

Wild at Heart

Be wild, whatever your age

Grow Your Own Festive Wreath



Bringing greenery inside the home when all is dark and dismal is an age old tradition.

With a bit of pre-planning you can make your own festive wreath from natural materials – far more attractive, unique and much better for the planet!

There's loads of wildlife benefits to growing your own wreath - all through the growing season your plants will be providing nectar, pollen and habitat for all sorts of wildlife, there will be plenty of berries and seeds for birds to eat, as well as creating little nooks and crannies for insects to overwinter in.

Come December, you can collect some of the material for your own enjoyment too!

Having a bit of colour and interest certainly lifts the spirits when the days are short and cold. Plus the satisfaction from creating something wonderful and the little smiles it generates every time you see it or someone asks you where you "bought" it from!

Even the act of going out on a nature walk to collect extra natural materials is a mood booster.

Plants to grow in your garden to use in wreath-making

The list is of course endless - here are some to start with.



Foliage

Ivy, Rosemary, Sage

Berries

Pyracanthus, Cotoneaster

Flowering Shrubs -

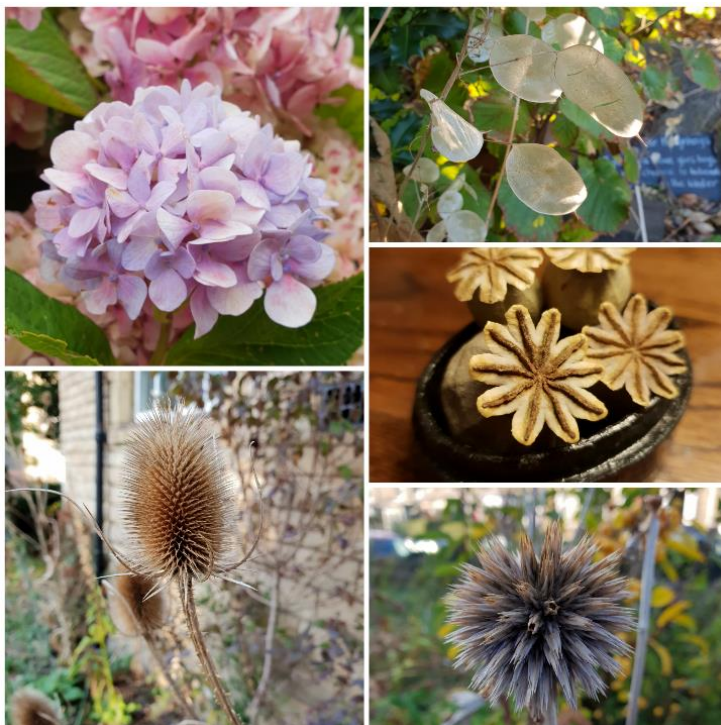
Viburnum, Winter Flowering Jasmine, Sedum, Skimmia, Mahonia etc

Flexible, structural plants to use to make your hoop base - dog wood, willow, hazel, bramble

Plants to grow in your garden and harvest in the summer / autumn and dry until needed.

- Honesty
- Oriental Poppy (seed heads)
- Teasels
- Echinops
- Sea Holly
- Hydrangea
- Lavender
- Allium Flower heads
- Ornamental Grasses

You can also dry annuals like cornflowers, Love in a Mist seed heads, ammi majus – these all keep their shape and can look beautiful when dried. Simply cut in summer when they are at their best, tie a rubber band around the stems and hang upside down in a cool, dry, dark place and forget about them until December!



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Items to forage whilst out on a nature walk



Guidelines for Foraging – Fallen items are best - think about nature, only collect things that are in abundance, only take what you need – leave plenty for wildlife, so as not to have a detrimental effect on the plant and the ecosystem.

All wild plants are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981). It is illegal to dig up or remove a whole plant (including algae, lichens and fungi) from the land on which it is growing without permission from the landowner or occupier. Some species like orchids are specially protected against picking, uprooting, damage and sale.

A list of these can be found on [Schedule 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act \(1981\)](#).

Evergreens/Conifers

Small pieces of Noble Fir, Pine, Spruce, Larch, Leyland Cypress, Holly, Laurel, Fern etc.

Structural material for base

Dogwood, willow, bramble, birch and hazel all work well

Natural treasures to embellish your wreath

- **Pine cones** (collect in the autumn)
- **Fruit & Berries** – to add colour - Hawthorn / Buckthorn berries. Rowan, Late black berries, Crab apples, Quince, Rosehips.
- **The fluffy seed heads of “Travellers Joy”**
- **Feathers**

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How to create your wreath

Gather your materials

- Secateurs
- Cotton thread – can be used to attach material to your wreath

Optional

- Floristry wire – can be useful for attaching items to your wreath.
- Hessian to make extra bows and ribbons

Make your hoop base.



Use your flexible, freshly cut or pre-soaked willow, dog wood or hazel to shape into a circle. The size of this circle will determine your wreath size - shorter length will create a perfectly attractive mini-wreath. Twist the end in so they push against each other to hold the shape. Continue to weave and twist the willow etc. Add a few more lengths to give the hoop structural integrity. A good tip is to overlap joins. Wait until you are happy with the thickness of the wreath before clipping the willow to improve the shape.

Attach the greenery first - this is where your evergreen foliage will come into play. You can use the natural gaps in your willow base to push the stems of the cuttings into. If you think they need to be more firmly attached you can use the cotton or floristry wire.



Experiment with colours and texture of different plants. See what fits the look that you're going for!

Then add some colourful embellishments. Things like berries, seed and flower heads. Use the natural treasure that you saved back in Summer. For an unknown (!) artistic reason – an odd number of items seems to hold people's attention better, try adding, 3, 5 7 or even 9(!) of one of your treasures and see what you think. Add your berries last of all – they are delicate and will easily fall from your cutting.



Your wreath will last about a month – you could always revamp it each week, changing its look to suit your mood. Once the festive period is over and it is time to take down your wreath, you could add it into your compost heap to be retaken back into the natural world.

Add some garden twine to make a loop to attach your wreath to your front door, ready to spread cheer over the Festive season.

If you enjoyed making it – why not make one for your neighbour too!

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