

Decorating with Pennsylvania Native Plants for the Holidays

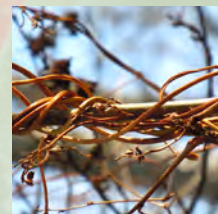
Marc Radell, PennState Master Gardener Emeritus, Montgomery County, Dec. 2021

People of different cultures have been decorating their homes with colorful vegetation during the winter months for millennia, often to celebrate religious or secular holidays. Many plants native to Pennsylvania can provide beautiful, eco-friendly accents to your home this season. Please remember to gather plant material only with the permission of the property owner & to compost or responsibly dispose of it afterwards.



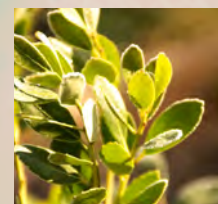
Virginia Pine

Live Trees. Potted evergreen conifers, such as White & Red Pines, Red & Black Spruces, Balsam Fir & Eastern Red Cedar, can be kept in a cool spot indoors for up to 10 days. A few days before bringing one inside, move it to an unheated garage or porch to help it adjust to higher temperatures. Remove any insects, egg masses, or other pests. Once indoors, place the pot in a saucer away from ducts, fireplaces, or other heat sources. While your tree is inside, water it regularly. After the holidays, return the tree to the unheated area for a few days & then plant it outdoors or store it in a sheltered location outside until spring.



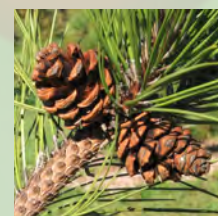
Fox Grape

Vines for Wreaths. Summer & Fox Grapes, Virginia & Trumpet Creepers, Coral Honeysuckle, Virgin's Bower & other native vines can be woven into wreaths. Soak lengths of vine in warm water for 1 hour to increase flexibility. Remove the vines from the water, coil one into a circle of the desired size, and weave its remaining length around the circle. Add new lengths of vine by tucking one end between the woven stems and wrapping them around the circle to attain the desired thickness. Let the wreath dry & tighten overnight before decorating. Secure greens and accents by tucking their stems between the woven vines or tying them with natural twine.



Inkberry

Evergreens for Wreaths, Garlands & Centerpieces. The branches of the evergreen conifers listed above are often plentiful & provide most of the greens for decorating. Use a variety of these greens or add branches of broadleaved evergreens and semi-evergreens, including Rosebay, Mountain Laurel, Inkberry & Sweetbay, for textural interest. When collecting greens, follow standard pruning practices and consider the plants' overall structure & health.



Red Pine

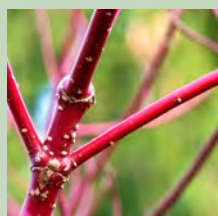
Berries, Cones & Other Accents. The fruits of Winterberry, American Holly, & Swamp & Virginia Roses provide a classic touch of red to holiday decorations. For more color, consider the blue 'berries' of Eastern Red Cedar, the gold berries of some Winterberry cultivars, or the orange fruit capsules of American Bittersweet. The cones of pines, spruces & firs add dimension and a sense of tradition. Red-Twig Dogwood stems bring vertical interest to centerpieces, as do the purplish stems of Black Raspberry. Don't be afraid to include other plant materials that catch your eye, such as the snowy floral bracts of Joe-Pye Weed, starchy seed casings of Swamp Rosemallow, or vibrant leaves of native oaks & American Beech.



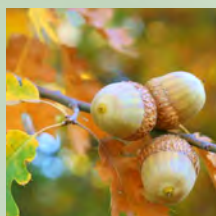
American Holly



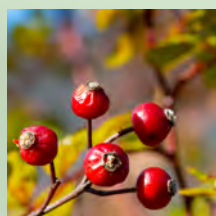
American Bittersweet



Red-Twig Dogwood



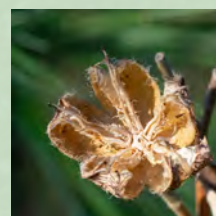
White Oak



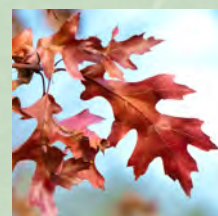
Virginia Rose



Eastern Red Cedar



Swamp Rosemallow



Pin Oak

Some Pennsylvania Native Plants for Holiday Decorations

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Needled Evergreens

Balsam Fir (*Abies balsamea*)

Eastern Red Cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*)

Red Spruce (*Picea rubens*)

Pitch Pine (*Pinus rigida*)

Virginia Pine (*Pinus virginiana*)

Prostrate Juniper (*Juniperus communis* var. *depressa*)

Black Spruce (*Picea mariana*)

Red Pine (*Pinus resinosa*)

White Pine (*Pinus strobus*)

Note: Juniperus species provide decorative 'berries' & other species provide cones.

Broadleaf Evergreens & Semi-Evergreens

Inkberry (*Ilex glabra*)

Sheep Laurel (*Kalmia angustifolia*)

Coral Honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*)

Rosebay (*Rhododendron maximum*)

American Holly (*Ilex opaca*)

Mountain Laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*)

Sweetbay (*Magnolia virginiana*)

Vines

Trumpet Creeper (*Campsis radicans*)

Coral Honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*)

Summer Grape (*Vitis aestivalis*)

Riverbank Grape (*Vitis riparia*)

Virgin's Bower (*Clematis virginiana*)

Virginia Creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*)

Fox Grape (*Vitis labrusca*)

Frost Grape (*Vitis vulpina*)

Berries and Berry-Like Fruit

American Bittersweet (*Celastrus scandens*)

American Holly (*Ilex opaca*)

Swamp Rose (*Rosa palustris*)

Inkberry (*Ilex glabra*)

Winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*) & yellow-berried cultivars

Virginia Rose (*Rosa virginiana*)

Acorns

White Oak (*Quercus alba*)

Bur Oak (*Quercus macrocarpa*)

Northern Red Oak (*Quercus rubra*)

Pin Oak (*Quercus palustris*)

Dried Flower Heads and Seed Structures

Dogbane (*Apocynum cannabinum*)

Butterfly Weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*)

Swamp Rosemallow (*Hibiscus moscheutos*)

Common Milkweed (*Asclepius syriaca*)

Spotted Joe-Pye Weed (*Eutrochium maculatum*)

Smooth Alder (*Alnus serrulata*)

Colorful Stems

Red-Twig Dogwood (*Cornus sericea*) & yellow-twigged cultivars

Black Raspberry (*Rubus occidentalis*)

Persistent Leaves

American Beech (*Fagus grandifolia*)

Oak species (*Quercus* spp.)