

Decorating from the Garden

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The holiday season is here! It was this time of the year, while I was still teaching 6th grade, that I would develop a twitch in my left eye. It was a not-so-gentle reminder that there was so much to do and little time in which to do it! Plus, it was dark by 4:30 pm, giving one the panicked impression that there really was no time left at the end of the school day. I found that the answer to both the panic and the lack of time was to go outside! Truly, if you can wait to decorate your home for the holidays until the last minute and want to save money as well, go outside! There in your yard is the answer to a beautiful holiday home.



Rose 'Whisper' with redwood cuttings, and rose hips

We, in California, are so lucky to be surrounded by evergreens and berries that are perfect to use in decorating for the holidays. The key is cutting the greenery as close as possible to the holiday if you want it to look fresh. However, I have cut greens and left them on the mantle for weeks. However, they do become brittle and somewhat of a fire hazard. Currently, I have a basket of *Nandina domestica* (Heavenly Bamboo) berries that are probably well over four years old! Berries, on their own, are fine dried and last as

long as one is willing to put up with dusty berries!



Cotoneaster Berries

To cover a mantle or tabletop with festive berries, think of *pyracantha*, *Cotoneaster glaucophyllus*, rose hips or, of course, holly (*Ilex aquafolium*). A warning: these and any other shrubbery you might wish to bring into your home should be kept out of the reach of children who are apt to

put things in their mouths and pets who, unfortunately, always put things in their mouths!
Cornell University has an excellent website listing poisonous plants:
www.ansci.cornell.edu/plants.

Almost any evergreen tree or shrub can be used for home decoration. Sticking to the conifers or evergreens with needles, gives the best holiday appearance. The key is to combine greenery with red berries, adding cones and other types of seedpods where desired. One of my favorite combinations is redwood branches, nandina berries or rose hips, nandina cuttings and roses. My florabunda rose 'Trumpeter' is always in bloom for the holidays. Its orange red color is perfect for Christmas bouquets! There's really no wrong combination. Select what pleases you. Adding a festive bow can make any arrangement of greens fit for the holidays!

Relax, go outside, breathe deeply and decorate naturally!