

Decorate the home with green rather than gold

By the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum

“For in the true nature of things, if we rightly consider, every green tree is far more glorious than if it were made of gold and silver.” Martin Luther

If green is more to your liking than silver or gold, simplicity more compelling than artifice, then let nature do the decorating this year. It'll make you pay more attention outdoors while you're gathering things and the objects you bring in can be appreciated in more detail than from a mere walk-by on a cold morning.

Whatever you find beautiful in the landscape—evergreens, bare branches, pine cones, bark, acorns, seedheads, bird feathers, berries, tree mushrooms, stones—can be used indoors as well.

If you're handy with a glue gun or wire cutters, you can make elaborate wreaths, swags and arrangements. The less-skilled among us can simply gather them in bowls, pots or boxes with a minimum of effort.

Candles and twinkle lights, maybe with a few shiny balls for reflecting, make them more visible and more of a focal point.

What to gather? The options are endless: berries from bittersweet, coralberry, eastern wahoo, cedar, viburnum, snowberry; dried flowers like artemisia, hydrangea, statice, grasses, goldenrod, rose hips, strawflowers, ornamental grasses; semi-evergreen plants like holly, wintercreeper, periwinkle, leather-leaf viburnum; acorns, walnuts or other seed pods; vines from honeysuckle, bittersweet, winter creeper, vinca, grape, etc.

How you gather or arrange them is up to you, but here are a few ideas:

- Do some pruning and put the bare (or decorated) branches in vases.
- Cut sections of birch or other large branches to use as candle holders or stands, or detach bark to tie around glass jars.
- Fill mason jars with fruit, berries, nuts, candles, or stalks of grains or grasses.
- Tuck pinecones into potted succulents.
- Use a section of rustic wood as a table runner.
- Fill an abandoned bird's nest with Christmas decorations.
- The wonderful blue berries of eastern redcedar will complement any grouping.
- Fill terracotta pots, large or small, with evergreens, pine cones, seedheads.
- Separate leaves from a fern or flowering plant and put individual leaves or stems in a series of jars and vases.
- What's your favorite bowl or platter? Fill it with pine cones, a small houseplant and some favorite rocks.
- Attach sprigs of evergreen to old garden tools like rakeheads, trowels and dandelion diggers and hang them on walls, doors or window frames.
- Christmas trees can be decorated in the same manner—with seedheads, pine cones, nests,

dried flowers, etc.

- Wrap Christmas presents with bows tied around cuttings from evergreen, wintercreeper or periwinkle.

- Use terracotta pots as gift holders rather than bags or boxes.

See ideas and photos at: pinterest.com/nearboretum/natural-decorating/.