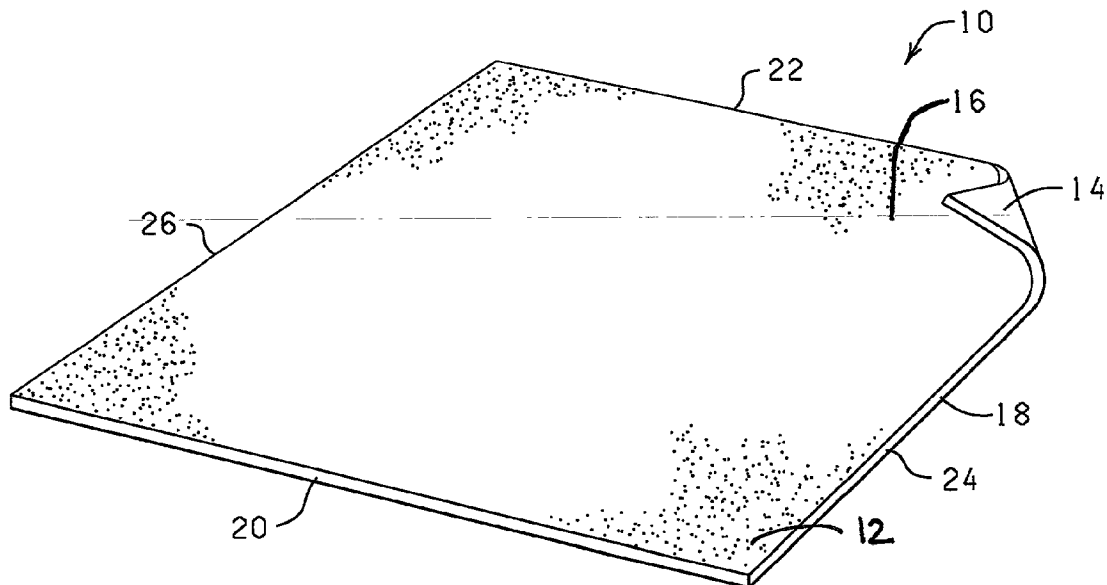
A decorative cover positionable about a flower pot or floral grouping is formed of a polymeric material or a laminated polymeric material. The decorative cover has a texture or appearance simulating the texture or appearance of paper on at least a portion of one surface thereof while maintaining the structural and mechanical characteristics of the polymeric material from which the decorative cover is formed. In addition to the texture or appearance simulating the texture or appearance of paper, the decorative cover may further be provided with printed and/or embossed patterns, which may be in or out of register with one another.

(21) Appl. No.: **09/891,315**

(22) Filed: **Jun. 26, 2001**

Related U.S. Application Data

(63) Continuation-in-part of application No. 09/234,794, filed on Jan. 20, 1999, which is a continuation-in-part



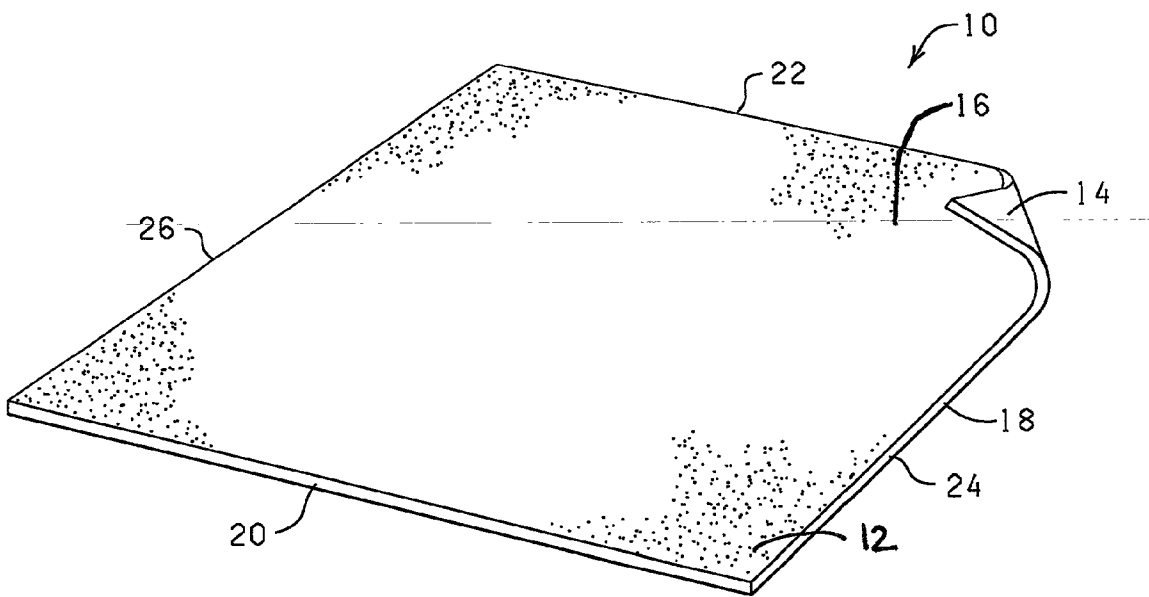


FIG. 1

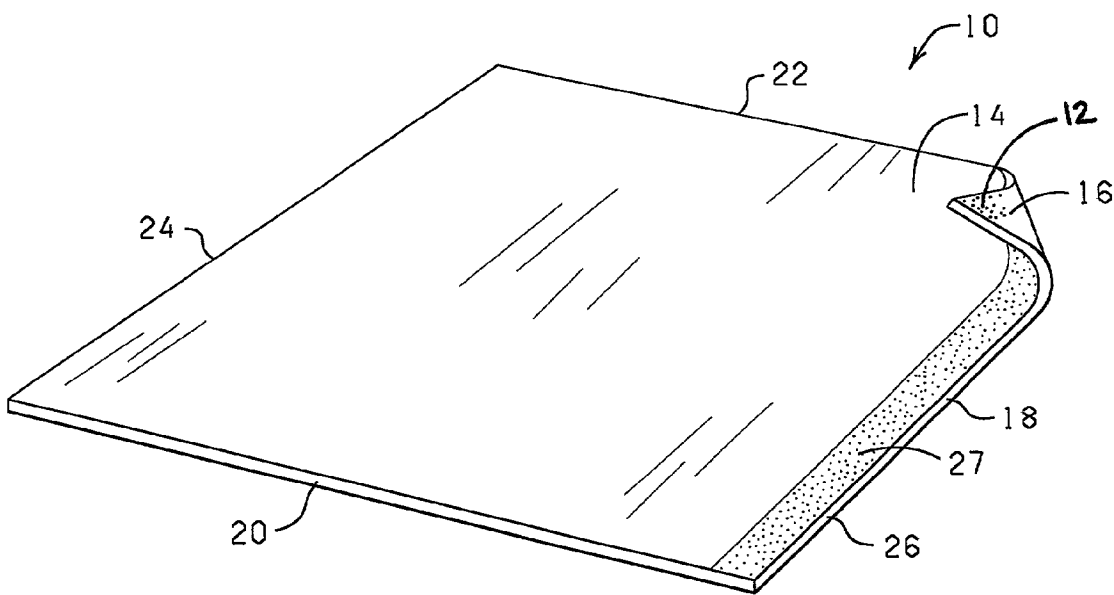
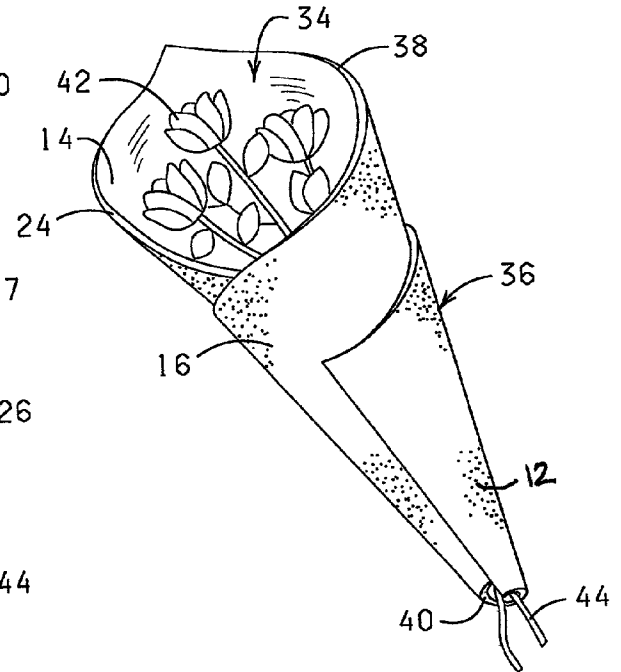
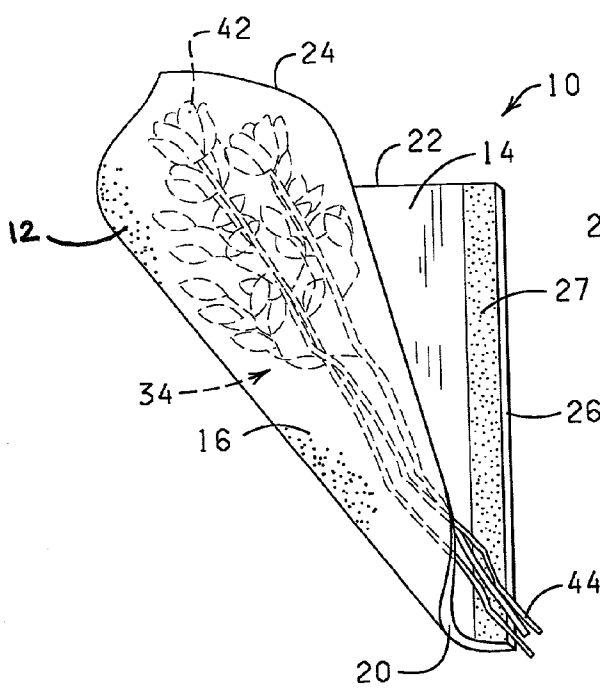
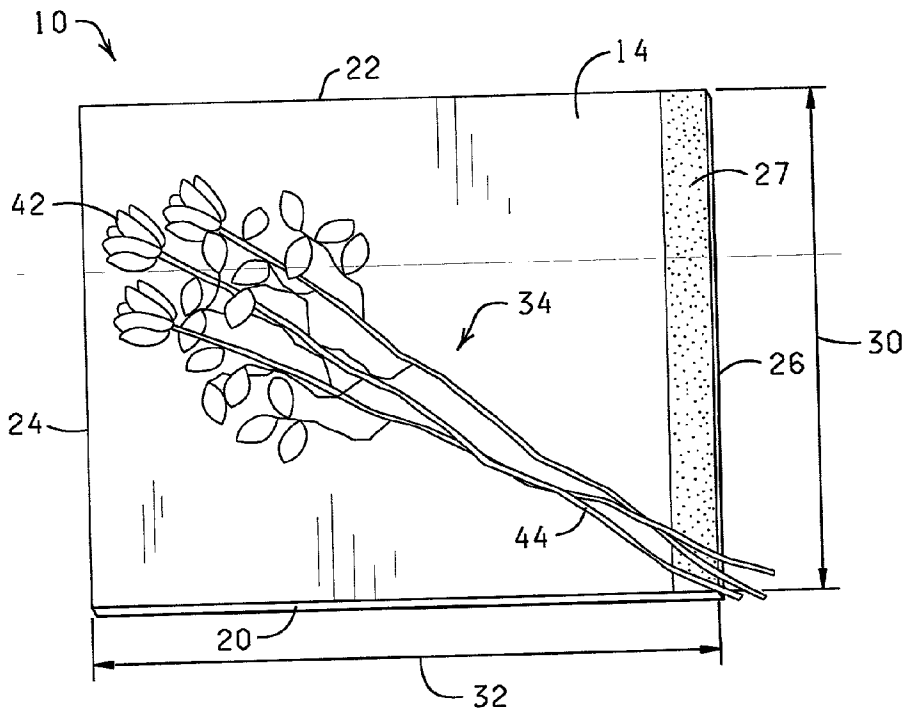
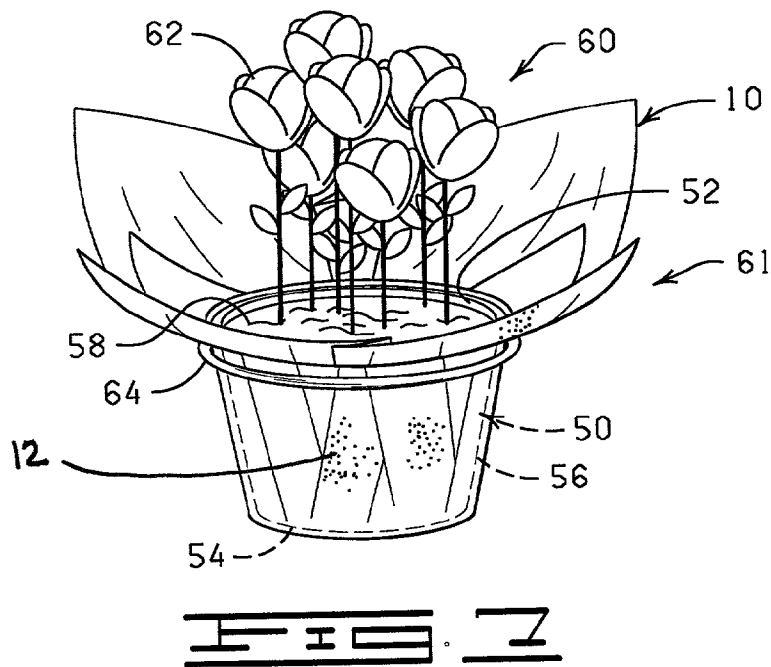
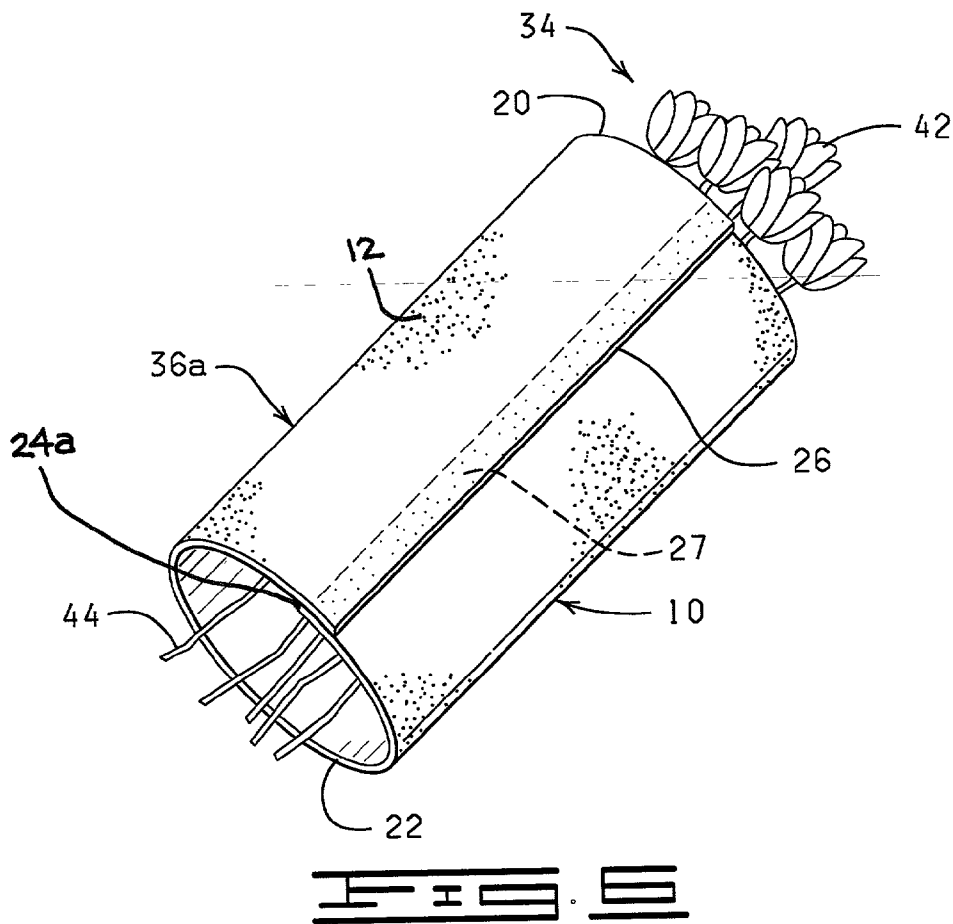


FIG. 2





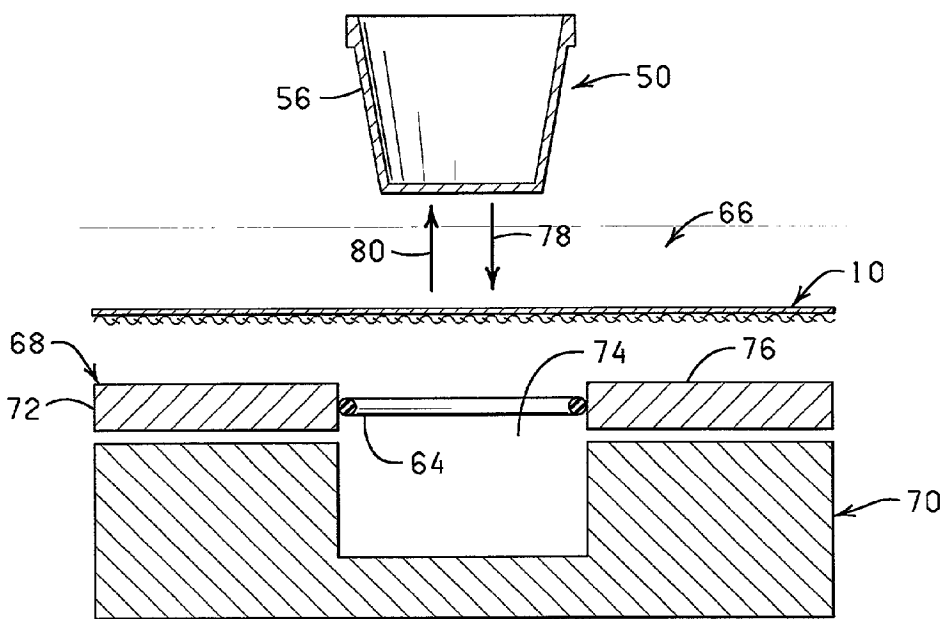


FIG. 8

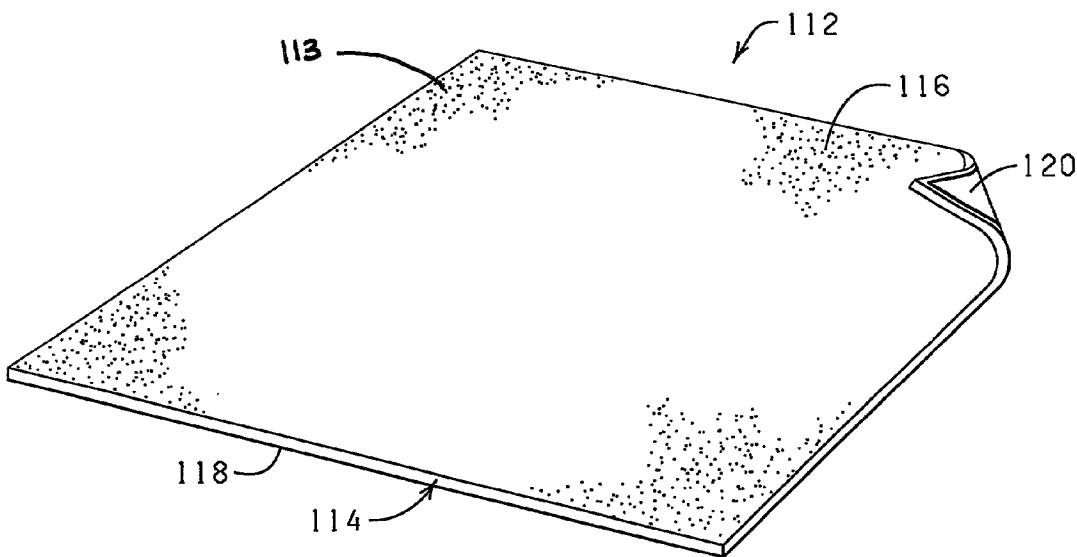


FIG. 9A

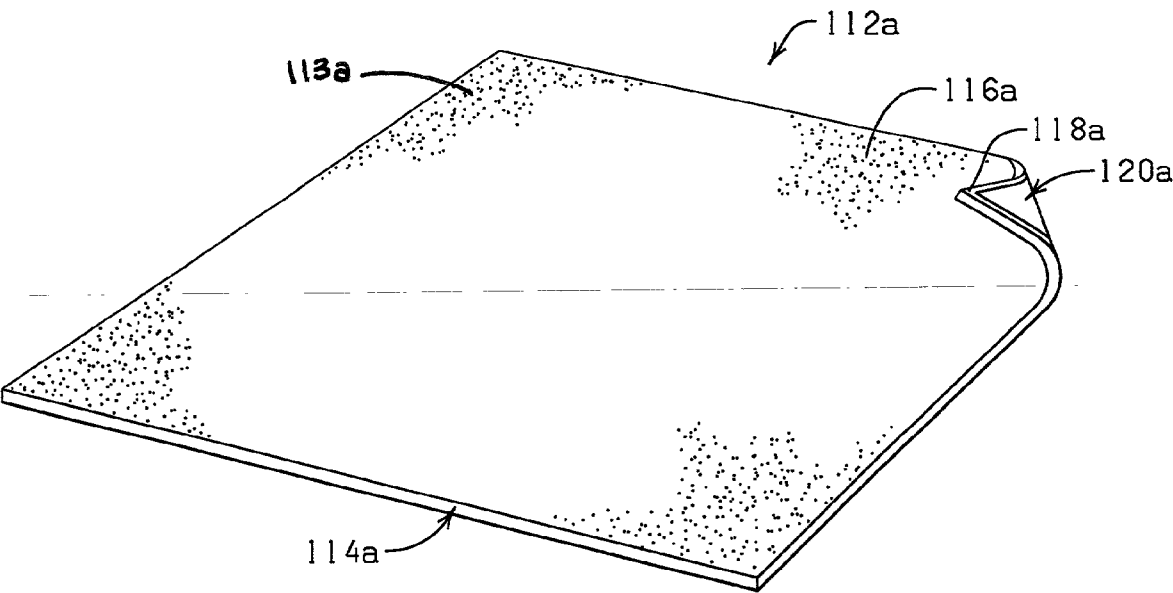


FIG. 9B

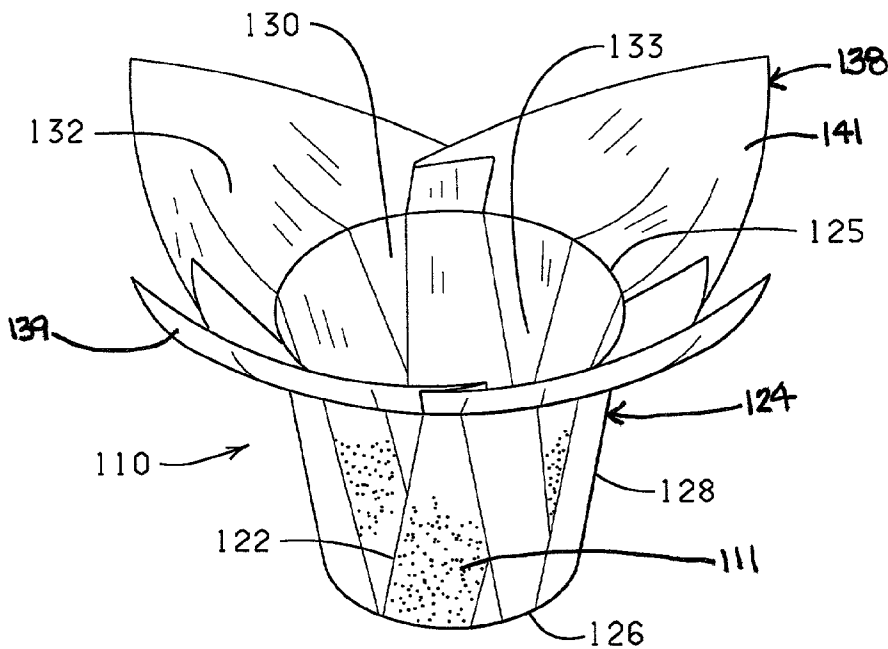


FIG. 10

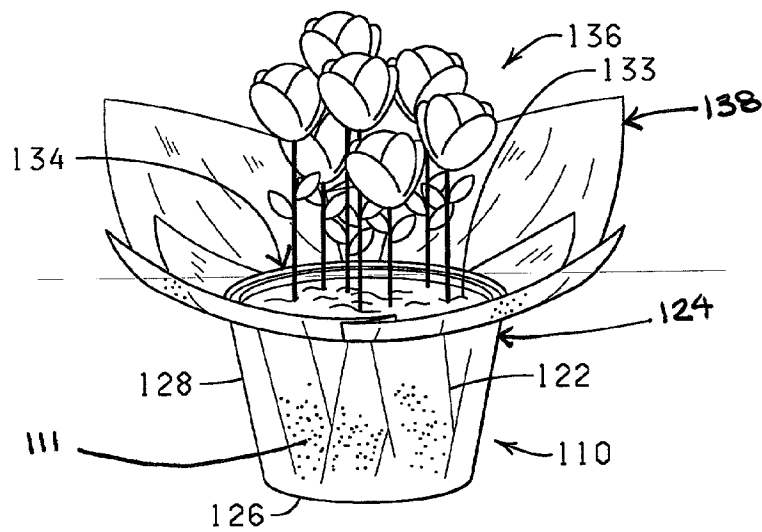


FIG. 11

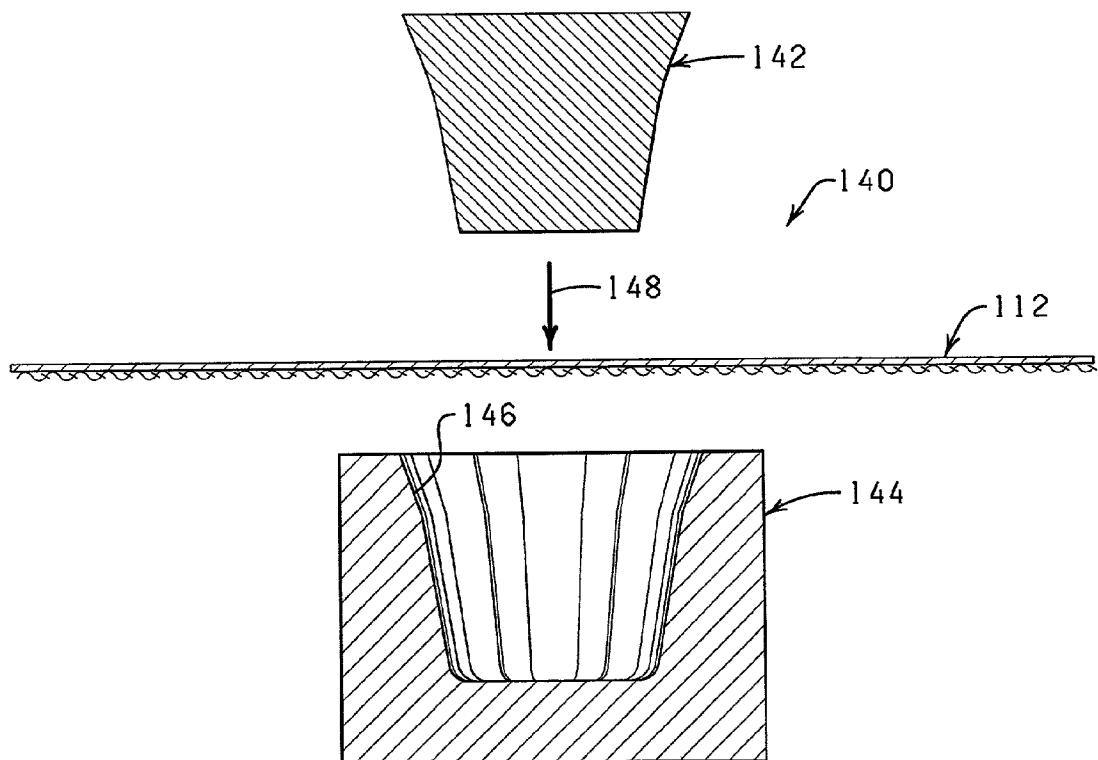


FIG. 12

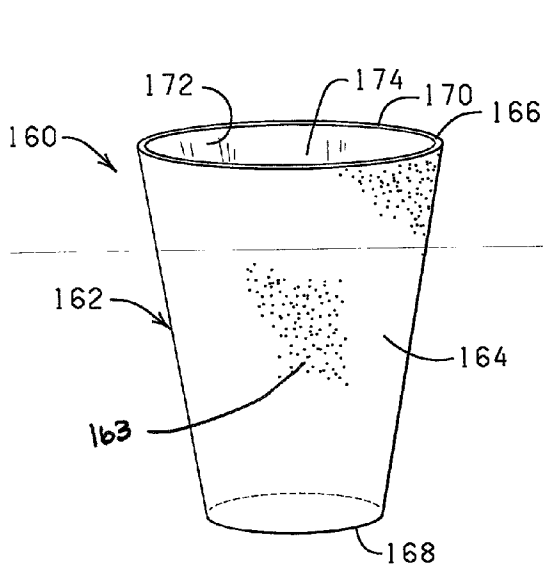


FIG. 13

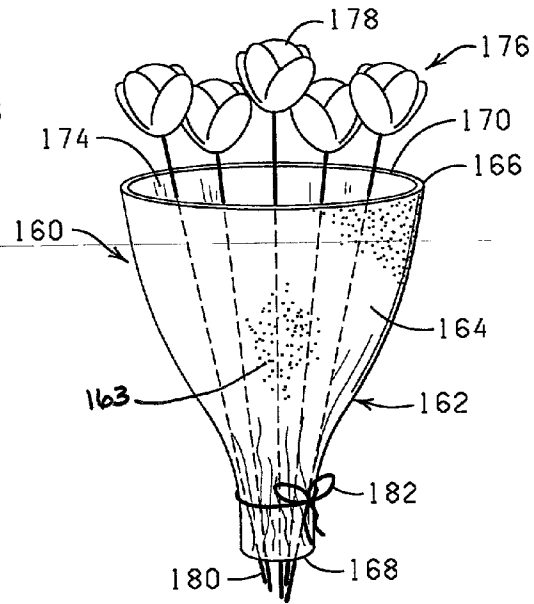


FIG. 14

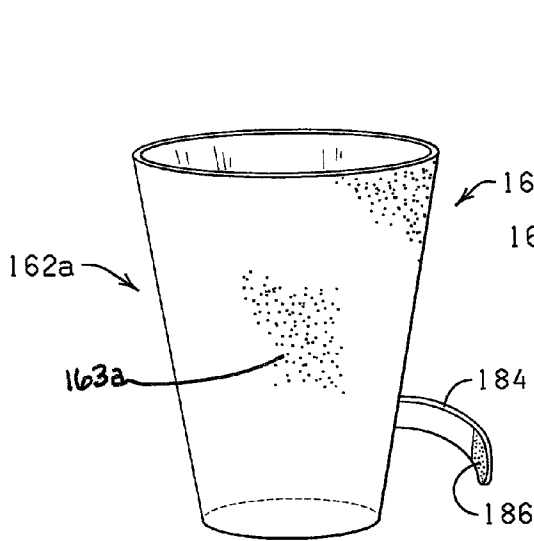


FIG. 15

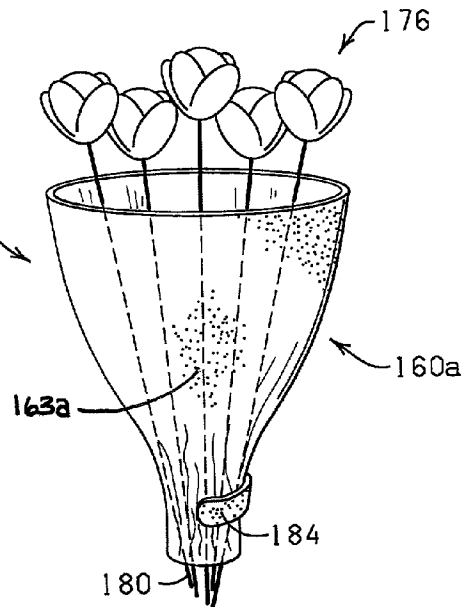


FIG. 16

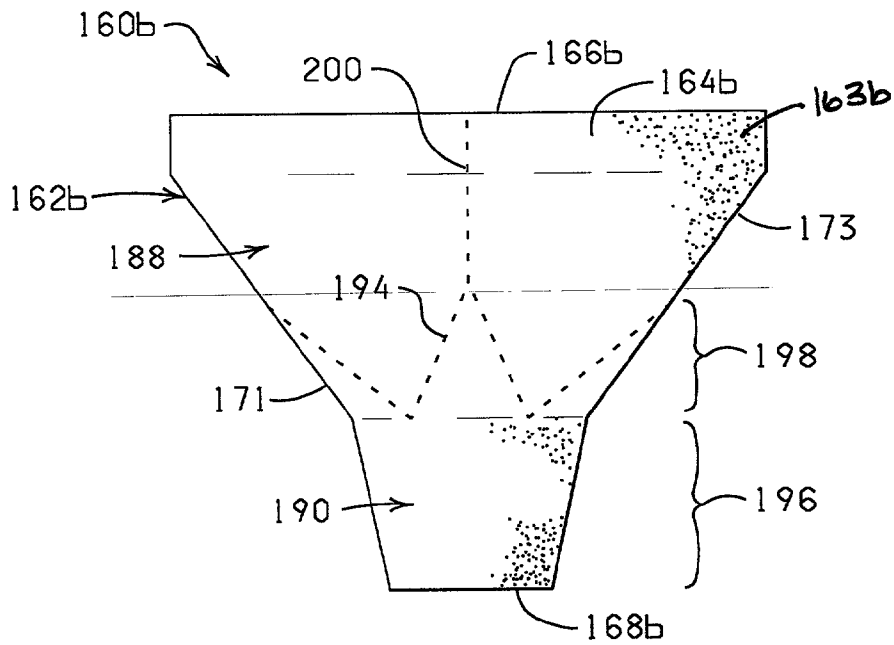


FIG. 17

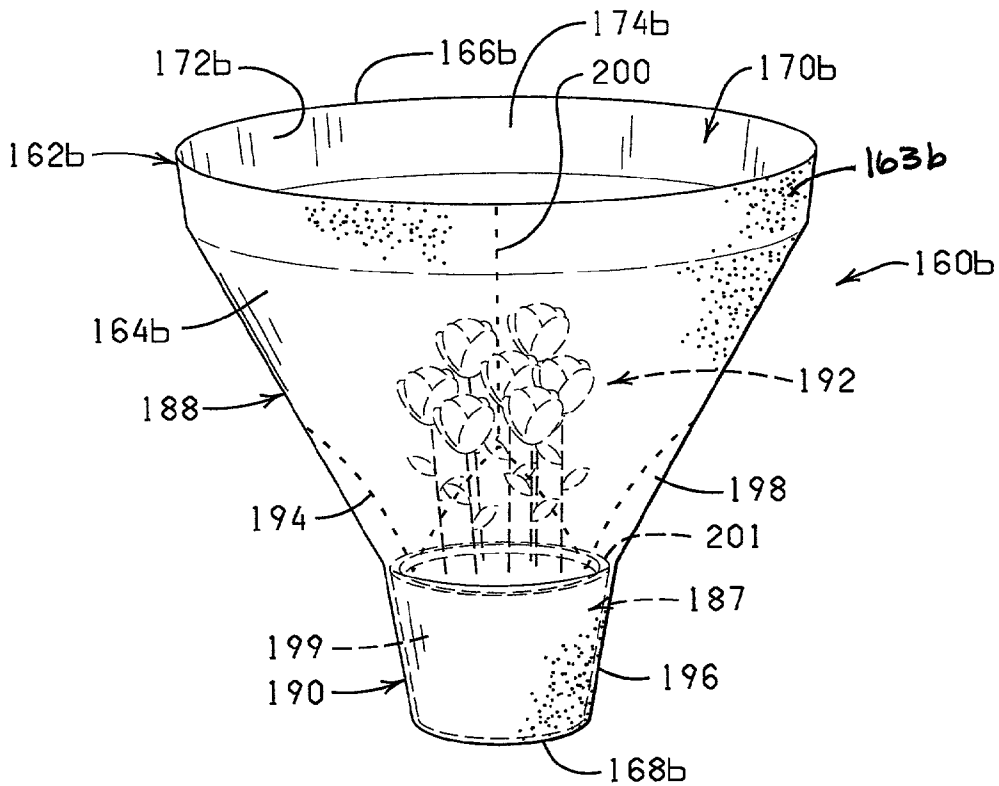


Fig. 10

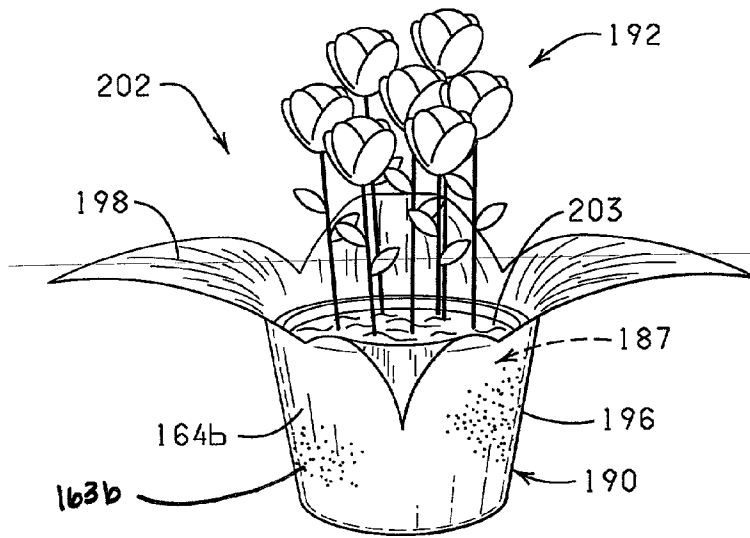


FIG. 19

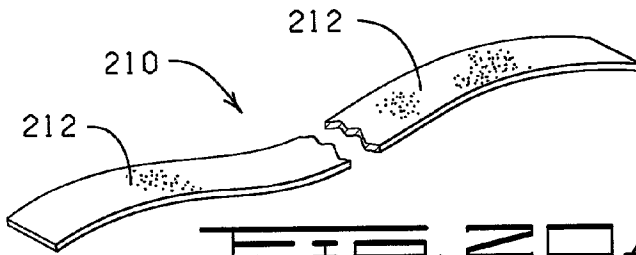


FIG. 20A

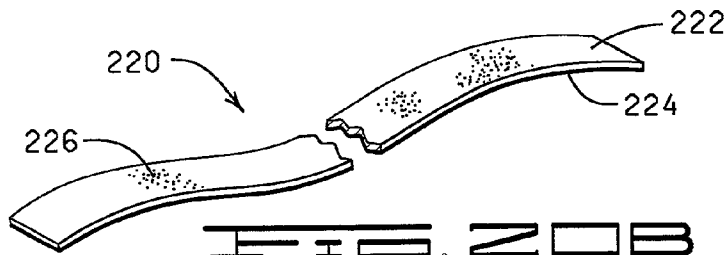


FIG. 20B

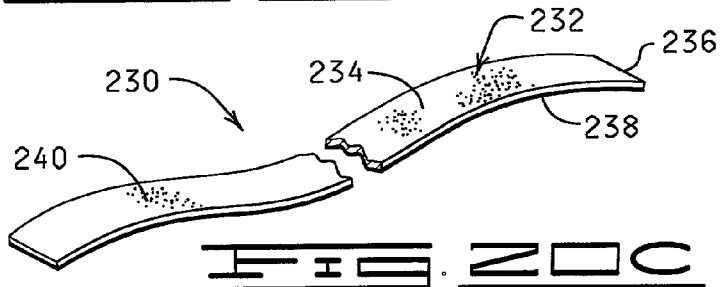


FIG. 20C

DECORATIVE COVER FOR FLOWER POT OR FLORAL GROUPING FORMED OF POLYMERIC MATERIALS HAVING A TEXTURE OR APPEARANCE SIMULATING THE TEXTURE OR APPEARANCE OF PAPER

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application is a continuation-in-part of U.S. Ser. No. 09/234,794 filed Jan. 20, 1999, entitled "DECORATIVE WRAPPING MATERIAL FORMED OF POLYMERIC MATERIALS HAVING A TEXTURE AND APPEARANCE ASSIMILATING PAPER"; which is a continuation-in-part of U.S. Ser. No. 09/098,898 filed Jun. 17, 1998, entitled "POLYMERIC MATERIAL HAVING A CLOTH-LIKE APPEARANCE", which claims benefit of U.S. provisional application Serial No. 60/050,867.

STATEMENT REGARDING FEDERALLY SPONSORED RESEARCH OR DEVELOPMENT

[0002] Not applicable.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0003] The present invention relates to polymeric materials having a texture or appearance simulating paper, and more particularly but not by way of limitation, to decorative covers positionable about flower pots and floral groupings made from such polymeric materials.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0004] FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a sheet of polymeric material having a texture or appearance simulating paper constructed in accordance with the present invention, one corner of the sheet of polymeric material upwardly turned.

[0005] FIG. 2 is a perspective view of the sheet of polymeric material having a texture or appearance simulating paper of FIG. 1 having a bonding material disposed along one edge thereof, one corner of the sheet of polymeric material upwardly turned.

[0006] FIG. 3 is a perspective view of the sheet of polymeric material having a texture or appearance simulating paper of FIG. 2 having a floral grouping disposed thereon.

[0007] FIG. 4 is a perspective view of the floral grouping of FIG. 3 being wrapped with the sheet of polymeric material having a texture or appearance simulating paper of FIG. 2 by one method of wrapping.

[0008] FIG. 5 is a perspective view of a decorative cover for the floral grouping formed from the sheet of polymeric material having a texture or appearance simulating paper of FIG. 2 wherein the decorative cover formed from the sheet of polymeric material has a conical configuration.

[0009] FIG. 6 is a perspective view of a decorative cover for the floral grouping formed from the sheet of polymeric material having a texture or appearance simulating paper of FIG. 2 wherein the decorative cover has a substantially cylindrical configuration.

[0010] FIG. 7 is a perspective view of a decorative cover positioned about a flower pot wherein the decorative cover

is formed from the sheet of polymeric material having a texture or appearance simulating paper of FIG. 1.

[0011] FIG. 8 is a diagrammatic, cross-sectional view of a flower pot cover former and band applicator apparatus having the sheet of polymeric material having a texture or appearance simulating paper of FIG. 1 disposed above an opening of the flower pot cover former and band applicator and having a flower pot disposed above the sheet of polymeric material having a texture or appearance simulating paper.

[0012] FIG. 9A is a perspective view of a sheet of expanded core polymeric film having a texture or appearance simulating paper wherein an acrylic heat sealable lacquer is disposed on at least one surface thereof, one corner of the sheet of expanded core polymeric film being upwardly turned.

[0013] FIG. 9B is a perspective view of a laminated sheet of material wherein one surface is modified or textured to provide the sheet of laminated material with a texture or appearance simulating paper, one corner of the laminated sheet of material being upwardly turned.

[0014] FIG. 10 is a perspective view of a preformed pot cover formed from a sheet of polymeric material having a texture or appearance simulating paper.

[0015] FIG. 11 is a perspective view of the preformed pot cover of FIG. 10 having a flower pot disposed therein.

[0016] FIG. 12 is a diagrammatic, cross-sectional view of a male and female mold having a sheet of polymeric material having a texture or appearance simulating paper disposed therebetween for forming the preformed pot cover of FIG. 10.

[0017] FIG. 13 is a perspective view of a floral sleeve formed from the sheet of polymeric material having a texture or appearance simulating paper.

[0018] FIG. 14 is a perspective view of the floral sleeve of FIG. 13 disposed about a floral grouping.

[0019] FIG. 15 is a perspective view of a floral sleeve having a cinching member wherein the floral sleeve is formed from a sheet of polymeric material having a texture or appearance simulating paper.

[0020] FIG. 16 is a perspective view of the floral sleeve of FIG. 15 disposed about a floral grouping.

[0021] FIG. 17 is a side view of a sleeve having a detachable portion wherein the sleeve is formed from a sheet of polymeric material having a texture or appearance simulating paper.

[0022] FIG. 18 is a perspective view of the sleeve of FIG. 17 having a flower pot disposed therein.

[0023] FIG. 19 is a perspective view of a flower pot disposed in the sleeve of FIG. 17 wherein an upper portion of the sleeve has been removed to provide a decorative cover having a skirt.

[0024] FIG. 20A is a perspective view of a polymeric ribbon material having a texture or appearance simulating paper.

[0025] FIG. 20B is a perspective view of a polymeric ribbon material formed of an expanded core polymeric film having a texture or appearance simulating paper.

[0026] FIG. 20C is a perspective view of a laminated polymeric ribbon wherein at least one surface of the laminated polymeric ribbon is modified or textured to provide the laminated polymeric ribbon with a texture or appearance simulating paper.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0027] Decorative covers for flower pots and floral groupings formed of paper are well known in the art and have been used for several years for decorative purposes. When such decorative covers are formed of paper, the paper may be colored and may be provided with a decorative pattern printed and/or embossed thereon to enhance the decorative appearance of the decorative covers formed therefrom. The paper decorative covers of the prior art, however, are sensitive to water and humidity as well as pressure placed thereon, and unless the paper from which the decorative cover is formed is treated, several undesired characteristics and features are observed. For example, the paper may become discolored, or an ink disposed on the paper to provide the decorative appearance of the paper may smear or run, thereby distorting or destroying the decorative appearance of the decorative cover and possibly staining a surface on which the decorative cover is disposed or displayed. In addition, exposure to stressors such as water and pressure can leave the paper more sensitive to tearing, which also distorts or destroys the decorative appearance of a decorative cover formed therefrom.

[0028] To overcome the disadvantages of paper, decorative covers have also been formed of polymeric film. While the polymeric film is more durable and not as sensitive to water, humidity and pressure as paper, the visible characteristics of polymeric film include a sheen which can readily be detected as polymeric film, and polymeric film does not have the soft feel or texture of paper which may be desired.

[0029] While the prior art methods of forming decorative covers for flower pots and floral groupings from paper or polymeric film have been widely accepted, new and improved methods for making decorative covers having the visible characteristics of paper, such as the texture or appearance of paper, and the physical characteristics of polymeric film, such as improved durability and decreased sensitivity to water, humidity and pressure when compared to paper, are being sought. It is to such decorative covers and methods for making same that the present invention is directed.

Description of FIGS. 1-9

[0030] Referring now to FIGS. 1 and 2, designated generally by the reference numeral 10 is a sheet or web of polymeric material having a texture or appearance 12 simulating the texture or appearance of paper (hereinafter referred to as the sheet of polymeric material 10 or the sheet of polymeric material 10 having the texture or appearance 12 simulating the texture or appearance of paper). That is, at least a portion of one surface of the sheet of polymeric material 10 has been modified to provide a matte or textured finish which provides the texture or appearance 12 simulating the texture or appearance of paper. The term "texture or

appearance simulating the texture or appearance of paper" is used interchangeably herein with the terms "texture or appearance simulating paper", "matte or textured finish simulating the texture or appearance of paper", and "appearance of being fabricated of paper". It is to be understood that the sheet of polymeric material 10 may be provided with both a texture and appearance simulating the texture and appearance of paper.

[0031] While the sheet of polymeric material 10 is provided with visible

[0032] characteristics simulating paper on at least a portion of one surface thereof, such as the texture or appearance 12 simulating the texture or appearance of paper on at least a portion of one surface thereof, the sheet of polymeric material 10 maintains the physical characteristics of the polymer from which the sheet of polymeric material 10 is formed, that is, the sheet of polymeric material 10 maintains the mechanical and structural characteristics of the polymer, such as increased durability and decreased sensitivity to water, humidity and pressure as compared to paper. In other words, at least a portion of one surface of the sheet of polymeric material 10 looks like paper while the entire sheet of polymeric material 10 behaves like polymeric material, and the texture or appearance 12 simulating the texture or appearance of paper is provided for a decorative purpose rather than a functional one.

[0033] The modification of the sheet of polymeric material 10 to provide the sheet of polymeric material 10 with a matte or textured finish which provides the texture or appearance 12 simulating paper in texture or appearance can be accomplished in several ways. For example, a matte finish can be provided by printing a desired pattern on the sheet of polymeric material 10 and thereafter laminating a matte material, such as a translucent polymeric film, over the printed pattern. To further enhance the texture or appearance 12 simulating paper of the sheet of polymeric material 10, the matte material may or may not have a plurality of spatially disposed holes extending therethrough. A matte or textured finish can also be produced by printing a sheet of polymeric material 10 with a matted (i.e. dull finish) ink, by lacquering at least one surface of the sheet of polymeric material 10 with a dull finish lacquer or a matting lacquer, by embossing the sheet of polymeric material 10 to provide an embossed pattern simulating the texture of paper, or by embossing and printing the sheet of polymeric material 10 to provide embossed and printed patterns having the texture or appearance 12 simulating the texture or appearance of paper wherein the embossed and printed patterns may be in registry, out of registry, or wherein a portion of the embossed and printed patterns are in registry and a portion of the embossed and printed patterns are out of registry. A matte or textured finish capable of providing the sheet of polymeric material 10 with the texture or appearance 12 simulating paper can also be achieved by extruding a polymeric resin onto a matted or textured chill roll or by laminating a second sheet of material to the sheet of polymeric material 10. A matte or textured finish capable of providing the sheet of polymeric material 10 with the texture or appearance 12 simulating paper can also be achieved through the use of selected pigments, such as TiO₂.

[0034] The sheet of polymeric material 10 having the texture or appearance 12 simulating paper has an upper

surface **14**, a lower surface **16**, and an outer peripheral edge **18**. At least one surface of the sheet of polymeric material **10**, such as the lower surface **16**, is matted or textured as described above to provide the sheet of polymeric material **10** with the texture or appearance **12** simulating paper. The outer peripheral edge **18** of the sheet of polymeric material **10** comprises a first side **20**, a second side **22**, a third side **24**, and a fourth side **26**. A bonding material **27** (FIG. 2) may be disposed on at least a portion of one or both of the upper and lower surfaces **14** and **16** of the sheet of polymeric material **10**, such as the upper surface **14** thereof as shown and as further illustrated in U.S. Pat. No. 5,181,364, issued Jan. 26, 1993 to Weder and entitled "WRAPPING A FLORAL GROUPING WITH SHEETS HAVING ADHESIVE OR COHESIVE MATERIAL APPLIED THERETO", the Specification of which is hereby expressly incorporated herein by reference.

[0035] The sheet of polymeric material **10** having the texture or appearance **12** simulating paper may be employed to provide a decorative cover for a floral grouping (FIGS. 3 through 6) or a decorative cover for a flower pot (FIG. 7); to form a preformed flower pot cover for covering a flower pot (FIGS. 10 and 11); to provide a sleeve for wrapping or covering a floral grouping (FIGS. 13 through 16) or a flower pot (FIGS. 17 through 19); or to provide a ribbon material (FIGS. 20A through 20C). The use of the sheet of polymeric material **10** to form a decorative cover for a floral grouping or a flower pot wherein the decorative cover is provided with a texture or appearance simulating the texture or appearance of paper, or to form a sleeve for a floral grouping or a flower pot wherein the sleeve is provided with a texture or appearance simulating the texture or appearance of paper, or to form a preformed flower pot cover having a texture or appearance simulating the texture or appearance of paper, or as a ribbon material having a texture or appearance simulating the texture or appearance of paper will be described in more complete detail herein.

[0036] As noted above, the sheet of polymeric material **10** having the texture or appearance **12** simulating the texture or appearance of paper can be utilized to form a decorative cover for a floral grouping or a flower pot. The term "flower pot" as used herein refers to any type of container for holding a floral grouping, or a plant, or even another pot-type container. Examples of flower pots and/or pot-type containers include, but are not limited to, clay pots, wooden pots, plastic pots, pots made from natural and/or synthetic fibers, or any combination thereof. Such flower pots and/or pot-type containers are provided with a retaining space for receiving a floral grouping. The floral grouping may be disposed within the retaining space of the flower pot with a suitable growing medium described in further detail below, or other retaining medium, such as a floral foam. It will also be understood that in some cases the floral grouping, and any appropriate growing medium or other retaining medium, may be disposed in a sleeve formed from the sheet of polymeric material **10** if the sleeve is adapted to contain a medium.

[0037] "Floral grouping" as used herein includes cut fresh flowers, artificial flowers, a single flower or other fresh and/or artificial plants or other floral materials and may include other secondary plants and/or ornamentation or artificial or natural materials which add to the aesthetics of the overall floral grouping. Further, the floral grouping may

comprise a growing potted plant having a root portion as well. However, it will be appreciated that the floral grouping may consist of only a single bloom or only foliage, or a botanical item (not shown), or a propagule. The term "floral grouping" may be used interchangeably herein with the term "floral arrangement". The term "floral grouping" may also be used interchangeably herein with the terms "botanical item" and/or "propagule."

[0038] The term "growing medium" when used herein includes any liquid, solid or gaseous material used for plant growth or for the cultivation of propagules, including organic and inorganic materials such as soil, humus, perlite, vermiculite, sand, water, and including the nutrients, fertilizers or hormones or combinations thereof required by the plants or propagules for growth.

[0039] The term "botanical item" when used herein refers to a natural or artificial herbaceous or woody plant, taken singularly or in combination. The term "botanical item" also includes any portion or portions of natural or artificial herbaceous or woody plants including stems, leaves, flowers, blossoms, buds, blooms, cones, or roots, taken singularly or in combination, or in groupings of such portions such as bouquets or floral groupings.

[0040] The term "propagule" when used herein refers to any structure capable of being propagated or acting as an agent of reproduction including seeds, shoots, stems, runners, tubers, plants, leaves, roots or spores.

[0041] In the embodiments shown in the drawings, the sheet of polymeric material **10** having the texture or appearance **12** simulating paper in texture or appearance is square. It will be appreciated, however, that the sheet of polymeric material **10** having the texture or appearance **12** simulating paper in texture or appearance can be of any shape, configuration or size as long as the sheet of polymeric material **10** is sufficiently sized and shaped to wrap and encompass a floral grouping or a flower pot. For example, the sheet of polymeric material **10** may have a rectangular, round, oval, octagonal or asymmetrical shape. Further, multiple sheets of the polymeric material **10** may be used in a single circumstance to provide a decorative cover or sleeve for a floral grouping or a flower pot. Moreover, when multiple sheets of the polymeric material **10** having the texture or appearance **12** simulating paper in texture or appearance are used in combination, the sheets of polymeric material **10** need not be uniform in size or shape. Finally, it will be appreciated that the sheet of polymeric material **10** having the texture or appearance **12** simulating the texture or appearance of paper shown herein is a substantially flat sheet except for the texturing, matting, embossing, flocking, application of a foamable lacquer or foamable ink, or other treatments and techniques employed to provide the sheet of polymeric material **10** with the desired texture or matting so that the sheet of polymeric material **10** has the texture or appearance **12** simulating the texture or appearance of paper.

[0042] Any thickness or stiffness of the sheet of polymeric material **10** may be utilized in accordance with the present invention as long as the sheet of polymeric material **10** can be modified to provide the sheet of polymeric material with the texture or appearance **12** simulating the texture or appearance of paper and the sheet of polymeric material **10** having the texture or appearance **12** simulating paper can be wrapped about at least a portion of a floral grouping or a

flower pot to form a decorative cover for the floral grouping or the flower pot, or formed into a preformed flower pot cover for covering a flower pot, or a sleeve for wrapping or covering a floral grouping or a flower pot, or to provide a ribbon. Generally, the sheet of polymeric material **10** will have a thickness of from about 0.1 mil to about 30 mil, and more desirably a thickness of from about 0.5 mil to about 10 mil.

[0043] The terms “polymer film”, “polymeric film” and “polymeric material” when used herein refer to a synthetic polymer such as polypropylene or polyethylene, a naturally occurring polymer such as cellophane, an extruded polymeric material having an expanded core such as extruded polypropylene having an expanded core and combinations thereof. The extruded polymeric material having an expanded core may also be referred to herein as an expanded core polymeric material.

[0044] “Extruded polymeric material having an expanded core” or “expanded core polymeric film” as used herein includes any extrudable polymeric material or polymeric film in which the core is expanded during extrusion, such as by incorporation of a blowing agent in the polymeric resin which is being extruded.

[0045] The sheet of polymeric material **10** having the texture or appearance **12** simulating the texture or appearance of paper may also be constructed, in whole or in part, from a cling material. “Cling material” when used herein includes any material which is capable of connecting to the sheet of material and/or itself upon contacting engagement during the wrapping process and is wrappable about an item, whereby portions of the cling material contactingly engage and connect to other portions of another material, or, alternatively, itself, for generally securing the material wrapped about at least a portion of a flower pot. This connecting engagement is preferably temporary in that the material may be easily removed, i.e., the cling material “clings” to the flower pot.

[0046] The cling material is constructed from polyethylene such as Cling Wrap made by Glad®, First Brands Corporation, Danbury, Conn. and may be treated if necessary. The thickness of the cling material will, in part, depend upon the size of sleeve and the size of the flower pot in the sleeve, i.e., generally, a larger flower pot may require a thicker and therefore stronger cling material. The cling material will range in thickness from about 0.1 mil to about 10 mil, and more desirably from about 0.5 mil to about 2.5 mil. However, any thickness of cling material may be utilized in accordance with the present invention which permits the cling material to be modified as hereinbefore described to provide the cling material with a texture or appearance simulating the texture or appearance of paper.

[0047] A decorative cover for a floral grouping (FIGS. 3 through 6), or a decorative cover for a flower pot (FIG. 7), or a preformed flower pot cover for covering a flower pot (FIGS. 10 and 11), or a sleeve for wrapping or covering a floral grouping (FIGS. 14 and 16) or a flower pot (FIGS. 17 through 19), or a ribbon material (FIGS. 20A through 20C) may also be constructed of a laminated material having a texture or appearance simulating paper in texture or appearance (FIG. 9B), wherein the texture or appearance simulating paper provides a decorative appearance to the decorative cover, preformed flower pot cover, sleeve or

ribbon material while maintaining the structural and mechanical characteristics of the polymeric material from which the laminated material is formed. The laminated material having a texture or appearance simulating the texture or appearance of paper can be produced by laminating two or more sheets of polymeric film (such as two or more sheets of polypropylene film or a sheet of polypropylene film and a sheet of expanded core polymeric film, such as expanded core polypropylene film), or by laminating a polymeric film (such as polypropylene film or an expanded core polymeric film) to metallized foil and the like wherein at least one surface of the laminated material is textured or modified to simulate the texture or appearance of paper. The only requirements in using a laminated material having a texture or appearance simulating paper in texture or appearance to form a decorative cover for a floral grouping, a decorative cover for a flower pot, a preformed flower pot cover for covering a flower pot, a sleeve for wrapping or covering a floral grouping or a flower pot, or as ribbon material in accordance with the present invention is that at least a portion of one surface of the laminated material be capable of being modified to provide the laminated material with at least a portion of one surface having a texture or appearance simulating the texture or appearance of paper, that the laminated material be sufficiently flexible or pliable to permit the laminated material to be formed into a decorative cover, a preformed flower pot cover, a sleeve, or ribbon material, and that the decorative cover, preformed flower pot cover, sleeve or ribbon material formed therefrom maintains the structural and mechanical characteristics of the polymeric material from which the laminated material is formed. It should also be noted that two or more separate sheets of polymeric material can be used to form a decorative cover for a floral grouping, or a decorative cover for a flower pot, or a preformed flower pot cover for covering a flower pot, or a sleeve for wrapping or covering a floral grouping or a flower pot as long as one of the sheets of polymeric material is modified or textured to provide same with a texture or appearance simulating paper.

[0048] The sheet of polymeric material **10** or a laminated material (FIG. 9B) having the texture or appearance **12** simulating the texture or appearance of paper may vary in color. Further, at least a portion of one of the upper and lower surfaces **14** and **16** of the sheet of polymeric material **10** or a laminated material may be provided with other decorative patterns or designs in addition to the matting, texturing, flocking, application of lacquers or foamable inks, or embossing employed to impart a paper-like texture or appearance to the sheet of polymeric material **10** or the laminated material wherein such decorative patterns or designs enhance the overall aesthetic characteristics of the sheet of polymeric material **10**. Such decorative patterns may include a printed pattern and/or an embossed pattern, and when used in combination, the printed and embossed patterns may be in or out of registry with one another, or a portion of the printed and embossed patterns may be in registry with one another and a portion of the printed and embossed patterns may be out of registry with one another.

[0049] As illustrated in FIG. 3, the sheet of polymeric material **10** has a width **30** extending generally between the first side **20** and the second side **22**, respectively, sufficiently sized whereby the sheet of polymeric material **10** can be wrapped about and encompass a floral grouping or a flower pot. The sheet of polymeric material **10** has a length **32**

extending generally between the third side 24 and the fourth side 26, respectively, sufficiently sized whereby the sheet of polymeric material 10 extends over a substantial portion of the floral grouping when the sheet of polymeric material 10 has been wrapped about the floral grouping in accordance with the present invention, as described in detail herein. The sheet of polymeric material 10 may also be wrapped about a flower pot to substantially wrap and cover the flower pot in accordance with the present invention.

[0050] A plurality of sheets of polymeric material 10 having the texture or appearance 12 simulating the texture or appearance of paper may be connected together to form a roll as is shown in U.S. Pat. No. 5,459,976, issued to Weder et al on Oct. 24, 1995, entitled "MATERIAL AND ADHESIVE STRIP DISPENSER", the Specification of which is hereby expressly incorporated in its entirety herein by reference.

[0051] FIGS. 3-5 illustrate the use of the sheet of polymeric material 10 having the texture or appearance 12 simulating the texture or appearance of paper for wrapping a floral grouping 34 to provide a decorative cover 36 having a texture or appearance simulating paper on at least a portion of one surface thereof (FIG. 5) for the floral grouping 34 wherein the decorative cover 36 is provided with a decorative appearance (i.e., the texture or appearance simulating paper) while maintaining the structural and mechanical characteristics of the sheet of polymeric material 10 has an open upper end 38 and a lower end 40. The sheet of polymeric material 10 may optionally have the strip of bonding material 27 disposed upon the upper surface 14, the lower surface 16 or both, such as the strip of bonding material 27 disposed along at least a portion of the upper surface 14 of the sheet of polymeric material 10 so that the strip of bonding material 27 is disposed substantially adjacent the fourth side 26 thereof substantially as shown in FIGS. 3 and 4. Further, the sheet of polymeric material 10 having the texture or appearance 12 simulating the texture or appearance of paper can be provided either as an individual sheet or from a pad or roll of material.

[0052] The bonding material 27, if present, may have a backing or release strip (not shown). The backing or release strip may be left applied for a period of time to the bonding material 27 after it is disposed on a surface of the sheet of polymeric material 10 prior to its use as a wrapping material in order to protect the bonding qualities of the strip of bonding material 27.

[0053] In operation, an operator may dispose the sheet of polymeric material 10 having the texture or appearance 12 simulating the texture or appearance of paper on a support surface (not shown) whereby the lower surface 16 of the sheet of polymeric material 10 (which has been modified to provide the sheet of polymeric material 10 with the texture or appearance 12 simulating the texture or appearance of paper) contacts the support surface. Referring more specifically to FIGS. 3-5, the floral grouping 34 is placed upon the upper surface 14 of the sheet of polymeric material 10 in a diagonal orientation. The floral grouping 34 has an upper bloom or foliage portion 42 and a lower stem portion 44. The sheet of polymeric material 10 is then wrapped about the floral grouping 34 by the operator (FIGS. 4 and 5), the operator overlapping a portion of the sheet of polymeric material 10 over another portion of the sheet of polymeric

material 10. That is, for example, the operator places the first side 20 of the sheet of polymeric material 10 over the floral grouping 34, as shown in FIG. 4. The operator continues to roll the floral grouping 34 and the sheet of polymeric material 10 in the direction toward the second side 22 of the sheet of polymeric material 10 until the upper surface 14 adjacent to fourth side 26 firmly engages the lower surface 16 of the sheet of polymeric material 10, wherein the floral grouping 34 is substantially encompassed by the sheet of polymeric material 10, and wherein the bonding material 27 on the upper surface 14 of the sheet of polymeric material 10 contacts the lower surface 16 of the sheet of polymeric material 10 to provide the decorative cover 36 having the texture or appearance 12 simulating the texture or appearance of paper which substantially encompasses and surrounds a substantial portion of the floral grouping 34. FIG. 5 shows the floral grouping 34 wrapped in a conical fashion to provide the decorative cover 36 for the floral grouping 34 wherein the decorative cover 36 has the texture or appearance 12 simulating paper. When the floral grouping 34 is wrapped in a conical fashion, the bloom portion 42 of the floral grouping 34 is exposed substantially adjacent the open upper end 38 of the decorative cover 36, and the stem portion 44 of the floral grouping 34 is exposed substantially adjacent the lower end 40 of the decorative cover 36.

[0054] In another embodiment, illustrated in FIG. 6, the sheet of polymeric material 10 having the texture or appearance 12 simulating paper in texture or appearance is utilized to wrap the floral grouping 34 in a cylindrical fashion. The floral grouping 34 is disposed upon the sheet of polymeric material 10 approximately parallel to the third side 24 of the sheet of polymeric material 10. The sheet of polymeric material 10 is wrapped generally about the stem portion 44 of the floral grouping 34 to a position wherein the fourth side 26 of the sheet of polymeric material 10 generally overlaps the third side 24 of the sheet of polymeric material 10 in a cylindrical fashion. It should be noted that the sheet of polymeric material 10 may be wrapped a plurality of times about the stem portion 44 of the floral grouping 34 before the overlapping of the third side 24 and the fourth side 26 of the sheet of polymeric material 10. As before, the portion of the sheet of polymeric material 10 near the fourth side 26 is disposed generally adjacent another portion of the sheet of polymeric material 10, and the two adjacent portions then are brought into contact where they may be bondingly engaged, thereby securing the sheet of polymeric material 10 generally about the floral grouping 34 so as to provide a decorative cover 36a having the texture or appearance 12 simulating paper for the floral grouping 34. The decorative cover 36a is provided with a decorative appearance (i.e., the texture or appearance 12 simulating paper) while maintaining the structural and mechanical characteristics of the sheet of polymeric material 10 from which the decorative cover 36a is formed.

[0055] In another version of the invention, the sheet of polymeric material 10 having the texture or appearance 12 simulating the texture or appearance of paper may be used to wrap a flower pot or pot-type container, as noted above. Shown in FIG. 7 is a flower pot designated by the reference numeral 50 having an open upper end 52, a bottom end 54, an outer peripheral surface 56, and an inner retaining space 58 within which may be disposed a growing medium. The

flower pot **50** may contain a botanical item, such as a plant **60**, which has an upper portion **62** comprising blooms or foliage or both.

[0056] The sheet of polymeric material **10** having the texture or appearance **12** simulating the texture or appearance of paper may be wrapped about the flower pot **50** by any one of numerous methods used to wrap sheets of material about flower pots to form decorative pot covers for flower pots, such as a decorative cover **61** having the texture or appearance **12** simulating the texture or appearance of paper disposed about the flower pot **50** illustrated in FIG. 7. The sheet of polymeric material **10** having the texture or appearance **12** simulating paper may, for example, be formed by hand about the outer peripheral surface **56** of the flower pot **50** to produce the decorative cover **61** which has the appearance of being fabricated of paper. The decorative cover **61** can then be secured about the flower pot **50** by a bonding material or by an elastic band **64** such that the open upper end **52** of the flower pot **50** remains substantially uncovered by the decorative cover **61**, substantially as shown in FIG. 7. The decorative cover **61** is provided with a decorative appearance (i.e., the texture or appearance **12** simulating paper) while maintaining the structural and mechanical characteristics of the sheet of polymeric material **10** from which the decorative cover **61** is formed.

[0057] Referring now to FIG. 8, a flower pot cover former and band applicator device **66** for forming the sheet of polymeric material **10** having a texture or appearance simulating the texture or appearance of paper into the decorative cover **61** for the flower pot **50** of FIG. 7 is illustrated. The flower pot cover former and band applicator device **66** comprises a band applicator **68** and a flower pot cover former **70**. The flower pot cover former and band applicator device **66** has a support platform **72** with an opening **74** formed therein. A band, such as the elastic band **64**, is disposed circumferentially about the opening **74** in the support platform **72**.

[0058] The lower surface **16** of the sheet of polymeric material **10** (which has been modified to provide the sheet of polymeric material **10** with the texture or appearance **12** simulating paper in texture or appearance) is positioned on an upper surface **76** on the support platform **72** such that the sheet of polymeric material **10** is positioned over the opening **74** in the support platform **72**. The flower pot **50** is positioned above the sheet of polymeric material **10** and is moved in a direction **78** into the opening **74** of the flower pot cover former and band applicator device **66**. As the flower pot **50** is moved into the opening **74**, the sheet of polymeric material **10** is pressed about the outer peripheral surface **56** of the flower pot **50** thereby forming the decorative cover **61** having the texture or appearance **12** simulating paper about the flower pot **50**. The decorative cover **61**, which has the texture or appearance **12** simulating the texture or appearance of paper, is then secured about the flower pot **50** by the elastic band **64**. The flower pot **50** having the decorative cover **61** secured thereto is then moved in a direction **80** out of the opening **74** in the support platform **72**.

[0059] The elastic band **64** can be applied manually or automatically such as by the method shown in U.S. Pat. No. 5,105,599 issued to Weder et al. on Apr. 21, 1992, entitled "Means For Securing A Decorative Cover About A Flower Pot", which is hereby expressly incorporated herein by

reference. The band **64** can also be applied as a tie using a method such as described in "Single Station Covering and Fastening System", U.S. Pat. No. 5,609,009, issued to Weder et al. on Mar. 11, 1997, the Specification of which is hereby expressly incorporated herein by reference. The sheet of polymeric material **10** having the texture or appearance **12** simulating the texture or appearance of paper can also be applied automatically about the flower pot **50**, for example, by methods shown in U.S. Pat. Nos. 4,733,521, issued to Weder et al. on Mar. 29, 1988 and entitled "Cover Forming Apparatus"; and 5,291,721, issued to Weder et al. on Mar. 8, 1994, entitled "Cover Forming Apparatus Having Pivoting Forming Members", both of which are hereby expressly incorporated herein by reference.

[0060] Instead of securing the decorative cover **61** about the flower pot **50** via the elastic band **64**, the decorative cover **61** formed from the sheet of polymeric material **10** having the texture or appearance **12** simulating the texture or appearance of paper may be secured to the flower pot **50** by the use of one or more bonding materials. For example, the upper surface **14** of the sheet of polymeric material **10** may have a bonding material, such as the bonding material **27**, disposed upon a portion thereof. When the sheet of polymeric material **10** is disposed about the flower pot **50**, at least a portion of the upper surface **14** of the sheet of polymeric material **10** contacts the outer peripheral surface **56** of the flower pot **50** and is thereby bonded and held about the flower pot **50** via the bonding material.

[0061] The bonding material **27** may cover a portion of the upper surface **14** of the sheet of polymeric material **10**, or the bonding material **27** may entirely cover the upper surface **14** of the sheet of polymeric material **10**. The bonding material **27** may be disposed on the upper surface **14** of the sheet of polymeric material **10** in the form of a strip or in the form of spaced-apart spots. One method for disposing the bonding material **27** on the sheet of polymeric material **10** is described in U.S. Pat. No. 5,111,637, entitled "Method For Wrapping A Floral Grouping", issued to Weder, et al. on May 12, 1992, which is expressly incorporated herein by reference.

[0062] The term "bonding material" when used herein can refer to 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 cause the attachment of a portion of the sheet of polymeric material **10** to itself, to the floral grouping **34**, or to the flower pot **50**. Since the bonding material **27** may comprise either an adhesive or an adhesive/cohesive combination, it will be appreciated that both adhesives and cohesives are known in the art, and both are commercially available. When the bonding material **27** is a cohesive, a similar cohesive material must be placed on the adjacent surface for bondingly contacting and bondingly engaging with the cohesive material.

[0063] The term "bonding material" also includes materials which are heat sealable and, in this instance, the adjacent portions of the material must be brought into contact and then heat must be applied to effect the seal. The term "bonding material" also includes materials which are sonically sealable and vibratory sealable. The term "bonding material" when used herein also means a heat sealing

lacquer or hot melt material which may be applied to the material and, in this instance, heat, sound waves, or vibrations, also must be applied to effect the sealing.

[0064] The term “bonding material” when used herein also includes any type of material or thing which can be used to effect the bonding or connecting of the two adjacent portions of the sheet of polymeric material **10** to effect the connection or bonding described herein. The term “bonding material” may also include ties, labels, bands, ribbons, strings, tapes (including single or double-sided adhesive tapes), staples or combinations thereof. Some of the bonding materials would secure the ends of the material while other bonding materials may bind the circumference of a cover, or a sleeve, or, alternatively and/or in addition, the bonding materials would secure overlapping folds in the material and/or sleeve. Another way to secure the cover and/or sleeve is to heat seal the ends of the material to another portion of the material. One way to do this is to contact the ends with an iron of sufficient heat to heat seal the material.

[0065] Alternatively, a cold seal adhesive may be utilized as the bonding material **27**. The cold seal adhesive adheres only to a similar substrate, acting similarly as a cohesive, and binds only to itself. The cold seal adhesive, since it bonds only to a similar substrate, does not cause a residue to build up on equipment, thereby both permitting much more rapid disposition and use of such equipment to form articles and reducing labor costs. Further, since no heat is required to effect the seal, the dwell time, that is, the time for the sheet of material to form and retain the shape of an article, such as a flower pot cover or flower pot, is reduced. A cold seal adhesive binds quickly and easily with minimal pressure, and such a seal is not readily releasable. This characteristic is different from, for example, a pressure sensitive adhesive.

[0066] The term “bonding material” when used herein also includes any heat or chemically shrinkable material, and static electrical or other electrical materials, chemical welding materials, magnetic materials, mechanical or barb-type fastening materials or clamps, curl-type characteristics of the film or materials incorporated in material which can cause the material to take on certain shapes, cling films, slots, grooves, shrinkable materials and bands, curl materials, springs, and any type of welding method which may weld portions of the material to itself or to the pot, or to both the material itself and the pot.

Description of FIGS. 9-12

[0067] Referring now to **FIGS. 10 and 11**, a decorative preformed flower pot cover **110** having a texture or appearance **111** simulating the texture or appearance of paper on at least a portion of one surface thereof is illustrated constructed from a sheet of polymeric material having at least a portion of one surface thereof textured or modified to provide the sheet of polymeric material with a texture or appearance simulating the texture or appearance of paper. The decorative preformed flower pot cover **110** is provided with a decorative appearance (i.e., the texture or appearance **111** simulating paper) while maintaining the structural and mechanical characteristics of the sheet of polymeric material from which the decorative preformed flower pot cover **110** is formed. The polymeric material having a texture or appearance simulating the texture or appearance of paper is a flexible material such as the sheet of polymeric material **10**

having the texture or appearance **12** simulating the texture or appearance of paper (**FIG. 1**), or a sheet of flexible material **112** having a texture or appearance **113** simulating the texture or appearance of paper (**FIG. 9A**) or a flexible laminated sheet of material **112a** having a texture or appearance **113a** simulating the texture or appearance of paper (**FIG. 9B**). In the embodiment shown in **FIG. 9A**, the sheet of flexible material **112** having the texture or appearance **113** simulating the texture or appearance of paper used in the construction of the decorative preformed flower pot cover **110** comprises a sheet of expanded core polymeric material **114** having an upper surface **116**, a lower surface **118** and the texture or appearance **113** simulating the texture or appearance of paper. The thickness of the sheet of expanded core polymeric material **114** may vary as long as the sheet of expanded core polymeric material **114** functions in accordance with the present invention. Generally, the sheet of expanded core polymeric material **114** will have a thickness in the range of from about 0.5 mil to about 10 mil, and desirably in the range of from about 0.6 mil to about 1.25 mil.

[0068] The sheet of expanded core polymeric material **114** is provided with a coating of an acrylic heat sealable lacquer **120** disposed on at least one of the upper and lower surfaces **116** and **118** thereof. It should be understood, however, that the sheet of flexible material **112** is not limited to being the sheet of expanded core polymeric film **114** having the texture or appearance **113** simulating the texture or appearance of paper; rather, the sheet of flexible material **112** can be any flexible polymeric material or flexible laminated material, such as the polymeric material **10** or the laminated polymeric material **112a**, which can be modified or textured so that at least one surface of such polymeric material or laminated material is provided with a finish or texture simulating paper in appearance while maintaining the structural and mechanical characteristics of such polymeric or laminated material.

[0069] As previously stated, the modification of the polymeric material or laminated polymeric material, such as the sheet of polymeric material **10**, the sheet of flexible laminated polymeric material **112a**, or the sheet of expanded core polymeric film **114** to provide the flexible material with the desired matte or textured finish can be accomplished by printing a desired pattern on the polymeric material and thereafter laminating a matte material, such as a translucent polymeric film, over the printed pattern. To further enhance the texture or appearance of the polymeric material so that the polymeric material assimilates the texture or appearance of paper, the matte material may or may not have a plurality of spatially disposed holes extending therethrough. A matte or textured finish can also be produced by printing a polymeric material with a matted (i.e. dull finish) ink, by lacquering at least one surface of the polymeric material with a dull finish lacquer or a matting lacquer, by embossing the polymeric material to provide an embossed pattern simulating the texture or appearance of paper, or by embossing and printing the polymeric material to provide embossed and printed patterns wherein the embossed and printed patterns may be in registry, out of registry or wherein a portion of the embossed and printed patterns are in registry and a portion of the embossed and printed patterns are out of registry. In addition, a matte or textured finish capable of providing the flexible polymeric material with a texture or appearance simulating the texture or appearance of paper

can be achieved by extruding a polymeric resin onto a matted or textured chill roll to produce the expanded core polymeric material, or by laminating a second sheet of material to the polymeric material, or by the use of selected pigments.

[0070] The sheet of flexible material **112** having the texture or appearance **113** simulating paper (**FIG. 9A**) or the sheet of flexible laminated material **112a** having the texture or appearance **113a** simulating the texture or appearance of paper (**FIG. 9B**) may vary in color. Further, the sheet of flexible material **112** or the sheet of flexible laminated material **112a** may be provided with other decorative patterns or designs in addition to the matting, texturing, flocking, application of lacquers or foamable inks, or embossing employed to impart a texture or appearance simulating the texture or appearance of paper to the sheet of flexible material **112**. For example, the sheet of flexible material **112** or the sheet of flexible laminated material **112a** may be provided with a printed pattern and/or an embossed pattern in addition to the texture or appearance **113** or **113a** simulating the texture or appearance of paper, and when provided in combination, the printed and embossed patterns may be in registry or out of registry with one another, or a portion of the printed and embossed patterns may be in registry with one another and a portion of the printed and embossed patterns may be out of registry with one another.

[0071] When the sheet of polymeric material, such as the sheet of flexible polymeric material **112**, is formed into the decorative preformed flower pot cover **110**, a plurality of overlapping folds **122** are formed, and at least a portion of the overlapping folds **122** are connected to adjacently disposed portions of the decorative preformed flower pot cover **110** via the acrylic heat sealable lacquer **120**.

[0072] As shown in **FIGS. 10 and 11**, the decorative preformed flower pot cover **110** has a base **124** having an open upper end **125**, a lower end **126**, and an outer peripheral surface **128**. An opening **130** intersects the open upper end **125** of the base **124** of the decorative preformed flower pot cover **110**, forming an inner peripheral surface **132** which defines and encompasses a retaining space **133** within which a flower pot **134** containing a floral grouping **136** may be disposed in a manner well known in the art (**FIG. 11**). The decorative preformed flower pot cover **110** is further provided with a decorative border **138** which extends outwardly from the open upper end **125** of the base **124**. The decorative border **138** is provided with an outer peripheral surface **139** and an inner peripheral surface **141**.

[0073] In another embodiment, a sheet of flexible material **112a** (**FIG. 9B**) is used in the construction of the decorative preformed flower pot cover **110**. The sheet of flexible material **112a** is a laminated material which comprises a first sheet of material **114a** having an upper surface **116a** and a lower surface **118a**, and a second sheet of material **120a**. At least a portion of one surface of one of the first sheet of material **114a** and the second sheet of material **120a** is modified to provide the sheet of flexible material **112a** with the desired texture or appearance **113a** simulating the texture or appearance of paper. The sheet of flexible laminated material **112a** having the texture or appearance **113a** simulating the texture or appearance of paper can be produced by laminating two or more sheets of polymeric film (such as two or more sheets of polypropylene film or a sheet of

polypropylene film and a sheet of expanded core polymeric film, such as expanded core polypropylene film), or by laminating a polymeric film (such as polypropylene film or an expanded core polymeric film) with a sheet of metallized foil and the like wherein at least one surface of the sheet of laminated material **112a** is textured or modified to simulate paper in appearance. Desirably, the first sheet of material **114a** is an expanded core polymeric film and the second sheet of material **120a** is a substantially water impervious polymeric film. The sheet of flexible laminated material **112a** is provided with the texture or appearance **113a** simulating the texture or appearance of paper on at least a portion of one surface thereof while maintaining the structural and mechanical characteristics of the polymeric film(s) from which the sheet of flexible laminated material **112a** is formed.

[0074] The first sheet of material **114a** desirably has a thickness of from about 0.5 mil to about 10 mil, and more desirably from about 0.6 mil to about 1.25 mil, and the second sheet of material **120a** desirably has a thickness of from about 0.5 mil to about 10 mil, and more desirably from about 0.6 mil to about 1.25 mil. The second sheet or material **120a** can be laminated to the first sheet of material **114a** with a colored adhesive so as to impart a desired color to the laminated sheet of flexible material **112a**. While the thickness of the sheet of flexible material **112a** can vary widely and will generally depend on the thickness of the first sheet of material **114a** and the thickness of the second sheet of material **120a**, desirable results can be obtained where the sheet of flexible material **112a** has a thickness in the range of from about 1 mil to about 20 mil, and more desirably from about 1.2 mil to about 2.5 mil.

[0075] As previously stated, the decorative preformed flower pot cover **110** may be constructed of the sheet of polymeric material **10** having the texture or appearance **12** simulating the texture or appearance of paper (**FIG. 1**), or of the sheet of the flexible material **112** having the texture or appearance **113** simulating paper (**FIG. 9A**), or of the laminated sheet of the flexible material **112a** having the texture or appearance **113a** simulating the texture or appearance of paper (**FIG. 9B**). Desirably, at least a portion of one surface of one of the base **124** and the decorative border **138** of the decorative, preformed flower pot cover **110** is provided with the texture or appearance **111** simulating the texture or appearance of paper. For example, the texture or appearance **111** simulating the texture or appearance of paper may be provided on at least a portion of the outer peripheral surface **128** of the base **124** or on at least a portion of one of the outer peripheral surface **139** and the inner peripheral surface **141** of the decorative border **138**, or the texture or appearance **111** simulating the texture or appearance of paper may be provided on a combination thereof.

[0076] The decorative preformed flower pot cover **110** so formed will have a plurality of overlapping folds **122** formed on the base **124** thereof, at least a portion thereof being connected so that the decorative preformed flower pot cover **110** may be substantially flattened and then unflattened to assume the original state of the decorative preformed flower pot cover **110**. A substantial portion of the overlapping folds **122** extend over different distances and at various and arbitrary angles. The decorative border **138** of the decorative preformed flower pot cover **110** is substantially free of permanently connected overlapping folds. If desired, the

decorative preformed flower pot cover **110** can be formed of a plurality of sheets of the same and/or different types of material.

[0077] The method and apparatus employed to form the decorative preformed flower pot cover **110** having the texture or appearance **111** simulating the texture or appearance of paper is substantially identical whether one uses one or more sheets of polymeric material **10** (FIG. 1), or one or more sheets of flexible polymeric material **112** (FIG. 9A), or one or more sheets of flexible material **112a** (FIG. 9B), or a combination of such sheets of material. Thus, only the formation of the decorative preformed flower pot cover **110** having the texture or appearance **111** simulating the texture or appearance of paper using the sheet of flexible polymeric material **112** of FIG. 9A will be described in detail hereinafter.

[0078] The decorative preformed flower pot cover **110** may be formed using a conventional mold system **140** comprising a male mold **142** and a female mold **144** having a mold cavity **146** for matingly receiving the male mold **142** (FIG. 12). The sheet of flexible polymeric material **112** having the texture or appearance **113** simulating the texture or appearance of paper is positioned between the male and female molds **142** and **144**, respectively. Movement of the male mold **142** in the direction **148** and into the mold cavity **146** forces the sheet of flexible polymeric material **112** to be disposed about the portion of the male mold **142** disposed in the mold cavity **146** of the female mold **144** and thereby forms the sheet of flexible polymeric material **112** into the preformed decorative flower pot cover **110** having the texture or appearance **111** simulating the texture or appearance of paper (FIGS. 10 and 11). Further, in accordance with the present invention, the decorative preformed flower pot cover **110** constructed from the materials described herein above may have a bonding material disposed upon a portion thereof.

[0079] Methods for forming such preformed decorative pot covers are well known in the art. Two methods of forming such covers are described in U.S. Pat. Nos. 4,773, 182 and 5,291,721, each of which is expressly incorporated herein by reference.

Description of FIGS. 13-19

[0080] Shown in FIG. 13 is a decorative cover designated therein by the general reference numeral **160** which comprises a flexible bag or sleeve **162** of unitary construction having a texture or appearance **163** simulating the texture or appearance of paper on at least a portion of one surface thereof in accordance with the present invention. The sleeve **162** may be used as a decorative cover for a floral grouping or a flower pot. The sleeve **162** initially comprises a flexible flat collapsed piece of polymeric material which is openable in the form of a tube or sleeve. Such sleeves are well known in the floral industry. Further, in accordance with the present invention, the decorative cover **160** can be constructed of the sheet of polymeric material **10** (FIG. 1), or the sheet of flexible polymeric material **112** (FIG. 9A), or the sheet of laminated flexible polymeric material **112a** (FIG. 9B) whereby at least a portion of one surface of the sleeve **162**, preferably an outer peripheral surface **164** of the sleeve **162**, has been modified to provide with sleeve **162** with the texture or appearance **163** simulating the texture or appearance

of paper, as previously described herein. The sleeve **162** is provided with a decorative appearance (i.e., the texture or appearance **163** simulating the texture or appearance of paper) while maintaining the structural and mechanical characteristics of the polymeric material from which the sleeve **162** is formed.

[0081] The sleeve **162** has an upper end **166**, a lower end **168** and the outer peripheral surface **164**. The sleeve **162** may be tapered outwardly from the lower end **168** toward a larger diameter at its upper end **166**. In its flattened state the sleeve **162** generally has an overall trapezoidal or modified trapezoidal shape, and when opened is substantially frusto-conical in configuration. It will be appreciated, however, that the sleeve **162** may comprise variations on the aforementioned shapes or may comprise significantly altered shapes such as square or rectangular, wherein the sleeve **162** when opened has a cylindrical form, as long as the sleeve **162** functions in accordance with the present invention in the manner described herein. The sleeve **162** (or any other sleeve disclosed herein) may have an angular or contoured shape.

[0082] The sleeve **162** has an opening **170** at the upper end **166** and may be open at the lower end **168**, or closed with a bottom at the lower end **168**. The sleeve **162** also has an inner peripheral surface **172** which, when the sleeve **162** is opened, defines and encompasses an inner retaining space **174**. When the lower end **168** of the sleeve **162** has a closed lower end **168**, a portion of the lower end **168** may be inwardly folded to form one or more gussets (not shown) for allowing the lower portion of the inner retaining space **174** to be expandable, for example, for receiving the circular bottom of a pot or growing medium.

[0083] The sleeve **162** is generally frusto-conically shaped, but the sleeve **162** may be, by way of example but not by way of limitation, cylindrical, frusto-conical, a combination of both frusto-conical and cylindrical, or any other shape, as long as the sleeve **162** functions as described herein as noted above. Further, the sleeve **162** may comprise any shape, whether geometric, non-geometric, asymmetrical and/or fanciful as long as it functions in accordance with the present invention. The sleeve **162** may also be equipped with drain holes (if having a closed bottom) or side ventilation holes (not shown), or can be made from gas permeable or impermeable materials.

[0084] The material from which the sleeve **162** is constructed is the same as previously described above for the sheet of polymeric material **10** having the texture or appearance **12** simulating the texture or appearance of paper, or the sheet of polymeric material **112** or **112a** having the texture or appearance **113** or **113a**, respectively, simulating the texture or appearance of paper. Any thickness of polymeric material may be utilized in accordance with the present invention as long as the sleeve **162** may be formed as described herein, is provided with the texture or appearance **163** simulating the texture or appearance of paper, and as long as the formed sleeve **162** may contain at least a portion of a flower pot or a floral grouping, as described herein. Additionally, an insulating material such as bubble film, preferable as one of two or more layers, can be utilized in order to provide additional protection for the item, such as a floral grouping, contained therein.

[0085] In FIG. 14 the sleeve **162** is illustrated having the texture or appearance **163** simulating the texture or appearance

ance of paper provided on at least a portion of the outer peripheral surface **164** of the sleeve **162**. A floral grouping **176** is disposed within the inner retaining space **174** of the sleeve **162**. Generally, an upper or bloom portion **178** of the floral grouping **176** is exposed substantially adjacent the opening **170** of the sleeve **162** and a lower or stem portion **180** of the floral grouping **176** is exposed substantially adjacent the lower end **168** of the sleeve **162**. Either end of the sleeve **162** may be closed about the floral grouping **176**. Generally, a portion of the sleeve **162** is tightened about a portion of the stem portion **180** of the floral grouping **176** for holding the decorative cover **160** about the floral grouping **176**. For example, the sleeve **162** may be held by a tie **182** tied about the sleeve **162** such as is shown in **FIG. 14**. Other methods for binding the sleeve **162** about the floral grouping **176** may be employed such as the bonding materials described elsewhere herein. For example, as shown in **FIG. 15**, a decorative cover **160a** is shown which comprises a sleeve **162a** having a texture or appearance **163a** simulating the texture or appearance of paper on at least a portion of one surface thereof and a cinching tab **184** having a bonding material **186** disposed upon a surface thereof. The cinching tab **184** can be used to gather portions of the sleeve **162a** together about the stem portion **180** of the floral grouping **176** as shown in **FIG. 16** for holding the sleeve **162a** tightly about the floral grouping **176**.

[0086] Similarly, it may generally be desired to use the sleeve **162** as a decorative cover for a flower pot (not shown). The flower pot will generally contain a botanical item or plant. The flower pot can be deposited into the open sleeve **162** in a manner well known in the art, such as manually wherein the sleeve **162** is opened by hand and the flower pot deposited therein.

[0087] As noted above, a bonding material may be disposed on a portion of the sleeve **162** or any sleeve described herein to assist in holding the sleeve **162** to the flower pot when the flower pot is disposed within the sleeve **162** or to assist in closing the upper end **166** of the sleeve **162** or adhering the sleeve **162** to the flower pot after the flower pot has been disposed therein, as will be discussed in further detail below.

[0088] It will be understood that the bonding material, if present, may be disposed as a strip or block on a surface of the sleeve **162**. The bonding material may also be disposed upon either the outer peripheral surface **164** or the inner peripheral surface **162** of the sleeve **162**, as well as upon the flower pot. Further, the bonding material may be disposed as spots of bonding material, or in any other geometric, non-geometric, asymmetric, or fanciful form, and in any pattern including covering either the entire inner peripheral surface **172** and/or outer peripheral surface **164** of the sleeve **162** and/or the flower pot. The bonding material may be covered by a cover or release strip which can be removed prior to the use of the sleeve **162** or flower pot. The bonding material can be applied by methods known to those of ordinary skill in their art. One method for disposing a bonding material, in this case an adhesive, is described in U.S. Pat. No. 5,111,637, issued to Weder et al. on May 12, 1993, which is hereby expressly incorporated herein by reference.

[0089] As noted above, a bonding material may be disposed on at least a portion of the inner peripheral surface **172** of the sleeve **162**, or, alternatively, the bonding material may

be disposed on the outer peripheral surface of a flower pot contained within the sleeve **162**, while the sleeve **162** may be free of the bonding material. In a further alternative, the bonding material may be disposed both on at least a portion of the flower pot as well as upon at least a portion of the inner peripheral surface **172** of the sleeve **162**. In addition, a portion of the bonding material may also be disposed on the outer peripheral surface **164** of the sleeve **162** as well. It will be understood that the bonding material may be disposed in a solid section of bonding material. The bonding material, when present, is disposed on the sleeve **162** and/or flower pot by any method known in the art.

[0090] Certain versions of sleeves described herein may be used in combination with a preformed pot cover. For example, a preformed pot cover may be applied to the pot, then the covered pot wrapped or disposed within a sleeve. Either the cover or the sleeve, or both, have a texture or appearance simulating the texture or appearance of paper. Examples of sleeves which may be used in this invention are shown in the specification of U.S. Pat. No. 5,625,979, issued to Weder on May 6, 1997, the specification of which is expressly incorporated herein by reference in its entirety. Equipment and devices for forming sleeves are commercially available, and well known in the art.

[0091] Shown in **FIGS. 17 and 18** is another embodiment of a decorative cover **160b** comprising a sleeve **162b** having a texture or appearance **163b** simulating the texture or appearance of paper constructed from the polymeric material **10**, or the flexible polymeric material **112** or **112a** in accordance with the present invention. The sleeve **162b** is provided with a decorative appearance (i.e., the texture or appearance **163b** simulating the texture or appearance of paper) while maintaining the structural and mechanical characteristics of the polymeric material from which the sleeve **162b** is formed. The sleeve **162b** has a "detaching" element in predetermined areas for detaching a portion of the sleeve **162b**. The sleeve **162b** generally initially comprises a flexible flat collapsed piece of material which is openable in the form of a tube or sleeve. The sleeve **162b** is constructed of the same material and in the same way as the sleeve **162** described previously herein and may be described exactly the same as the sleeve **162** described herein except for the additional elements described hereinafter.

[0092] The sleeve **162b** has an upper end **166b**, a lower end **168b**, and an outer peripheral surface **164b**. The sleeve **162b** has an opening **170b** at the upper end **166b** thereof, and the sleeve **162b** may be open at the lower end **168b** or closed with a bottom at the lower end **168b**. In a flattened state, the sleeve **162b** has a first side **171** and a second side **173**. The sleeve **162b** also has an inner peripheral surface **172b** which, when the sleeve **162b** is opened, defines and encompasses an inner retaining space **174b** as shown in **FIG. 18**. When the lower end **168b** of the sleeve **162b** has a closed bottom, a portion of the lower end **168b** may be inwardly folded to form one or more gussets (not shown) for permitting a circular bottom of an object such as a flower pot **187**, to be disposed in the inner retaining space **174b** of the sleeve **162b**.

[0093] As shown in **FIGS. 17 and 18**, the sleeve **162b** is demarcated into an upper portion **188** and a lower portion **190**. The lower portion **190** of the sleeve **162b** is generally

sized to contain the flower pot 187. The upper portion 188 of the sleeve 162b is sized to substantially surround and encompass a plant 192 contained in the flower pot 187 disposed within the lower portion 190 of the sleeve 162b. The sleeve 162b is demarcated into the upper portion 188 and the lower portion 190 by a detaching element 194 for enabling the detachment of the upper portion 188 of the sleeve 162b from the lower portion 190 of the sleeve 162b. In the present version, the detaching element 194 is a plurality of generally laterally-oriented or alternately diagonally-oriented perforations which extend circumferentially across the outer peripheral surface 164b of the sleeve 162b from the first side 171 to the second side 173.

[0094] In the embodiment shown in FIGS. 17 and 18, the lower portion 190 of the sleeve 162b further comprises a base portion 196 and a skirt portion 198. The base portion 196 of the lower portion 190 of the sleeve 162b comprises that part of the lower portion 190 of the sleeve 162b which, when the flower pot 187 is placed into the lower portion 190 of the sleeve 162b, has an inner peripheral surface 172b which is substantially adjacent to and surrounds an outer peripheral surface 199 of the flower pot 187. The skirt portion 198 of the lower portion 190 of the sleeve 162b comprises that part of the lower portion 190 of the sleeve 162b which extends beyond an open upper end 201 of the flower pot 187 and adjacent at least a portion of the plant 192 contained within the flower pot 187 and which is left to freely extend at an angle, inwardly or outwardly, from the base portion 196 when the upper portion 188 of the sleeve 162b is detached from the lower portion 190 of the sleeve 162b by actuation of the detaching element 194.

[0095] In the intact sleeve 162b, the skirt portion 198 of the lower portion 190 of the sleeve 162b comprises an upper peripheral edge congruent with the detaching element 194 which is connected to a lower peripheral edge, also congruent with the detaching element 194, of the upper portion 188 of the sleeve 162b. In FIGS. 17 and 18, the upper peripheral edge of the skirt portion 198 of the lower portion 190 of the sleeve 162b is congruent with a series of alternately diagonally-oriented lines of perforations which together form a zigzag and comprise the detaching element 194. The upper portion 188 of the sleeve 162b may also have an additional detaching element 200 indicated as a plurality of vertical perforations for facilitating removal of the upper portion 188 of the sleeve 162b and which are disposed more or less vertically therein extending between the detaching element 194 of the sleeve 162b.

[0096] The upper portion 188 of the sleeve 162b is thereby separable from the lower portion 190 of the sleeve 162b by tearing the upper portion 188 along both the detaching element 200 and the detaching element 194, thereby separating the upper portion 188 from the lower portion 190 of the sleeve 162b. The lower portion 190 of the sleeve 162b remains disposed as the base portion 196 about the flower pot 187 and as the skirt portion 198 about the plant 192 forming a decorative cover 202 as shown in FIG. 19 which substantially surrounds and encompasses the flower pot 187 and the plant 192 contained therein. At least a portion of an outer peripheral surface 164b of the lower portion 190 of the sleeve 162b, for example, the base and skirt portions 196 and 198, may be modified to provide the lower portion 190 of the sleeve 162b with the texture or appearance 163b simulating the texture or appearance of paper, while the upper portion

188 of the sleeve 162b is left unmodified or is provided with a printed pattern; or at least a portion of one surface of both the upper portion 188 and the lower portion 190 may be provided with a modified or textured surface so the both the upper portion 188 and the lower portion 190 of the sleeve 162b is provided with the texture or appearance 163b simulating paper. When the upper portion 188 is detached, the lower portion 190 of the sleeve 162b remains about the flower pot 176b and thereby forms a decorative cover about the flower pot 176b which has the appearance of paper.

[0097] "Detaching element" as used herein includes any element, or combination of elements, or features, such as, but not by way of limitation, perforations, tear strips, zippers, and any other devices or elements of this nature known in the art, or any combination thereof. Therefore, while perforations are shown and described in detail herein, it will be understood that tear strips, zippers, or any other "detaching elements" known in the art, or any combination thereof, could be substituted therefor and/or used therewith.

[0098] In a general method of use of the sleeve 162b as the decorative cover 202 for the flower pot 187, an operator provides the sleeve 162b and the flower pot 187 having the plant 192 disposed in a growing medium 203 contained within the flower pot 187. The operator then disposes the flower pot 187 having the plant 192 contained therein into the sleeve 162b by opening the sleeve 162b at end the upper 166 thereof and assuring both that the opening 170b therein is in an open condition, and that the inner peripheral surface 172b of the sleeve 162b is somewhat expanded outward as well, as shown in FIG. 18. The operator then manually or automatically disposes the flower pot 187 into the opening 170b in the sleeve 162b, the flower pot 187 being disposed generally through the upper portion 188 of the sleeve 162b into generally the lower portion 190 of the sleeve 162b, the flower pot 187 remaining in the lower portion 190 of the sleeve 162b, permitting the sleeve 162b to substantially surround and tightly encompass the flower pot 187. It will be understood that alternatively, the sleeve 162b may be provided with an extension (not shown), and the sleeve 162b may be disposed on rods or wickets, and the flower pot 187 may then be disposed in the sleeve 162b either before or after the sleeve 162b has been removed from the wickets.

Description of FIGS. 20A-20C

[0099] Referring now to FIG. 20A, designated generally by the reference numeral 210 is a polymeric ribbon material having a texture or appearance 212 simulating the texture or appearance of paper for forming decorative bows and for wrapping items, wherein the polymeric ribbon material 210 maintains the structural and mechanical characteristics of the polymer from which the polymeric ribbon material 210 is formed. That is, at least one surface of a sheet or web of polymeric material (not shown) is modified to provide a matte or textured finish which provides the texture or appearance 212 simulating the texture or appearance of paper. The modification of the sheet or web of polymeric material (not shown) to provide the polymeric ribbon material 210 with the matte or textured finish which provides the texture or appearance 212 simulating paper can be accomplished in several ways. For example, the polymeric ribbon material 210 having the matte or textured finish which provides the texture or appearance 212 simulating the texture or appearance of paper can be produced by printing a

sheet or web of polymeric material with a matted (i.e. dull finish) ink, by lacquering at least one surface of the sheet or web of polymeric material with a dull finish lacquer or a matting lacquer, by embossing the sheet or web of polymeric material to provide an embossed pattern simulating the texture or appearance of paper, or by flocking the sheet or web of polymeric material, or by application of a foamable lacquer or foamable ink to the sheet or web of polymeric material, or by embossing and printing the sheet or web of polymeric material to provide embossed and printed patterns wherein the embossed and printed patterns may be in registry, out of registry or wherein a portion of the embossed and printed patterns are in registry and a portion of the embossed and printed patterns are out of registry. In addition, a matte or textured finish capable of providing the sheet or web of polymeric material with the texture or appearance **212** simulating the texture or appearance of paper can be achieved by extruding a polymeric resin onto a matted or textured chill roll. Thereafter, the sheet or web of material having the texture or appearance **212** simulating the texture or appearance of paper can be cut in a conventional manner to provide the polymeric ribbon material **210** having the texture or appearance **212** simulating the texture or appearance of paper.

[0100] In addition to providing the sheet or web of polymeric material with the desired matte or textured finish which provides the texture or appearance **212** simulating the texture or appearance of paper, the sheet or web of polymeric material may contain additional embossed patterns and/or printed patterns which enhance the overall aesthetic characteristics of the polymeric ribbon material **210** produced from the sheet or web of polymeric material. When provided in combination, such embossed and printed patterns may be in register with one another, out of register with one another, or a portion of the embossed and printed patterns may be in register with one another and a portion of the embossed and printed patterns may be out of register with one another. Further, the embossed and printed patterns may be positioned on the sheet or web of polymeric material such that when the sheet or web of polymeric material is cut into the polymeric ribbon material **210**, the embossed and printed patterns lie within the boundaries of the polymeric ribbon material **210**, i.e., between opposite sides of the polymeric ribbon material **210**, or the embossed and printed patterns may be randomly positioned on the sheet or web of polymeric material such that when the sheet or web of polymeric material is cut into the polymeric ribbon material **210**, the embossed and printed patterns are randomly positioned on the polymeric ribbon material **210**.

[0101] Any polymeric material capable of being textured or otherwise modified to provide the polymeric material with the texture or appearance **212** simulating the texture or appearance of paper can be employed in the formulation of the polymeric ribbon material **210**. For example, the polymeric material employed to produce the polymeric ribbon material **210** can be polypropylene film having a thickness of from about 0.1 mil to about 30 mil, and more desirably of from about 0.5 mil to about 10 mil, or an expanded core polymeric film having a thickness of from about 0.5 mil to about 10 mil.

[0102] Referring now to **FIG. 20B**, designated generally by the reference numeral **220** is another embodiment of a polymeric ribbon material for forming decorative bows and

for wrapping items. The polymeric ribbon material **220** is a laminated material comprising a first web or sheet of material **222** having a thickness of from about 0.5 mil to about 10 mil, and more desirably from about 0.6 mil to about 1.25 mil, and a second web or sheet of material **224** having a thickness of from about 0.5 mil to about 10 mil, and more desirably from about 0.6 mil to about 1.25 mil. The laminated material can be produced by laminating two or more sheets of polymeric film (such as two or more sheets of polypropylene film or a sheet of polypropylene film and a sheet of expanded core polymeric film, such as expanded core polypropylene film), or by laminating a polymeric film (such as polypropylene film or an expanded core polymeric film) with a sheet of metallized foil and the like wherein at least one surface of the laminated material is textured or modified to simulate the texture or appearance of paper. The second web or sheet of material **224** is desirably laminated to the first web or sheet of material **222** with a colored adhesive so as to impart a desired color to the polymeric ribbon material **220**. If desired the polymeric ribbon material **220** may be treated or otherwise processed to provide the polymeric ribbon material **220** with a matte or textured finish which provides a texture or appearance **226** simulating the texture or appearance of paper, while the polymeric ribbon material **220** maintains the structural and mechanical characteristics of the polymer from which the polymeric ribbon material **220** is formed. That is, a matte or textured finish which provides the texture or appearance **226** simulating paper in texture or appearance can be printed on at least a portion of one surface of the first web or sheet of material **222** and thereafter the second web or sheet of material **224** (which in this case is desirably a matte material of translucent polymeric film) is laminated to the first web or sheet of material **222** to provide the polymeric ribbon material **220** with the texture or appearance **226** simulating the texture or appearance of paper. To further enhance the texture or appearance **226** simulating the texture or appearance of paper of the polymeric ribbon material **220**, the second web or sheet of material **224** may or may not have a plurality of spatially disposed holes extending therethrough. The matte or textured finish which provides the texture or appearance **226** simulating the texture or appearance of paper can be produced by printing at least one of the first and second webs or sheets of material **222** and **224** with a matted (i.e. dull finish) ink, by lacquering at least one surface of at least one of the first and second webs or sheets of material **222** and **224** with a dull finish lacquer or a matting lacquer, by flocking at least one of the first and second webs or sheets of material **222** and **224**, by application of a foamable lacquer or foamable ink to at least one of the first and second webs or sheets of material **222** and **224**, by embossing at least one of the first and second webs or sheets of material **222** and **224** to provide an embossed pattern simulating the appearance and texture of paper, or by embossing and printing at least one of the first and second webs or sheets of material **222** and **224** to provide embossed and printed patterns wherein the embossed and printed patterns may be in registry, out of registry or wherein a portion of the embossed and printed patterns are in registry and a portion of the embossed and printed patterns are out of registry. In addition, a matte or textured finish capable of providing the polymeric ribbon material **220** with the texture or appearance **226** simulating the texture or appearance of paper can be achieved by extruding the resin used to produce

one of the first and second webs or sheets of material **222** and **224** onto a matted or textured chill roll.

[0103] In addition to providing the first web or sheet of material **222** and/or the second web or sheet of material **224** with the desired matte or textured finish which provides the texture or appearance **226** simulating the texture or appearance of paper, at least a portion of one surface of at least one of the first web or sheet of material **222** and the second web or sheet of material **224** may contain additional embossed and/or printed patterns which enhance with overall aesthetic characteristics of the polymeric ribbon material **220** produced from the first and second webs or sheets of material **222** and **224**. When provided in combination, such embossed and printed patterns may be in register with one another, out of register with one another, or a portion of the embossed and printed patterns may be in register with one another and a portion of the embossed and printed patterns may be out of register with one another. Further, the embossed and printed patterns may be positioned on the first and/or second webs of material **222** and **224** such that when the laminated material produced therefrom is cut into the polymeric ribbon material **220**, the embossed and/or printed patterns lie within the boundaries of the polymeric ribbon material **220**, i.e., between opposite sides of the polymeric ribbon material **220**, or the embossed and/or printed patterns may be randomly positioned on the first and/or second sheets or webs of material **222** and **224** such that when the laminated material produced therefrom is cut into the polymeric ribbon material **220**, the embossed and/or printed patterns are randomly positioned on the polymeric ribbon material **220**.

[0104] Referring now to FIG. 20C, designated generally by the reference numeral **230** is another embodiment of a polymeric ribbon material for forming decorative bows and for wrapping items. The polymeric ribbon material **230** comprises a polymeric film **232** having an upper surface **234** and a lower surface **236**. An acrylic heat sealable lacquer **238** can be applied to at least one of the upper and lower surfaces **234** and **236** of the polymeric film **232**, such as the lower surface **236** of the polymeric film **232**, and the upper surface **234** of the polymeric film **232** is desirably modified to provide the polymeric ribbon material **230** with a matte or textured finish which provides a texture or appearance **240** simulating the texture or appearance of paper, while the polymeric ribbon material **230** maintains the structural and mechanical characteristics of the polymer from which the polymeric ribbon material **230** is formed. The modification of the polymeric film **232** to provide the polymeric ribbon material **230** with the texture or appearance **240** simulating the texture or appearance of paper can be accomplished in several ways. For example, the polymeric ribbon material **230** having the matte or textured finish can be produced by printing the polymeric film **232** with a matted (i.e. dull finish) ink, by lacquering at least one of the upper and lower surfaces **234** and **236** of the polymeric film **232** with a dull finish lacquer or a matting lacquer, by flocking the polymeric film **232**, by application of a foamable lacquer or foamable ink to the polymeric film **232**, by embossing the polymeric film **232** to provide an embossed pattern simulating the texture or appearance of paper, or by embossing and printing the polymeric film **232** to provide embossed and printed patterns wherein the embossed and printed patterns may be in registry, out of registry or wherein a portion of the embossed and printed patterns are in registry and a portion

of the embossed and printed patterns are out of registry. In addition, a matte or textured finish capable of providing the polymeric film **232** with the texture or appearance **240** simulating the texture or appearance of paper can be achieved by extruding a polymeric resin onto a matted or textured chill roll. Thereafter, the polymeric film **232** having the texture or appearance **240** simulating the texture or appearance of paper can be cut in a conventional manner to provide the polymeric ribbon material **230**.

[0105] In addition to providing the polymeric film **232** with the desired matte or textured finish which provides the texture or appearance **240** simulating the texture or appearance of paper, at least a portion of one surface of the polymeric film **232** may contain additional embossed and/or printed patterns which enhance with overall aesthetic characteristics of the polymeric ribbon material **230** produced from the polymeric film **232**. When provided in combination, such embossed and printed patterns may be in register with one another, out of register with one another, or a portion of the embossed and printed patterns may be in register with one another and a portion of the embossed and printed patterns may be out of register with one another. Further, the embossed and printed patterns may be positioned on the polymeric film **232** such that when the polymeric film **232** is cut into the polymeric ribbon material **230**, the embossed and/or printed patterns lie within the boundaries of the polymeric ribbon material **230**, i.e., between opposite sides of the polymeric ribbon material **230**, or the embossed and/or printed patterns may be randomly positioned on the polymeric film **232** such that when the polymeric film **232** is cut into the polymeric ribbon material **230**, the embossed and/or printed patterns are randomly positioned on the polymeric ribbon material **230**.

[0106] Any polymeric film capable of being textured or otherwise modified to provide the polymeric material with the texture or appearance **240** simulating the texture or appearance of paper can be employed in the formulation of the polymeric ribbon material **230**. For example, the polymeric material **232** employed to produce the polymeric ribbon material **230** can be polypropylene film having a thickness of from about 0.1 mil to about 30 mil, and more desirably of from about 0.5 mil to about 10 mil, or an expanded core polymeric film having a thickness of from about 0.6 mil to about 10 mil.

[0107] Changes may be made in the construction and the operation of the various components, elements and assemblies described herein or in the steps or the sequence of steps of the methods described herein without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention as defined in the following claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A decorative cover positionable about a flower pot or a floral grouping, the decorative cover having an appearance or texture simulating the appearance or texture of paper on at least a portion of one surface thereof and comprising:

a sheet of expanded core polymeric material having an upper surface and a lower surface wherein at least a portion of the lower surface of the sheet of expanded core polymeric material is embossed, printed, embossed and printed or textured to provide the lower surface of the sheet of expanded core polymeric mate-

rial with an appearance or texture simulating the appearance or texture of paper;

- a bonding material disposed on at least a portion of the upper surface of the sheet of expanded core polymeric material wherein the sheet of expanded core polymeric material may be bondingly connected to itself or to the flower pot or floral grouping so that the sheet of expanded core polymeric material may be secured generally about the flower pot or floral grouping, thereby providing the decorative cover which substantially surrounds and encompasses the flower pot or floral grouping; and

wherein when the sheet of expanded core polymeric material is formed into the decorative cover which substantially surrounds and encompasses the flower pot or floral grouping, at least a portion of one surface of the decorative cover is provided with the texture or appearance simulating the texture or appearance of paper while maintaining structural and mechanical characteristics of the sheet of expanded core polymeric material from which the decorative cover is formed.

- 2. The decorative cover of claim 1 wherein the bonding material is a pressure sensitive adhesive.

- 3. A decorative cover positionable about a flower pot or a floral grouping, the decorative cover having an appearance or texture simulating the appearance or texture of paper on at least a portion of one surface thereof and comprising:

- a sheet of polymeric material having an upper surface and a lower surface wherein at least a portion of at least one of the upper and lower surfaces of the sheet of polymeric material is modified to provide an appearance or texture simulating the appearance or texture of paper;

- a bonding material disposed on at least a portion of the upper surface of the sheet of polymeric material wherein the sheet of polymeric material may be bondingly connected to itself or to the flower pot or floral grouping so that the sheet of polymeric material may be secured generally about the flower pot or floral grouping, thereby providing the decorative cover which substantially surrounds and encompasses the flower pot or floral grouping; and

wherein when the sheet of polymeric material is formed into the decorative cover which substantially surrounds and encompasses the flower pot or floral grouping, at least a portion of one surface of the decorative cover is provided with the texture or appearance simulating the texture or appearance of paper while maintaining structural and mechanical characteristics of the sheet of polymeric material from which the decorative cover is formed.

- 4. The decorative cover of claim 3 wherein at least a portion of one of the upper and lower surfaces of the sheet of polymeric material is further provided with an embossed pattern, a printed pattern or embossed and printed patterns which enhance the aesthetic characteristics of the sheet of polymeric material having an appearance or texture simulating the appearance and texture of paper.

- 5. The decorative cover of claim 3 wherein at least a portion of one of the upper and lower surfaces of the sheet of polymeric material is further provided with embossed and printed patterns which enhance the aesthetic characteristics of the sheet of polymeric material having an appearance or

texture simulating the appearance and texture of paper, and wherein the embossed and printed patterns are in register with one another.

- 6. The decorative cover of claim 3 wherein at least a portion of one of the upper and lower surfaces of the sheet of polymeric material is further provided with embossed and printed patterns which enhance the aesthetic characteristics of the sheet of polymeric material having an appearance or texture simulating the appearance and texture of paper, and wherein the embossed and printed patterns are out of register with one another.

- 7. The decorative cover of claim 3 wherein at least a portion of one of the upper and lower surfaces of the sheet of polymeric material is further provided with embossed and printed patterns which enhance the aesthetic characteristics of the sheet of polymeric material having an appearance or texture simulating the appearance and texture of paper, and wherein a portion of the embossed and printed patterns are in register with one another and another portion of the embossed and printed patterns are out of register with one another.

- 8. The decorative cover of claim 3 wherein the sheet of polymeric material is a sheet of expanded core polymeric material having a thickness in the range of from about 0.5 mil to about 10 mil and wherein at least a portion of one of the upper and lower surfaces of the sheet of expanded core polymeric material is further provided with an embossed pattern, a printed pattern or embossed and printed patterns which enhance the aesthetic characteristics of the sheet of expanded core polymeric material having an appearance or texture simulating the appearance and texture of paper.

- 9. The decorative cover of claim 8 wherein at least a portion of one of the upper and lower surfaces of the sheet of expanded core polymeric material is further provided with embossed and printed patterns which are in register with one another.

- 10. The decorative cover of claim 8 wherein at least a portion of one of the upper and lower surfaces of the sheet of expanded core polymeric material is further provided with embossed and printed patterns which are out of register with one another.

- 11. The decorative cover of claim 8 wherein at least a portion of one of the upper and lower surfaces of the sheet of expanded core polymeric material is further provided with embossed and printed patterns wherein a portion of the embossed and printed patterns are in register with one another and another portion of the embossed and printed patterns are out of register with one another.

- 12. A decorative cover positionable about a flower pot or a floral grouping, the decorative cover having an appearance or texture simulating the appearance or texture of paper on at least a portion of one surface thereof and comprising:

- a polymeric material having an upper surface and a lower surface, at least a portion of one of the upper and lower surfaces of the polymeric material being modified to provide an appearance or texture simulating the appearance or texture of paper, wherein when the polymeric material is formed into the decorative cover about the flower pot or floral grouping, at least a portion of one surface of the decorative cover is provided with the texture or appearance simulating the texture or appearance of paper while maintaining structural and mechanical characteristics of the polymeric material from which the decorative cover is formed.

13. The decorative cover of claim 12 wherein at least a portion of one of the upper and lower surfaces of the polymeric material is further provided with an embossed pattern, a printed pattern or embossed and printed patterns which enhance the aesthetic characteristics of the polymeric material having an appearance or texture simulating the appearance and texture of paper.

14. The decorative cover of claim 12 wherein at least a portion of one of the upper and lower surfaces of the polymeric material is further provided with embossed and printed patterns which enhance the aesthetic characteristics of the polymeric material having an appearance or texture simulating the appearance and texture of paper, and wherein the embossed and printed patterns are in register with one another.

15. The decorative cover of claim 12 wherein at least a portion of one of the upper and lower surfaces of the polymeric material is further provided with embossed and printed patterns which enhance the aesthetic characteristics of the polymeric material having an appearance or texture simulating the appearance and texture of paper, and wherein the embossed and printed patterns are out of register with one another.

16. The decorative cover of claim 12 wherein at least a portion of one of the upper and lower surfaces of the polymeric material is further provided with embossed and printed patterns which enhance the aesthetic characteristics of the polymeric material having an appearance or texture simulating the appearance and texture of paper, and wherein a portion of the embossed and printed patterns are in register with one another and another portion of the embossed and printed patterns are out of register with one another.

17. The decorative cover of claim 12 wherein the polymeric material having an appearance or texture simulating the appearance and texture of paper is an expanded core polymeric material having a thickness in the range of from about 0.5 mil to about 10 mil.

18. A decorative cover positionable about a flower pot or a floral grouping, the decorative cover having an appearance or texture simulating the appearance or texture of paper on at least a portion of one surface thereof and comprising:

a polymeric material having an upper surface and a lower surface wherein at least a portion of the lower surface is provided with a texture or appearance simulating the texture or appearance of paper;

an acrylic heat sealable lacquer disposed on at least one of the upper and lower surfaces of the polymeric material; and

wherein when the polymeric material is formed into the decorative cover about the flower pot or floral grouping, at least a portion of one surface of the decorative cover is provided with the texture or appearance simulating the texture or appearance of paper while maintaining structural and mechanical characteristics of the polymeric material from which the decorative cover is formed.

19. The decorative cover of claim 18 wherein at least a portion of the one of the upper and lower surfaces of the polymeric material is further provided with embossed and printed patterns which enhance the aesthetic characteristics of the polymeric material having a texture or appearance simulating the texture or appearance of paper.

20. The decorative cover of claim 19 wherein the embossed and printed patterns provided on the polymeric material are in registry with one another.

21. The decorative cover of claim 19 wherein the embossed and printed patterns provided on the polymeric material are out of registry with one another.

22. The decorative cover of claim 19 wherein a portion of the embossed and printed patterns provided on the polymeric material are in register with one another and a portion of the embossed and printed patterns provided on the polymeric material are out of register with one another.

23. A decorative cover positionable about a flower pot or a floral grouping, the decorative cover formed from a flexible laminated polymeric material having an appearance or texture simulating the appearance or texture of paper on at least a portion of one surface thereof, the flexible laminated polymeric material comprising:

an expanded core polymeric material having an upper surface and a lower surface;

a substantially water impervious polymeric material laminated to the expanded core polymeric material to form the flexible laminated polymeric material; and

wherein at least a portion of one surface of one of the expanded core polymeric material and the substantially water impervious polymeric material is modified so as to provide a texture or appearance simulating the texture or appearance of paper such that at least a portion of one surface of the flexible laminated polymeric material is provided with a texture or appearance simulating the texture or appearance of paper, wherein when the flexible laminated polymeric material is formed into the decorative cover about the flower pot or floral grouping, the decorative cover is provided with a texture or appearance simulating the texture or appearance of paper on at least a portion of one surface thereof while maintaining structural and mechanical characteristics of the flexible laminated polymeric material from which the decorative cover is formed.

24. The decorative cover of claim 23 wherein the expanded core polymeric material and the substantially water impervious polymeric material are laminated with a colored adhesive.

25. The decorative cover of claim 24 wherein the expanded core polymeric film has a thickness in the range of from about 0.5 mil to about 10 mil and the substantially water impervious polymeric film has a thickness in the range of from about 0.5 mil to about 10 mil.

26. The decorative cover of claim 23 wherein at least a portion of one surface of one of the expanded core polymeric film and the substantially water impervious polymeric film is further provided with an embossed pattern, a printed pattern or an embossed pattern and a printed pattern.

27. The decorative cover of claim 23 wherein at least a portion of one surface of one of the expanded core polymeric film and the substantially water impervious polymeric film is further provided with an embossed pattern and at least a portion of one surface of one of the expanded core polymeric film and the substantially water impervious polymeric film is further provided with a printed pattern, and wherein the embossed and printed patterns are in register with one another.

28. The decorative cover of claim 23 wherein at least a portion of one surface of one of the expanded core polymeric

film and the substantially water impervious polymeric film is further provided with an embossed pattern and at least a portion of one surface of one of the expanded core polymeric film and the substantially water impervious polymeric film is further provided with a printed pattern, and wherein the embossed and printed patterns are out of register with one another.

29. The decorative cover of claim 23 wherein at least a portion of one surface of one of the expanded core polymeric film and the substantially water impervious polymeric film is further provided with an embossed pattern and at least a portion of one surface of one of the expanded core polymeric film and the substantially water impervious polymeric film is further provided with a printed pattern, and wherein a portion of the embossed and printed patterns are in register with one another and a portion of the embossed and printed patterns are out of register with one another.

30. A decorative cover positionable about a flower pot or floral grouping, the decorative cover formed from a flexible laminated polymeric material having an appearance or texture simulating the appearance or texture of paper on at least a portion of one surface thereof, the flexible laminated polymeric material comprising:

- a polymeric material having an upper surface and a lower surface;

- a material laminated to the polymeric material wherein the material laminated to the polymeric material is selected from the group consisting of a metallized foil and a polymeric material; and

wherein at least a portion of one surface of one of the polymeric material and the material laminated thereto is modified so as to provide a texture or appearance simulating the texture or appearance of paper such that when the flexible laminated polymeric material is formed into the decorative cover about the flower pot or floral grouping, the decorative cover is provided with a

texture or appearance simulating the texture or appearance of paper on at least a portion of one surface thereof while maintaining structural and mechanical characteristics of the flexible laminated polymeric material from which the decorative cover is formed.

31. The decorative cover of claim 30 wherein the polymeric material and the material selected from the group consisting of a metallized foil and a polymeric material are laminated with a colored adhesive.

32. The decorative cover of claim 30 wherein at least a portion of one surface of one of the polymeric material and the material selected from the group consisting of a metallized foil and a polymeric material is further provided with an embossed pattern, a printed pattern or an embossed pattern and a printed pattern.

33. The decorative cover of claim 30 wherein at least a portion of one surface of one of the polymeric material and the material selected from the group consisting of a metallized foil and a polymeric material is further provided with embossed and printed patterns and wherein the embossed and printed patterns are in register with one another.

34. The decorative cover of claim 30 wherein at least a portion of one surface of one of the polymeric material and the material selected from the group consisting of a metallized foil and a polymeric material is further provided with embossed and printed patterns and wherein the embossed and printed patterns are out of register with one another.

35. The decorative cover of claim 30 wherein at least a portion of one surface of one of the polymeric material and the material selected from the group consisting of a metallized foil and a polymeric material is further provided with embossed and printed patterns and wherein a portion of the embossed and printed patterns are in register with one another and a portion of the embossed and printed patterns are out of register with one another.

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