



backyard

Sprucing Up Your Winter Containers

By Judy Alleruzzo

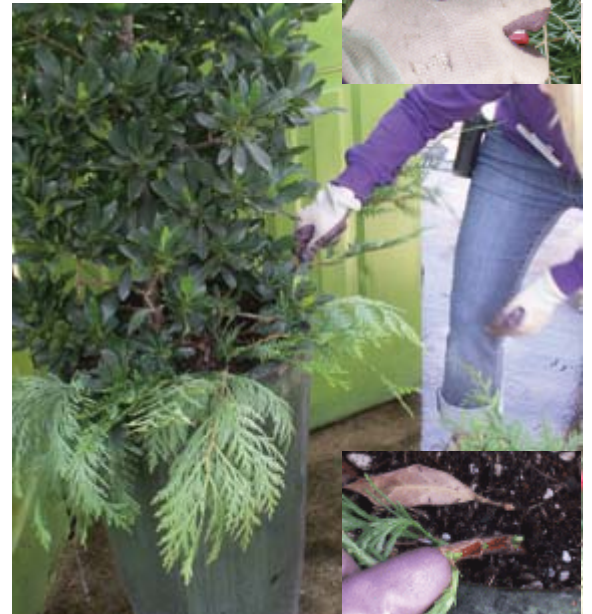
Bright red holly berries, frost on blue spruce and the bright red foliage of Nandina transforms our Northwest landscapes in December. As our view changes, we are inspired to also transform the look of our containers that decorate our patios, decks and front doors to match this brand new palette of texture and colors. This transformation can be made fun by gathering plant materials from our gardens and landscapes. With a sharp pair of pruners in hand, head out to your garden and look at it with a different eye: one of creating a textural design with foliage greens and accents of color.

Begin by snipping a few branches from Cedar, Pine or Cypress trees. Proceed to nip off some branches of Holly with berries, or roses with hips or even a few evergreen Euonymus branches. Try trimming some of the longer branches of red or yellow twig dogwood, curly willow or birch twigs with their catkins to add an accent of color and structure. Don't forget to pick up a few gems like pine and fir cones that are lying beneath their trees.

After you have had fun gathering plant material from your garden, you may need to stop by your favorite garden center for a few extra pieces. There will be an abundance of interesting holiday greens available. Spiky gold cypress branches, fragrant Eucalyptus sprigs and deep green leafy Boxwood will often be available. You'll find more different types of evergreens and it might inspire you to pluck a few more from your landscape that you never thought about using.

You can also pick up some plastic shiny ornaments and bows to add a more Christmas touch. The combinations of ideas will be almost overwhelming!

At home, the transformation of the fall container to winter begins. The best part is you don't have to plant or dig up anything. Just cut back all the old plant material in your containers, and add a bit of fresh soil for a clean surface. The roots of the old plants will help to hold in the branches of your new creation.





Sprucing Up Your Winter Containers...continued

Now the decorating begins. Strip off a few inches of the foliage at the bottom of the stems, and give a fresh angled cut to the ends. There still should be moisture in the soil to keep the cut greens looking fresh during the winter. Push the end of the branches into the soil, and layer some around the edge of the pot. Layering in different types of evergreens will show them off best. Place some at vertical angles to give the container height. Add branch material for height too. Secure a few pine cones and ornaments to your greens with wire.

To complete your job, give the soil a little more water. You can also spray the cut evergreens with WILT-STOP. This is a non-toxic, natural spray that will seal the foliage from drying out too rapidly.

Finished! It's that easy. It's a fun project for all, and a great way to get outside and enjoy your garden. Celebrate the plant material that makes a Northwest winter beautiful.