

Reaping for WREATHS

The holiday season is here with the welcomed cool wetness of winter. This is the one season in our coastal climate that may actually cause us to hibernate indoors for a rainy day or two, forcing us to view our gardens through the streams tracing down our windows. We must welcome the rain as it offers our plants a much needed drink after a very long, dry season.

However, stoked fireplaces, warm clothing, profuse coniferous musk from the Christmas tree, and the delicious aromas from the kitchen make being stuck indoors bearable to any outdoor-loving gardener. Between early rainfalls, we can find a moment to untangle the spaghetti-puzzle of stored Christmas lights and begin twining them around a favorite specimen tree, to delineate house trimming and illuminate other garden plants.

We can continue celebrating the winter garden, even when we can't be outside, by bringing plants and botanicals indoors with us. Trimming twigs with showy, juicy, red, swollen fruits from **holly**, **cotoneaster**, and our native **toyon** can add holiday décor to a dried flower arrangement. Additionally, twigs of **red-stemmed dogwood**, **curly willow**, **deer grass** in florescence, and fire-stemmed dormant **Japanese maples** can be quite striking in a large vase with cut and dried **lotus pods**.

For additional horticultural holiday ornaments, don't overlook the abundance of full and finished potted floral crops available for the holidays to brighten your home, such as the showy bracts of the ever-popular **poinsettia** (available in multitudes of various colors beyond the

traditional red), sharply sweet-pungent **paperwhite narcissus**, succulent **Christmas cactus**, and **upright rosemary**, trimmed in the shape of a diminutive christmas tree.

There are other welcomed botanical holiday treats besides the traditional tree that add grace and aroma in the home. Place spice-scented **cedar** boughs over a warm mantle. Awaken the senses with **cinnamon brooms** and **pine cones**. Of course, a fresh **conifer**, **eucalyptus**, or **sage** wreath can add that welcoming woodsy subtlety to any room in the home. Little bits of any of the above plants can double as easily accessible incense in the fireplace, as well.

While December leaves much of our great country laden in frozen blankets of pure white snow, we get to enjoy cool coastal California rains and frequently clear, warm days with crisp evenings. Even though the weather may not allow us to garden as much these days, take a moment to enjoy a warm cup of cider while celebrating the holidays with family and friends in our treasured temperate locale. May Santa bring you all the garden goodies fathomable!

Warmest wishes this holiday season.

