

The Natural Look for the Holidays

By Julie Silva

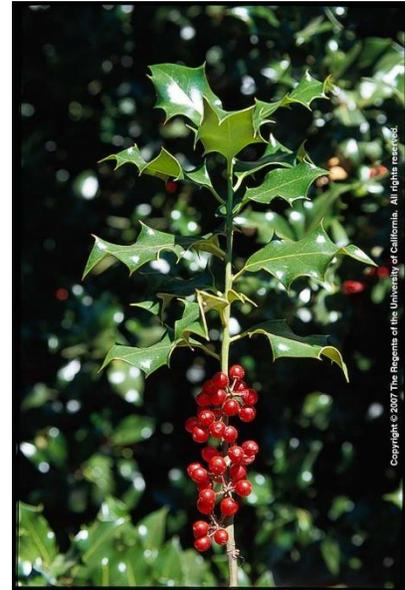
For many decades, families have used natural decorations for the holidays. German immigrants brought the holiday tradition of an indoor tree to the US. In the early 1900's F. W. Woolworth introduced glass ornaments at their Five and Dime Stores. It took until after World War II before trees with lights became commonplace. Prior to that, candles or glass candle cups illuminated the tree on Christmas Eve. Other greenery included garlands of ivy, laurel, mistletoe, and holly that were hung from the roof, walls, and windows. Candle wax was used to suspend the greenery.

Natural decorations are becoming more popular every year. Decorations from nature have fragrance, interesting texture, and varied colors. Just about any plant may be used in your decorating theme. Even your existing indoor plants can become holiday decorations by wrapping their pots in holiday themed materials.

Naturally the tree comes to mind first, then followed by poinsettias and mistletoe. The list must also include; boxwood, cyclamen, spruce, cedars, firs, junipers, ivy, laurel, holly, rosemary, azaleas, amaryllis, orchids, paper whites, maples and southern magnolias. Actually almost anything may be used.

Where to start? Look in your own garden. The greenery will be fresher, a great price (free), things you already like, and a better selection than what you will find commercially. Greenery is a relative term, green may range from the silver hues to almost black. Search out the fragrances that you enjoy. As you are gathering greenery remember you are pruning. Make your cuts correctly and leave the plant in a natural shape. If you scope out plant material at a neighbor's yard, remember to ask. Their dog might be in full protection mode on that spruce tree! If you see something you love, consider purchasing that plant for the future to grow in your own yard.

Keep your greenery fresh as possible. Prior to harvesting your decorations, have several sizes of pruners and make sure your blades are sharp. Bring along a bucket of water to immerse the fresh cut ends. Store your finds in an unheated garage until they are ready to be used. The evening prior, to displaying your decorations do a new cut, soak the greenery in water by immersing it, and then allow it to dry completely. There are products you can spray on your greenery that will help the plant material hold moisture. Anti-transpirant spray will help hold the moisture. Place your decorations away from heat sources, direct sunlight, heater vents or candles. Also



English Holly

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remember to use a protective covering under your decorations for your furniture. Some plants have a sticky substance that might damage wood.

Some plants could be poisonous for children and pets. Some popular berry- producing plants are best left out of the reach of little ones. Here are a few to keep away from inquisitive pets and children: mistletoe, including the white berries, ivy, hollies and yews.

Greenery is a great base from which to start. Searching your yard may bring finds like acorns; fruits, like lemons or limes; dried hydrangeas blossoms; magnolia pods, pine cones, rose hips and pyracantha. If you are looking for fragrance, choose lavender, common myrtle, boxwood, rosemary, thyme, or redwood branches. If you like a plant in your yard, you will like it inside your home too.

If you have an artificial Christmas tree and are missing that fragrance, Maria's Self has an answer. She uses 1 part Spruce (Hemlock) essential oil, 2 parts Fir Needle Essential Oil, distilled water, and a spray bottle. Shake and spray – you have liquid Christmas tree.

Holidays will have fragrance trigger points for all of us. Whether it is pumpkin pie spice or cinnamon and eggnog, those fragrances may take us back to those moments of sugar plums dancing and the sounds of reindeer hooves on the rooftop.

Julie Silva is a University of California Cooperative Extension of Tuolumne County Master Gardener.

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