



NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

Holiday Decorations from the Garden (Lifestyle December 2021)

by Tulare/Kings Counties UCCE Master Gardener

What a wonderful bounty of color we have in our Central Valley gardens! At this time of year, our thoughts are moving towards Holiday decorations. A great variety of materials are available in nature all around us -- and for very little cost! Take a walk around your neighborhood and notice the beautiful trees - maples, redbuds, and firs - with leaves in various colors of gold, red, and green - just the colors of Christmas! Drought tolerant shrubs like nandina, holly, and toyon all have beautiful berries at this time of year. It is so easy to add beauty and a touch of nature to our homes absolutely free of charge.

You can gather a variety of acorns from the many varieties of oaks found in our area, bright red and green Fresno chili peppers from your garden or Farmer's market, white snowberry balls, walnuts, pomegranates, or lemon scented geranium leaves to add to a home-made or purchased wreath. How about chopping up pieces of greenery from a fragrant pine tree, slicing orange peel and tossing with any of the above items into a clear glass bowl for a fragrant potpourri?

If you enjoy succulents and have a collection, their interesting leaf shapes and combinations of texture and colors can be combined into a low bowl to make a colorful addition to a table. Some ideas are leaves from Kalanchoe, Christmas cactus, jade, cotyledon, crassula and several other varieties. Many succulents have leaves with green centers and red edging - perfect colors for this time of year. Tuck a couple of miniature ornament balls into the bowl for some extra pizzazz.



Lay large bundles of fresh cinnamon sticks tied together with a bright Holiday ribbon and bunches of evergreen on an end table under a lamp. The warmth of the lamp will set off the aroma of the cinnamon sticks and add fragrance to your home.

Magnolia leaves are so magnificent at this time of year and they hold up well even if sprayed with paint. Use metallic silver or gold to make the leaves really stand out in a wreath. Layer them on top of fir branches, tie it all together with a huge red, green and gold wire bow, add a large ornament and hang this swag on your front door to welcome guests. You see all kinds of fake lemons, apples, pomegranates and other fruits for sale in department stores. Just gather a selection of the real thing for free and layer them in a tall glass jar. Or use green and red apples, tuck a few sprigs of fir or pine into the layers or tiny ornaments to add a festive touch. You could also add a small set of battery operated lights to the jar.

Collect small pine cones and a branch of red berries, tie to a bit of mistletoe with a small ribbon and hang over a doorway to encourage a Christmas kiss.

You can also make inexpensive gift baskets using a variety of nuts - almonds, walnuts, pecans - and a variety of dried fruit and raisins or olives that are grown in our area. Include a jar of homemade jam or a cheese ball for a healthy treat. Inexpensive nutcrackers or cheese spreaders are available at most discount stores and would make a darling addition to this gift.

We are so lucky to live in this area with its bountiful variety of trees, shrubs, flowers, vegetables, fruits and nuts. Let's not forget to appreciate our local flora and surroundings when celebrating and decorating for this joyous season.

Happy (and naturally beautiful) Holidays from the Tulare/Kings Master Gardeners!

Get your garden questions answered by a Master Gardener!

In-person:

1st Saturday @ Ace Hardware, Visalia

2nd Saturday @ Luis' Nursery, Visalia

Visalia Farmer's Market - 1st & 3rd Saturdays, 8-11 am, Caldwell/Mooney (behind Sears Building)

By phone (leave a message, we'll call you back!):

Tulare County (559) 684-3325

Kings County (559) 852-2736

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