

RIVER & SHORE

COASTAL LIFESTYLES IN CONNECTICUT

Holidays ahoy

Gifts aplenty
for those who
love the sea

All things avian

Field trip to the Audubon Shop

Let's go for a sleigh ride

And other seasonal events

HOLLY JOLLY,

INDEED



Colorful cuttings help you spread cheer throughout the season

By Janie McCabe

FESTIVELY PLANTED CONTAINERS set the stage for the holiday season in your home or office entrance.

Make your holiday container a statement of your personal taste by selecting interesting cuttings from your own garden.

Select a container that will withstand the elements, especially if it will remain outside for the winter. Iron or cement pots are durable and will hold up in any weather. Plastic window boxes and ceramic containers can be used, but may crack and break if left outdoors for several years.

Cuttings from cascading pine, English holly, blueberry juniper, golden false cypress, blue spruce, incense



Photos by Janie McCabe

Colors of the season: Above, sparkleberry and false cypress. Above right, viburnum is laden with gold fruit.

cedar, andromeda, red twig dogwood, skimmia, Southern magnolia and native sparkleberry create a cheery, seasonal tableaux.

For color, there are natural seedpods, grass plumes and brightly colored stems that can be found in local woodlands and incorporated into your container gardens. Textural accents of spiny pine cones and the steel blue berries of viburnums make wonderful additions.

Local garden centers offer a selection of holiday greens which provide lots of inspiration. The combination of various shrubbery creates a fusion of colors and textures, allowing the container to echo the holiday season.

Start by soaking cut branches in large buckets of water prior to arranging in the container. To provide good drainage and alleviate early freezing of soil, fill your containers with a 50/50 mix of potting soil and builder's sand, which will allow an easier insertion of cut greens. Spraying the branches with an anti-desiccant such as Wilt-pruf helps to seal in the moisture in the needles and leaves, prolonging the life of the greens. Equally important is to keep the container well watered over



Above, the yellow sword-like foliage is yucca "golden sword." Left, golden chamaecyparis sets off viburnum.



the coming season.

Start by filling the base of the container with holly or white pine, which provides a simple platform to build from. Gradually add taller accents of sparkleberry, sprays of contrasting green, gold and blue evergreen branches and textural branches of broadleaf evergreens such as Southern magnolia or andromeda.

Variegated holly, as well as red twig dogwood, provides vertical interest

and enlivens the arrangement with color; if desired, embellish with natural seedpods or pine cones. Avoid adding too many different species, which may make the arrangement appear too busy. The golden rule of less is more is especially appropriate when creating holiday containers.

Janie McCabe is founder of M.J. McCabe Garden Design. For more, go to www.mjmgardendesign.com or call 203-484-9031.