



## Seasonal Beauty—inside and out

December 2008 “In the Garden” from Nebraska Statewide Arboretum, Inc.

Podcast and web video at [arboretum.unl.edu](http://arboretum.unl.edu)

Season’s greetings from the staff of the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum!

If your idea of winter beauty is bright berries against a snowy backdrop, or the soft colors of seedpods and dried flowers, here are some ideas for highlighting nature’s beauty both inside your home and outside.

### Wreaths, Swags and Arrangements

For boughs, fans or other arrangements, combine things like:

**Evergreens**—Scotch or Austrian pine, eastern red cedar, blue spruce, concolor fir, Canada hemlock, Douglasfir or Japanese yew.

**Woody florals**—the bright-colored red, orange or chartreuse stems of dogwood; willows with colored or contorted stems; the fuzzy buds of pussy willows; crabapples with persistent fruit; and viburnums.

**Holly, bayberry or other foliage** (will last longer outdoors or with stems in water). In Nebraska, try blue prince or princess meserve holly. There’s also creeping mahonia, a beautiful holly-like evergreen native to Nebraska that has exceptional color throughout the year, turning bronzy purple in winter. It’s hardy, drought-tolerant and has spring flowers and late summer fruits.

**Osage orange or hedge apples** have wonderful, decorative seed patterns. They can be cut into ½” thick slices and dried. Whole osage oranges, tucked into a wire egg basket, add an old-fashioned feel to the home.

**Pomanders** are wonderfully fragrant, natural room fresheners. Oranges, kumquats, limes and lemons can be covered with clove studs and rolled in cinnamon or left in a bowl with spices like bay leaves or lavender.

**Strawberry ears of corn** can be hung in clusters on the tree with a cup hook in the back and a bow to brighten them up.

**Small gourds** in a variety of colors and sizes.

**Catkins** from hazelnut and alder; alder also has clusters of small, pinecone-like “nutlets” that can be used in decorating.

**Bark from a white birch tree** can be cut in decorative shapes and used in arrangements. Or make a tiny birdhouse out of cardboard and glue the salmon-colored bark or a river birch tree to the sides.

### Christmas Tree Decorations

For a natural Christmas tree, try using these ornaments, either as they are or spray-painted:

**Empty bird nests**, possibly adding eggs or small bird ornaments.

**Pinecones**, alone or in clusters, with a small hook or paper clip for hanging.

**Seedpods** from black-eyed susan, wild beebalm, Chinese lantern, prairie bushclover, Siberian iris, penstemon, poppies, love-in-the-mist, milkweed or okra.

**Acorns**, singly for a small tree or clustered together with glue (you may want to spray them with a sealant for more gloss). Or consider stringing them with popcorn, black walnuts or other nuts or berries you've collected.

**Dried flowers** gathered in small bouquets or glued to small styrofoam balls: artemisia, white statice, sweet annie, feathery dried grasses, goldenrod, etc. For large, single flowers, try hydrangea or yarrow.

**Rose hips**, particularly from Rugosas. Best hip production is from roses grown in full sun with little or no deadheading after August.

**Dried fruit** gives the appearance of homemade stained glass windows. Simply slice oranges, apples, pears, lemons or grapefruit 1/8" thick, dip in a solution of one part lemon concentrate and one part water, making sure the fruit is well-covered. Line several cookie sheets with brown paper bags and heat at 175 degrees for two hours, then turn fruit over and leave in oven another 1½ hours.

**Berries:** bittersweet, black chokeberry, viburnums, coralberry, snowberry, eastern wahoo, bittersweet, wax myrtle, etc.

For those winter days when the "weather outside is frightful," do some gathering in advance to enjoy winter's beauty close-at-hand indoors.