



deck the outdoors

I like the idea of having a holiday look both indoors and out. What suggestions can you give me for creating a festive appearance in my garden?



Text by Troy Bankord • Illustration by Clint Miller

There are many ways to dress up your garden for the holidays. Picking a color scheme for flower beds, pots and planters is a good idea for any season. White is a nice choice for the holidays because it lends a pure, slightly formal feel to the garden. Hydrangeas, pansies, petunias, roses, impatiens, gardenias, lobelias and even poinsettias come in various shades of white. For contrast, try adding variegated ivies or pittosporum to your pots and groupings.

Outdoor furnishings can be done up with white cushions and pillows for a crisp, clean appearance. Incorporate a mirrored table top to reflect flickering candlelight and flowering plants. Loads of white candles and touches of silver complete the look. Following are more ideas to celebrate the season.

- Red is classic. For a show-stopper, combine masses of red geraniums with deep-green dracaena spikes and ivy.
- White twinkle lights in trees set a festive, romantic mood.
- Hanging metallic ornaments at various lengths from a tree creates a beautiful effect when illuminated at night.
- Bowls and baskets overflowing with fruit lend opulence. Or, fill glass vases with cranberries, oranges, green or red apples or lemons, then add red roses, white lilies or red tulips. Float citrus in a fountain for a spot of harvest color.
- Tuck pine or cedar limbs in and around groupings of pots for a touch of holiday magic. Use

natural garland to wrap a mailbox stanchion or light posts, or as a swag on a garden gate.

- If you are entertaining, line a garden path with lanterns to lead guests toward the party destination. Fill the party space with greens and loads of white candles, and use white tablecloths with silver centerpieces filled with red cyclamen. Many nurseries rent plants for events. One idea is to rent 5-gallon junipers and group them to serve as a backdrop; jazz them up with twinkle lights, and camouflage their containers with earth-tone fabric and pine boughs.

- To add height and drama to a narrow space, dust gnarly branches with white spray paint, stand them up in a vessel, and light from below. For a sophisticated look, hang clear crystal prisms from the branches; this will turn neighboring walls into a spectrum of color.

- Consider incorporating plants with unique foliage or red berries into your garden. For foliage, try acanthus, asparagus fern, bay leaf laurel, citrus, foxtail fern, ivy, juniper, philodendron, swordtail fern, and variegated pittosporum. If red berries are what you are after, plant holly, nandina (heavenly bamboo), pyracantha, or pepper trees.

These are just a few of many creative ways to turn an ordinary garden into a festive outdoor room that everyone will be talking about. 🌿

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