



UW-MADISON EXTENSION



Plant and Soil Sciences

PLANT CRAFTS

Member Guide



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DRYING FLOWERS

Drying flowers is a good way to keep their summer beauty through several winters. Dried flowers can be used in simple arrangements designed by you. Anytime from spring through fall is a good time for flower drying. When preparing flowers for drying, you will see different parts of the flower: sepals, petals, stamens (male part which bears “pollen”), pistil (female part), stalk (stem) and the receptacle (from which the flower parts arise). (See Image 1.)

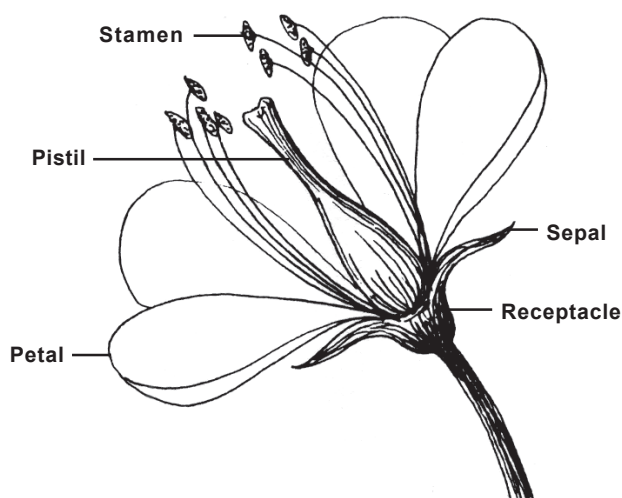
Materials

- Artificial flower stems
- Fine sand (washed and dried)
- Flowers
- Pins
- Pruners
- Rubber bands
- Shoebox
- String
- Toothpick or paintbrush

Tips for Collecting Flowers

Flower color should be at its best. However, you may want to try drying flowers at different stages of growth. White and yellow flowers seem to hold their color better than others. But you may want to try other colors to see how they do. Try to collect flowers in the heat of the day when the least amount of water is in the plant. Petals at the center of the flower should remain folded.

Image 1: Parts of the flower



Hanging Flowers to Dry

This is probably the easiest way to dry flowers but it works only with types called “everlastings.” Flowers of this group hold shape and color when dried by hanging.

Everlasting Flowers

Achillea (Yarrow)
Bells of Ireland
Bittersweet
Cat-tails (harvest as soon as they develop – to avoid shattering)
Celosia (Cockscomb)
Chives
Chrysanthemum
Delphinium
Gilia (Thimble Flower)
Globe Amaranth
Globe Thistle
Goldenrod
Grains
Gypsophila
Hydrangea
Joe Pye Weed
Knotweed
Larkspur
Mullen
Pussy Willow
Sage
Salvia
Statice
Strawflower
Teasel (Thistle)

To dry these flowers, cut stems at the length you want. Strip off all leaves. Tie stems of several flowers into a bunch, using a rubber band. Hang with flowers upside down in a dry, dark and somewhat airy closet or attic. The room should be dark because light will fade the flower color. If the weather is very humid, the flowers may dry slowly and lose their beauty. One problem with drying flowers using the hanging method is that they often shrivel and lose their shape.



Drying Difficult Flowers

Burying flowers in a drying material will help to preserve their shape and color. Four drying materials are: silica gel; sand; mixture of sand and silica gel; and mixture of one part borax and six parts corn meal. Silica gel, a substance which absorbs water from the flower, is fairly expensive and requires drying after each use. Sand, which is less expensive, also works well. Sand holds the flower and its parts in place so they will not lose shape while drying. Use fine sand that has been washed three or four times, spread out in a large pan and dried in an oven at 250°F for about two hours. The sand should be completely cool before using. Re-dry after each use. A mixture of borax and cornmeal is inexpensive and requires drying in an oven at 160°F between uses.

To use these drying materials, stems are cut about one inch below the flowers. Place a pin lengthwise into the cut stem. When the flower dries, the stem will shrivel. The pin will leave a hole for inserting an artificial stem. Next, place the selected drying material in a shoe box to a depth of one inch. Push the stem into the material with flower facing up. If you have more than one flower, repeat this step. Do not allow the flowers to touch one another. With the flowers in place, grab a handful of the drying material as though making a fist. Let it sift *gently* through the hole at the bottom of your fist. With a paintbrush or toothpick, carefully push the drying material under the flowers until the flowers are resting in a natural position. Very carefully sift the drying material down between the sepals, petals and other flower parts. Use the paintbrush or toothpick to guide the drying material into place. Do this to all the flowers in the box. Now add drying material to the box until flowers are buried about one-half inch below the surface. Do not cover the box. (See Image 2.)

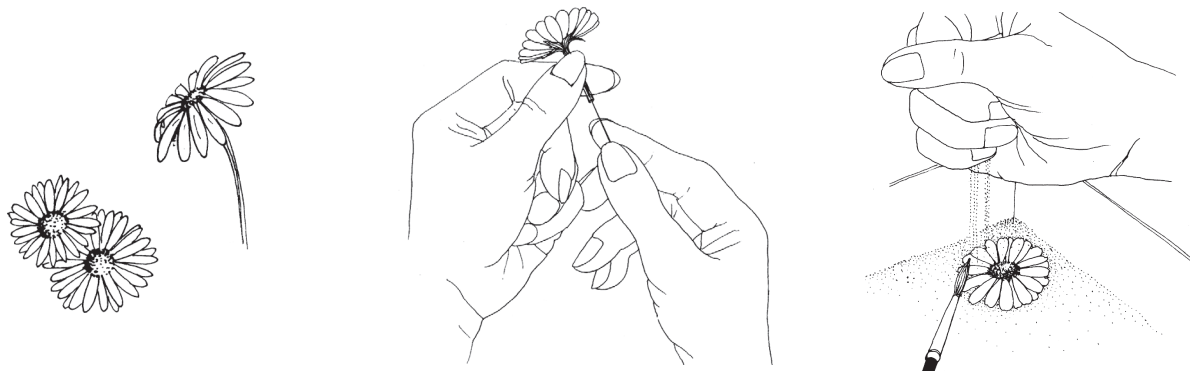
Place the box in a dry, airy spot. After four weeks, check one flower to see if it has dried. This will act as a guide for the other flowers. When flowers are dry, remove them by tilting the box slightly and allowing the drying material to slowly pour onto a newspaper or into another shoebox. *Gently*

brush the drying material from the flower. Be careful not to break flower parts. Remove the pin and insert an artificial stem. The flowers are now dry and ready for you to enjoy.

Flowers for Drying

Aster
Carnation
Centurea
Chrysanthemum
Daffodil
Dahlia
Daisy
Delphinium
Dogwood
Gaillardia
Gladiolus
Hollyhock
Iris (Siberian)
Japanese Anemone
Larkspur
Lilac
Lily
Marigold
Pansy
Queen Anne's Lace
Scabiosa
Scilla (Wood Hyacinth)
Sweet Pea
Tithonia
Zinnia

Image 2: Cut the stem one inch below the flower, place a pin into the stem, and sift drying material over the flower.



DRIED ARRANGEMENTS

Arranging dried materials in a design all your own can be very entertaining. There are many different types of arrangements you may like to try. If you make dried arrangements in fall, you can use naturally dried materials. During other seasons you may have to dry many of the plants yourself.

Creating dried arrangements involves two basic steps: collecting the dried plants or drying them yourself, and then arranging them. To collect dried materials, get a shoe box and go on a collection mission. Keep an eye open for unique stones and any dried materials that come from plants, such as bark, seeds, twigs, leaves and flowers. There are plenty of materials and it is up to you to find them. Collect several of each.

Materials

- Acorns
- Bittersweet
- Cat-tails
- Cones (if closed, place near a heater to open)
- Dried flowers (or dry them yourself)
- Dried leaves and pine needles
- Dried teasel
- Flat stones
- Milkweed pods
- Nuts
- Unusual pieces of wood and bark

Making Dried Arrangements

Simple Vase or Container Arrangements

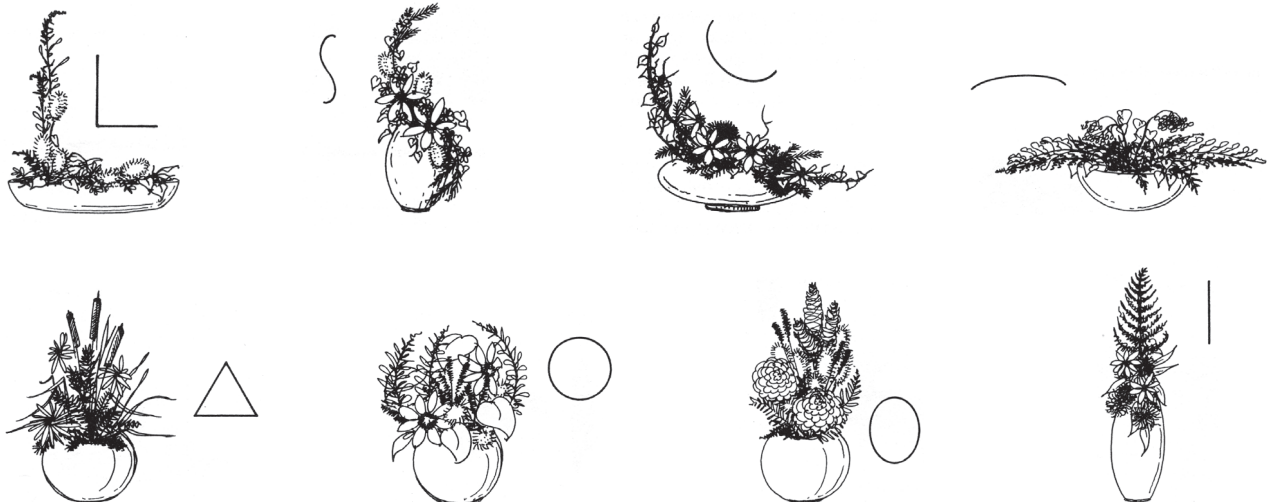
If you have learned how to dry flowers, this is for you. You will need a vase, narrow-necked bottle, tin can or some other container. Some type of holder is necessary to keep flowers in place. Styrofoam fastened to the bottom of the container with florist clay works fine. Check with a local florist for other ideas.

Arranging plant materials in a pleasing design is a real art. Several suggestions will help you with your design. *Line* and *mass* arrangements are the two main forms of design. Five kinds of line arrangements are the hogarth curve, crescent, horizontal, vertical and right angle. Three kinds of mass arrangement are the circle, oval and triangle. Scale, balance and harmony are also important features of design. Scale deals with size. Large flowers would not look right in a tiny container or vice versa. For balance, avoid top-heavy designs. Harmony is achieved mainly by avoiding color clash. Using a limited number of types of materials generally results in a more powerful design. Experiment so you can see what works best in your arrangement. These ideas may also be used in fresh flower designs. (See Image 3.)

To arrange, start with the tallest of the dried flowers. It should be about two times as tall as the upright container. If using a low container, the flowers should be two times as tall as the container is wide or long.

Now add two or more dried flowers: one to the right and one to the left of the tall center flowers. This will give your design an outline.

Image 3: (Left to Right, Top) Right angle, hogarth curve, crescent, and horizontal flower arrangements; (Left to Right, Bottom) triangle, circle, oval and vertical flower arrangements.



Place some dried flowers of different lengths in front and in back of the first three flowers. Add two or three flowers of darker color to be the “focal” point of the arrangement. Try not to face all the flowers the same direction.

Place fine leaves, pine needles or other lace-like dried material between the edge of the container and the flowers. Take out or add some flowers. Step back and look over your arrangement. If you like it, you are done; if not, try again.

Arrangements Inside Glass Jars

Choose a glass container with a mouth large enough to get your hands into. Wash and dry thoroughly. Add about one-inch of dry sand or colored gravel to the bottom. Use more for larger containers. Select several of the dried materials that will fit in the jar; arrange them as you wish but do not crowd. Add acorns or unusual stones to the bottom for decoration.

Collages

Choose a sturdy flat surface. Burlap tightly stretched over a wooden frame, construction paper or flat pieces of wood make fine backgrounds. On the surface, lay out a design using the dried materials, flat stones and other materials. When you have a design you like, glue the materials into place. (White glue works well.)

The final design may be used as a table decoration or framed and hung on the wall.

Mobiles

These are hanging, movable, dried arrangements. You will need black, white or clear nylon thread. The key to this arrangement is balance. The weights of the different materials will cause the mobile to shift and go off balance. Your job is to tie the thread and arrange the dried materials in a way that lets your final design have balance. Try to keep this design simple.

These are just a few of the things that can be done. Once you have tried these, you may want to try others. (See Image 4.)

CORSAGES

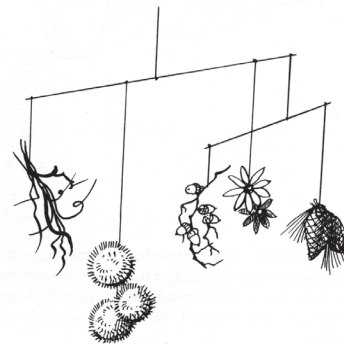
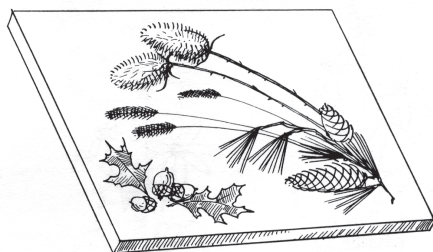
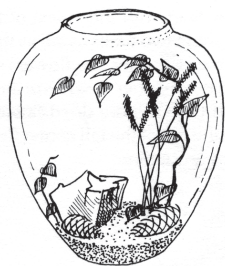
A corsage is a bouquet out of water made of one or more blooms, stem wrapping material, wire and a bow, if needed. It is also fixed in a pleasing pattern.

Every flower garden provides some blooms that can be worked into attractive corsages to wear. Flowers may be worn on your shoulder, in your hair, at your waist, on your wrist or attached to a bag.

Materials

- Flowers – Use only flowers that last three hours or longer without water. Some flowers wilt quickly out of water. These include petunia, sun rose, cosmos and flowering tobacco. Avoid using these in corsages.
- Foliage – Stiff green leaves, useful as a backing for your corsages. Sometimes the foliage of the flowers you use is suitable. Some corsages need no foliage. Foliage can come from:
 - Arborvitae
 - Boxwood
 - Chamaecyparis
 - English Ivy
 - Euonymus
 - Evergreen Privet
 - Holly
 - Honeysuckle
 - Juniper
 - Mountain Laurel
 - Rhododendron
 - Yew
- Ribbon – A bow of ribbon often helps to finish off a corsage. A bow is made from a yard of ½ or ¾-inch wide ribbon of a color appropriate for the flowers used.

Image 4: Glass jar arrangements, collages and mobiles.



- Tape – Floral tape to cover the wired stems is very handy or you can use colored cellophane tape. Tinfoil also is good finishing material. Some florists may sell floral tape.
- Wire – Wire is sold according to size. The larger the number of the wire, the finer it is. If a wire is not available from your florist, you may find spools at department or hardware stores. For corsage making, three good sizes of wire are:
 - *Size 32* – fine wire, for small or fragile flowers, such as florets of gladiolus and delphinium.
 - *Size 28* – medium wire, for most of the daisy type flowers.
 - *Size 22* – heavy wire, used with heavy flowers, such as roses, irises and peonies.

Types of Corsages (See Image 5.)

Cluster or Nosegay

A cluster or nosegay corsage is made up of flowers grouped in a mass. A colonial bouquet is assembled by starting with one flower in the center, such as a rose. Other flowers are worked around the center in a circle, until the desired size is reached.

Another type of cluster corsage is made by gathering one type of flower into a ball-like mass. This is often done with sweet peas or violets. The sweet pea or violet corsage does not require separate wiring of individual flowers, because the flowers are tightly packed and support each other. A backing of stiff, green leaves adds more support. A wrapping of aluminum foil creates a good finish for a cluster corsage.

Spray

Spray corsages are individual flowers arranged in a loose group. Wired stems are needed to hold flowers in desired positions. Each flower is wired separately and its stem is wrapped.

Roses, daisies, irises, chrysanthemums and most round corsage flowers can be treated this way. After arranging the flowers the way you want them, add wired foliage to form a backing. Secure the whole corsage with a piece of wire by wrapping it tightly around the other wires, binding them together.

Individual Flower

The individual flower corsage is usually made of one large flower, such as a peony, tulip, iris or lily. A wired flower and flower bud are generally used, backed by two or three leaves. The leaves set off the beauty of the bloom.

How to Make Corsages

Wiring Flowers

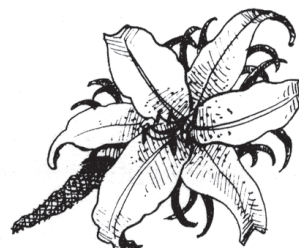
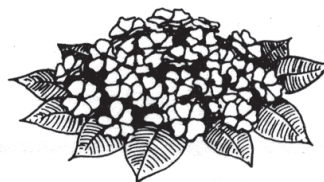
Flowers with hollow stems can be made strong enough to hold a fixed position in a corsage by pushing a Size 22 wire up through the stem and into the flower. Daffodils and zinnias are treated this way.

Large stems often are replaced by wire. When wiring roses, use Size 22 wire. Cut the stem down to two inches. Run a wire through the hard green part under the petals. Bend the wire down on both sides of the green part and twist one of the wires around the other wire and the short stem.

Carnations can be wired this way, too, with Size 28 wire. Carnations can be made larger and fluffier by removing the green casing (calyx).

Flowers with thin, stiff stems can be wired by running a Size 28 wire along the stem. Start by pushing the wire through the flower and making a small hook. Then pull the hook into the petals and wind the wire around the stem. Small, flowered chrysanthemums are sometimes wired this way.

Image 5: Cluster, spray and individual flower corsages.



To wire a gladiolus floret, wrap the base of the floret with colored tape or colored cellophane tape to prevent crushing the floret. Gladiolus can be built into a “glamellia” by opening a floret, removing the stamens and pistil, and adding a bud for the center. For a stiffer center, run a Size 28 wire up into the base of the bud. Wrap the opened floret around the bud. Build up the wanted size by adding more opened flowers. Run three or four fine wires through the assembled glamellia. Bend these back and wrap them around each other lightly. Wrap with tape. (See Image 6.)

Wiring Foliage

Make a hairpin of Size 28 wire. Push it through the leaf one inch above the lower edge. Extend one wire end along the stem. Wind the other wire end around the stem and wire.

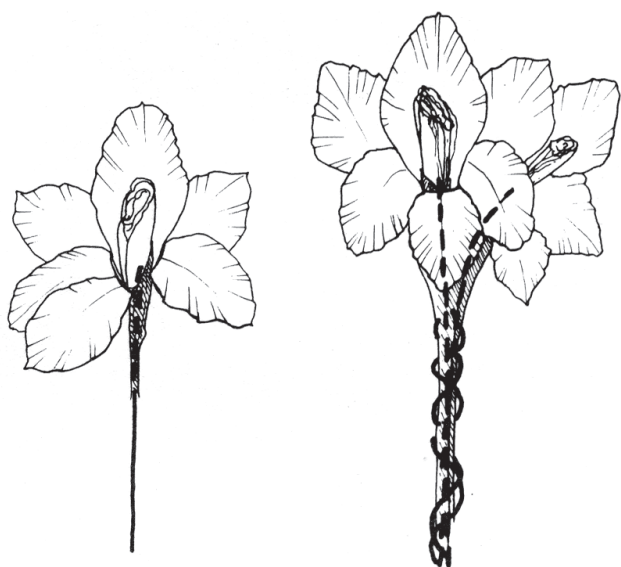
Making a Bow

You will need about three feet of ribbon for a bow. Holding a piece of ribbon between your thumb and index finger, make several loops above and below your fingers. Pinch each loop between your fingers as it is made. Place the center of a one-foot piece of Size 28 wire on the spot where you pinch the loops. Pull the wire around the ribbon and twist the wire together tightly at this point two or three times. Use the free ends of wire to fasten the bow to the corsage.

HOLIDAY GREENS

Beautiful holiday decorations you can easily make at home include holiday bouquets, mantle decorations, festoons, evergreen balls, door swags and holiday corsages. Two others, wreaths and centerpieces, are discussed here.

Image 6: Wiring gladiolus florets.



Materials

In addition to the greens, you should have the following materials for holiday decorations:

- Pruning shears, knife or old scissors to cut wire and greens
- Ribbon for bows and cellophane or plastic straws
- Cones, berried-branches and other material for decoration
- Size 9 wire for wreath hoops; Size 22 or 24 wire for winding; Size 20 or 22 wire for attaching decorations
- Styrofoam or pieces of wood and moss for centerpieces
- Candles for table decorations

Greens

Many different kinds of leaves, stems and branches can be used in holiday decorations. Many can be purchased. Some may be pruned from the evergreens growing in your yard. Many may be gathered in the woods. Do not use greens from plants which are listed on the State Conservation list of protected plants. Always obtain permission of the owner to gather greens. Some of the better common greens are:

- Arborvitae
- Austrian Pine
- Balsam Fir
- Boxwood
- Douglas Fir
- Ground Pine
- Holly
- Juniper
- Mountain Laurel
- Red Cedar
- White Pine
- Yew

Many other cultivated greens, such as rhododendron, evergreen barberry, evergreen privet and English Ivy, may be gathered in small quantities without damaging the plants.

Dried grasses, herbs, cones, berries and seed pods may be used in place of evergreen for the body of wreaths and table decorations.



How to Make Holiday Greens

Table Centerpieces

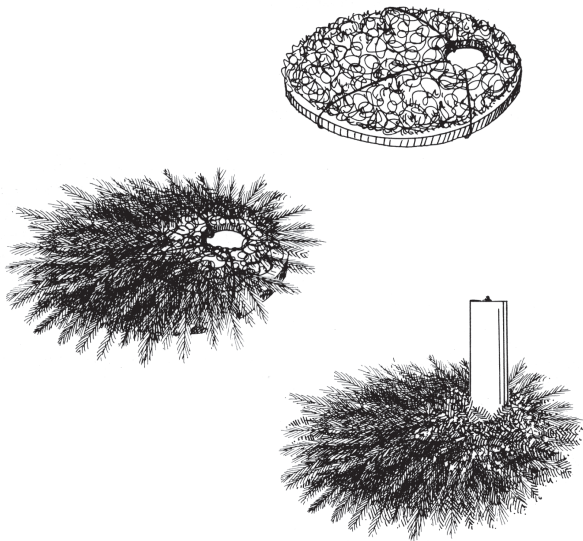
Table centerpieces must be planned carefully to fit the table and be in good proportion. Height should be kept below the eye level of people sitting at the table.

Table decorations may be made in low bowls, moss or Styrofoam. Sprays of evergreen, berries, cones and other decorations can be arranged in a bowl using a pin cushion holder.

An easy way to make a table decoration is to start with a piece of board. Cut the board to allow the evergreens to extend about six inches all the way around. Bore holes in the board for one, two or three candles. Sphagnum moss from the florist or clean fibrous moss from the woods is bound firmly with string or wire to the wood block. The moss should be moist but not wet. Styrofoam may be used as the base of an arrangement in place of a board and moss.

Short pieces of evergreen are sharpened and stuck into the moss. The evergreen pieces may be wired if necessary. Starting at the outer edge, pieces of evergreen six or seven inches long should be placed close together to cover the edge of the moss. Build up with shorter pieces of evergreen until the moss is entirely covered. One or more candles, 12 to 18 inches long, are then placed in the holes. The centerpiece can then be decorated with cones, red berries and other ornaments. Evergreens are highly flammable, particularly after they dry out. Because of the danger of fire, the candles should *not* be lighted. (See Image 7.)

Image 7: Evergreen centerpiece should not be lighted.



Wreaths

The first step in making a wreath is to make the frame. The size of the frame determines the size of the finished wreath. A medium-sized wreath would have a frame 10 to 15 inches in diameter.

The frame may be made in a number of different ways. Size 9 wire may be drawn into a circle and bound together by wrapping with Size 20 wire, or a coat hanger may be twisted into a circle and bound. Wire frames may also be purchased from florists.

The size of the pieces of evergreen depends on the size of the wreath to be made. A wreath with a frame 15 inches in diameter should have sprays of green four to six inches long. Cut enough greens for the whole wreath before you start binding. Strip the needles from the base of the stems.

Select a piece of Size 20 wire, which is long enough to go around the frame several times. Attach this wire to the frame. Take two to four sprays and hold them against the frame. Bind the base of sprays to the frame by wrapping with the wire. Repeat this step until the wreath is complete. It is better to turn one group of greens inward and the next outward. Tighten the binding wire after each group of sprays is added.

When the end is reached the first sprays are held back and others are bound under them. The binding wire is then securely fastened to the frame. The wreath can now be trimmed with ribbon, cones, berries or other decorative material.

Trimnings and decorations are added after the wreath is finished and should not be worked in during the binding step. Decorations are individually wired to the frame. Your imagination will determine what decorations to use.

Door Swags or Sprays

Door swags probably are the easiest holiday decorations to make. Arrange three or more evergreen branches, 18 to 30 inches long, to make a pleasing bouquet or festoon. The arrangement should be largest at the bottom. Wire the branches securely together. Decorate with such things as ribbon, sleigh bells and cones.

Holiday Corsages

Holiday corsages give you an opportunity to be creative. Construction principles are the same as for regular corsages. Simple holiday corsages can be made with a few pieces of evergreen like spruce or yew, a few bright berries and a bow of one-half inch bright red ribbon.



MORE INFORMATION

The Wisconsin 4-H Plant Crafts project covers harvesting, drying and using plant materials. Check with your county 4-H office for other 4-H publications on plants, or visit 4H.extension.wisc.edu for updated project lists and resources.

There are plenty of ways to find Plant Craft Inspiration including visiting local greenhouses, botanical gardens, and using online resources to discover new ideas. Some great examples are:

The Floral Design Institute - features several demonstrations and care techniques. floraldesigninstitute.com

The U.S Forest Service and USDA Website - has an abundance of educational resources and craft ideas. fs.usda.gov

If you enter plant craft projects in your county fair, judges usually use the following criteria to evaluate or “place” exhibits:

- Color Harmony: Refers to the relation of colors to one another in the arrangement, which makes for a pleasing and unified arrangement of dried flowers and foliage. Good color harmony should also be evident between plant material and container. Avoid gaudy and unusual containers that detract from the arrangement.
- Design: Arrangements should have a definite design with stems arranged to create an attractive effect, such as a triangle, S-curve, crescent or sunburst. This requires the tasteful use of color, space, texture and plant shapes.

- Balance: Involves the volume and color of plant material, and making sure that the “weight” of one side of the arrangement is equal to the other side. A well-balanced arrangement is stable in appearance and does not appear to tilt to either side.
- Proportion: Refers to the proper relationship between various parts of the arrangement and between plant materials and the container. Size of dried flowers and foliage, and stem length are major considerations.
- Condition: Plants should be properly dried. Plants should have maintained their color and shape (not be shriveled or broken).
- Suitability of Material, Relation to Container: Dried flowers and foliage used should naturally belong together. Containers can give rhythm and harmony of shape and color as well as complement line arrangements.
- Distinction, Originality: Refers to exhibits that show style, are uncommon, out of the ordinary and not imitated. The constructive expression of the designer’s personality is imaginative, inventive, unique and dissimilar to the rank and file without being bizarre.
- Construction: Exhibit is well planned and executed. Construction techniques are solid. Foliage should be inserted so the judge can not see foam, wires or other material used to hold stems in the container. The container’s back also should be finished off.





UW-MADISON EXTENSION

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