



## HOME GROWN WREATHES

By Penye Cushing, UCCE Master Gardener

Don't you just love this time of the year? While we still have the warmth of day, the nights are cooling down. The sky turns gold and the sounds of the day seem softened by the cooler temperatures, especially after the long heat of summer. This is the time when my creative heart turns to wreaths for every gate and door!

I feel compelled to celebrate Summer transitioning into harvesting Fall with all its color and glory! I sound like a revivalist, and maybe there is a little in me as I revive the tradition of swathing our doors to welcome friends and family. We all know that fall is a good time to prune shrubs, so why not make wreaths from the clippings instead of filling your green waste can? With a sharp pair of nippers and a long-handled pruner, survey the premises for likely materials. I even check out the neighborhood (asking permission first, of course!).

Keep in mind you can make wreaths, garlands OR swags with your findings, so cut a length a little longer than you think you might need. You might have a theme as you prowl around looking for likely materials, but if you're like me, you might like to work "on the fly." I prefer working with available materials as I find them. It gives me more creative license to weave together this year's "look."

Consider acacia flower buds with their gray feathery foliage. They are so graceful with movement. Toyon, full of fall red berries, or pyracantha (warning – thorns!), or nandina are winners for a door wreath. Wax-leaf privet has purple berries and mixes elegantly with silver dollar eucalyptus and citrus leaves or kumquat branches with the fruit still on.

Don't allow your imagination to stop there! Consider all the beautiful fall branches turning shades of red or gold. Forage for branches and seedpods. For greenery, grevilleas, evergreens and magnolias. What about long wild rose runners (thorns can be clipped off) with rose hips? Prickly seed balls from sycamore or liquid amber, either natural or sprayed with silver or gold paint. Fresh bay leaves or cinnamon sticks add a fragrant note to your masterpiece.



Acacia Flower Buds  
Photo courtesy of Forest & Kim Starr

Take a trial walk to look for good mixes. Then get clipping and gathering. Once you've depleted your own yard of available materials, go visit friends to "shop" for clip pings. To give yourself a great start have a few things ready. Fill a bucket with water and add a cup of sprite or a lemon-lime soda (no diet here, clippings need the sugar), ½ teaspoon of bleach and 1 tablespoon of lemon juice for every gallon of water. This will serve as a preservative for your cuttings. As soon as you have a clipping, hose it off to remove any dirt or bugs, then let the foliage dry as the clipping sits in its bucket of preservative. If stems are woody, smash the ends well with a hammer so the stems can absorb their preservative food. Greens should sit and sip in their buckets over-night (best) or at least several hours.

If you have a wreath form--either wire, straw, or Styrofoam, this job can be easier to mold your shape. Don't forget to wear your gloves! Also have floral wire or fishing line and a glue gun. Start by securing the larger heavier greenery first. Then start layering and filling in the spaces with small branches, leaves, twigs, berries, pine cones, nuts, moss, or even fruit (either real or plastic). Add some ribbon, and voila you have created a masterpiece!

Weave and mix to your heart's desire. Let your imagination soar to create a glorious Fall welcome to your home



October 21, 2017