

Cutting Evergreens

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Fresh greens are beautiful for the holidays. Live wreaths, swags, garlands and flower arrangements can be amazing decorations that brighten a room and freshen the air with their crisp, piney fragrance. Whether you buy your greenery from a reputable nursery or cut your own from a farm or your property, here are some important tips for extending the life of your decorations throughout the holiday season.



1. Buy fresh or cut from your own property. The foliage should be bright green with few needles lost when handled. Branches should be pliable, easily bent without breaking.

2. If cutting your own greenery, prune smart. Prune healthy branches that help shape the tree for future growth. Do not create holes in the tree/shrub. Prune crossing, rubbing branches; branches growing in wrong direction (i.e., opposite of natural growth); and overly thick areas.

3. Recut $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ inch from branch and pound the ends with hammer to increase surface area for absorbing water. If possible, place all greenery in room temperature water for several hours to ensure as much rehydration as possible.



4. An anti-desiccant spray can be used to seal pores on leaves and branches, thereby helping retain moisture and prolonging freshness and vibrancy. Follow label directions.
5. After arrangements are made, mist them daily to keep foliage hydrated. If in a container of water, change the water regularly.
6. Keep arrangements away from direct sunlight, heat, candles, and fireplaces.
7. Arrangements last longer outside in cooler environments. If possible, they should remain outside until bringing them in for display.
8. If cared for, fresh greenery arrangements can last 2 weeks indoors.



There are many choices of evergreens for making wreaths, swags, garlands and arrangements, many of which are found in our landscapes. In general, the longer needled pines such as scotch pine and white pine, and the firs last longer than the short needle pines such as hemlock and spruce. The broad leaf evergreens are also a good choice such as rhododendron, Andromeda, holly, magnolia and photinia. Winter berries can add color to an arrangement. Pine cones add texture and herbs such as rosemary add additional fragrance. So use your imagination and be creative!

This Master Gardener chose foliage from her property to dress the 'natural' wreath in the last photo. Can you find the following evergreens in the wreath? Balsam fir, white pine, hemlock, concolor fir, andromeda, rhododendron, azalea, arborvitae, ivy, pachysandra, boxwood, as well as a variety of cones.

