



FROM LEFT: BOXWOOD, CYPRESS, WILLOW BRANCH WREATH DESIGNS BY ZINNIA WILSON AND KATHLEEN WIGMORE OF TERRA GREENHOUSES, MILTON.

Christmas Naturally

GREEN HOLIDAY DECORATING IDEAS

WORDS KATHY BUCKWORTH IMAGES STEVE UHRANEY PHOTOGRAPHED AT TERRA NURSERIES IN MILTON

Walk into any retail store, and you'll be immediately surrounded by huge displays of flashing, talking, glittering, shiny Christmas decorations, which will be sure to not only boost your credit card bill during this heavy spending period, but your electricity or battery bill as well.

Taking things back to the basics is an easy way to be green, and stay in the green. We gathered up some practical tips from experts to help you go natural. Leslie Garrett, author of *The Virtuous Consumer*, is a pro at putting an environmental spin on the holidays:

✱ **Dogwood branches** are naturally 'Christmassy.' Add a few clippings of cedar or pine in a glass vase and you've got a simple, lovely decoration.

✱ **My "signature" table centre:** Take a clear glass bowl or large glass vase; add cranberries to float on top. Put in a few floating candles in white, green, and silver. Throw in a few little bits of cedar and you've got a great centerpiece that can be dumped in your composter when the season's over.

The fabulous design team at *Circle Home Design* in Oakville (www.circlehome.ca) has also discovered a terrific way to make the most of your natural holiday decorations. "Get double duty from your holiday wreath. Bring it in from the front door and lay it flat as your table centerpiece with a large hurricane candle in the middle. With a touch of water the greenery will stay fresh for the duration of your dinner party."

The wreath itself doesn't have to be store-purchased. "Snippings of fresh greenery (pine, cedar, boxwood) or rosehips can be gathered from the backyard (or purchased inexpensively at any nursery), or you can even save the branches

that you trim from your Christmas tree!"

Besides the dinner table, and the front door, other rooms can be easily decorated in a natural and inexpensive way. "Don't overlook the bathroom – a simple bit of silver or glass filled with fresh greenery looks and smells great. In the kitchen, rosemary is a nice alternative to add a fresh green touch. Tie a small bundle of rosemary with a red ribbon and hang it from a cupboard handle," they advise.

If you don't have the foliage available in your own back (or front) yard, a visit to *TERRA Greenhouses* can provide all the greenery you need. Karen Moretti, Business Development Manager, knows what's popular with her clientele:

✱ **Our most popular table décor** generally revolves around Poinsettias. Simple potted plants can be combined with cut greens to create an easy festive table centerpiece. We carry a wide assortment of Eucalyptus, Magnolia, Boxwood, and Oregonia. For a scented option, you can also use potted herbs like rosemary or thyme in a festive pot for the table.

✱ **Sprays for fresh cedar** can be combined with other types of greenery like pine or cypress to add extra texture for the mantle. Accents of berries or sprigs of holly can add natural touches of colour, or you can combine some of your favourite ornaments to tie all of your décor together.

"Natural décor is definitely still gaining popularity," says Moretti. "Some super-hot items this year include our red-dyed magnolia leaves, cut birch poles, and square boxwood wreaths."

But how long can these natural decorations last?

Moretti says "All of our live greens arrangements (both indoor and outdoor) are generally made with Cedar and Pine. All fresh cut greens should last the season outdoors without much concern, and should last indoors if kept watered for up to 3 weeks." If you're looking for something to last longer, they also offer a huge selection of dried accents, which will retain their colour throughout a longer holiday season.

It's worth going green with your decorations, to make sure your bank balance doesn't go in the red. ☺

Bird Feeder planter (top left) and fresh cut greens arranged by Laura Bitner of terra greenhouses. This season, twigs are hugely popular. Consider mixing red or yellow twig dogwood birch or corkscrew willow with your favourite evergreens.

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