

DECK THE HALLS WITH LOCAL FLORA!

One of the most delightful things about living in Southern California is that the holidays offer up some of the best weather we have all year. The air turns crisp and the hills turn green again, presenting a cornucopia of beautiful and interesting plant materials which allow endless possibilities for creating fresh decorations and colorful gardens for the holidays.

The name Calabasas is derived from calabaza, the Spanish word for squash, so you'd better believe that when fall arrives, we have a beautiful proliferation of pumpkins and gourds with which to decorate our front steps. At the same time, cool weather annuals such as pansies, stock, Iceland poppies, cyclamen, primrose, English daisies, and (my favorite)

ranunculus start to show up in nurseries and garden stores everywhere. These plants can take a light frost, but here in Southern California, we don't have to worry about too many things in the garden not making it through winter. Don't get me wrong; I loved my 20 years in Connecticut, but having more than the typical arsenal of autumnal foliage or winter pine and poinsettia to help me set the stage for holiday festivities is a breath of fresh air. Now, instead of putting my gardens to bed in the fall, I look forward to refreshing them. I love to sprinkle the beds along our walkways with these cool weather annuals and ground cover, like baby tears, moneywort, and sedum. These cool-loving plants also look gorgeous arranged in pots of various sizes and shapes in luscious combinations of hue and texture that announce the holiday season in the vivaciously organic way only Southern California can.

I love to create my holiday décor against this backdrop of living color which keeps going strong from autumn to the New Year. Rather than wading through the mass-produced options in stores, I've found that it takes just the tiniest bit more time (and usually less money) to create my own beautiful arrangements from natural materials. The more traditional spruce can be fashioned to make wonderful wreaths and tabletop arrangements, but so can native olive branches, eucalyptus, magnolia leaves, and succulents. Pots of rosemary, myrtle, jasmine, and lavender trimmed into cone shapes make tiny fragrant living Christmas trees that look amazing in groups of varied sizes and containers. Another plus to using these kinds of plant materials is that often they fit seamlessly into the greater setting of our indigenous flora and help bridge the more expected holiday materials, like pine and holly, both indoors and out.



Put your own spin on what nature provides. A few well-placed velvet bows, some dainty lights, and your own touch will add the festive sparkle. I have a box of special pretties that I keep tucked away to reuse every year. It's full of anything that can embellish wreaths, garlands, and potted plants: gossamer wired ribbon, stiff velvet bows, and tiny battery-operated copper string lights. A nice benefit of using live plants and cuttings from your garden is that when you pack up at the end of the season, a box of these small additions takes up much less storage space than those big old boxes of fake greenery.

In addition to ribbons, lights, and bows, I have a cherished collection of tiny birds with natural feathers that tend to find their way into my decorations. In my home, they are a big part of making our holiday feel festive. My mother-in-law has a set of antique sleigh bells that she attaches to the noble-fir wreath that greets us at her front door every Christmas. The fresh scent of fir and the sound of those sleigh bells is part of her special holiday tradition that we all love so much. Fresh and personal holiday décor...it's only natural!

Wishing you a happy and beautiful holiday season. Until next time, here's to creating your own Noble Spaces! ■

Tammy Randall Wood, ASID is the founder and principal of Interior Archaeology. She has designed an extensive array of projects coast to coast - from seaside cottages on Martha's Vineyard, metropolitan penthouses and formal Beltway manors to cultivated West Coast compounds. Her firm brings a fresh approach to tailored interiors.

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Tammy's Tabletop Tree of Fresh Olive Branches adorned with gossamer ribbon and string lights in Crackleware Frieze Bowl by Formations



Ranunculus



English Daisies