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The Holly and The Ivy

— by Lori Hicks, Graphics Department

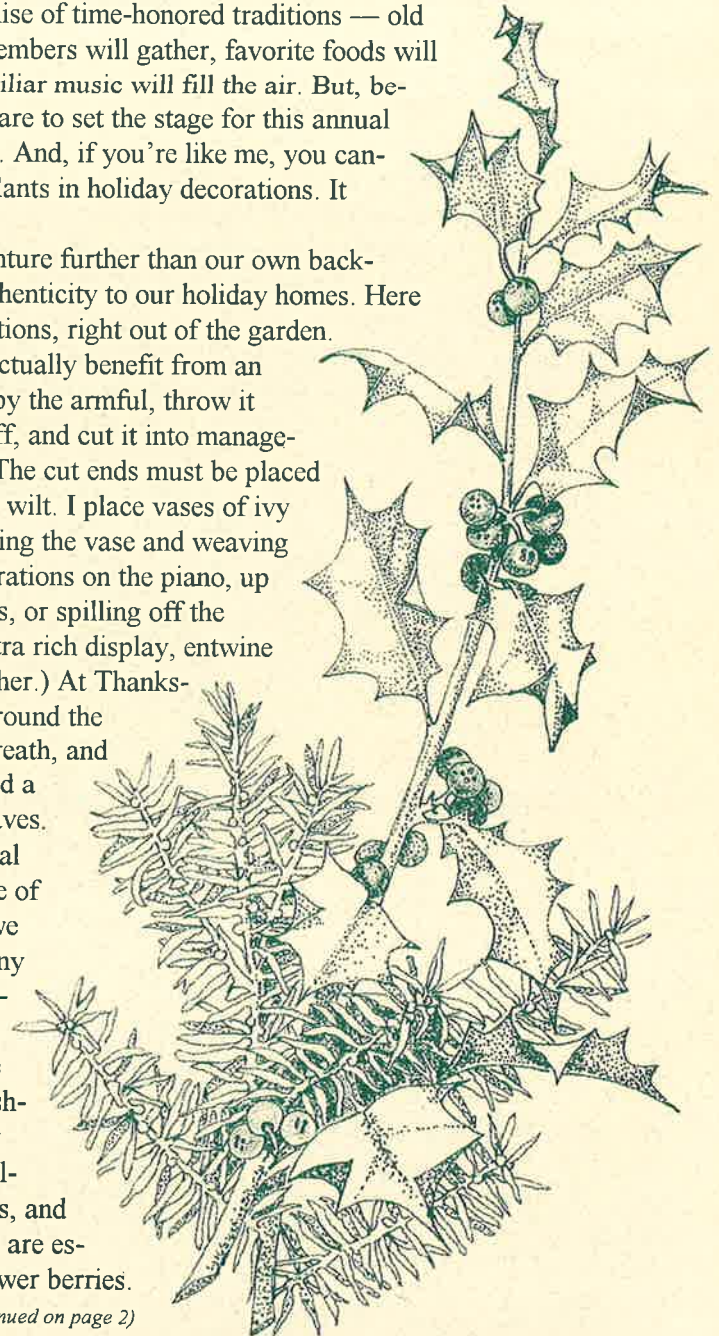
In late fall, anticipation begins to build. Chilly autumn breezes whirl the fallen leaves and stir the tender memories of the heart. The holidays lie ahead with their promise of time-honored traditions — old friends and cherished family members will gather, favorite foods will be prepared, and strains of familiar music will fill the air. But, before it can all unfold, we take care to set the stage for this annual drama of joy and remembrance. And, if you're like me, you cannot bear to resort to artificial plants in holiday decorations. It just seems so...well, fake.

Fortunately, we needn't venture further than our own backyards to add the blessing of authenticity to our holiday homes. Here are some of my favorite decorations, right out of the garden.

Ivy — The ivy patch will actually benefit from an annual thinning. I yank ivy up by the armful, throw it over the clothesline to hose it off, and cut it into manageable sections to bring indoors. The cut ends must be placed in water, or the ivy will quickly wilt. I place vases of ivy everywhere, sometimes concealing the vase and weaving the ivy in and out of other decorations on the piano, up the wall and over picture frames, or spilling off the edges of the mantle. (For an extra rich display, entwine two or three long sections together.) At Thanksgiving, I weave it around and around the punch bowl, forming an airy wreath, and tuck sprays of baby's breath and a few pine cones in among the leaves.

Holly — is the quintessential Christmas decoration — and one of the first things I planted when we bought our home. I use it in many Christmas arrangements. A simple brass container of holly and a needle evergreen, such as pine or yew, is so delightfully old fashioned — “like a picture print by Currier and Ives.” Add shiny colored balls, perhaps some candles, and a bright bow. Variegated hollies are especially lovely, but they have fewer berries.

(Continued on page 2)



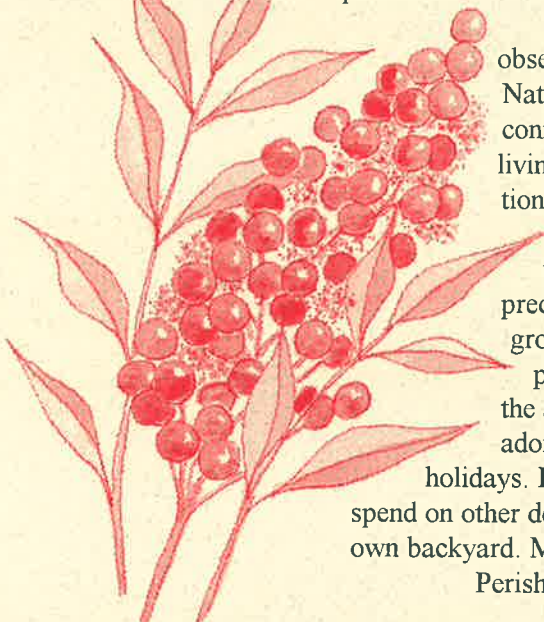
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That's where another of my favorites comes in.

Nandina — is a durable and attractive plant. Although it keeps a rather low profile in the garden, no one can miss the generous clusters of small, bright red berries that appear in fall. I divide these into smaller clusters and use them to add color to my green arrangements. For a special dinner, tuck these small clusters of berries into each napkin ring, with or without a sprig of holly. Now that my nandinas are mature they produce masses of berries. I leave some on the plants and still have enough to place a large, narrow vase of cascading berries on a high shelf. I discovered by accident that if the water evaporates, the berry bunches will dry and remain intact, the berries mellowing and deepening slightly in tone. The dried bunches are brittle, so place them away from curious little fingers.

Magnolia — My sister-in-law supplies me with bunches of evergreen, or Southern, magnolia. These are quite large and make a bold statement. The leaves are glossy green on one side and velvety brown on the other. I place them inside the front door in a large crock with a big red bow. They shout a cheerful holiday "Welcome!" to all who enter. Magnolia leaves can also be fashioned into stunning wreaths, and they provide a base for Williamsburg-type decorations combined with fresh fruit, such as apples and pineapples. One year I made a sumptuous ring around a large candle in a glass hurricane shade. The magnolia leaves formed the base to which I added a circle of apples and crowned it all with a ring of cranberries. A less formal, yet equally effective use is

to pile the branches haphazardly atop a tall china closet or bookcase. The leaves don't need to be in water and even in an out-of-the-way place such as this make a big impact.



Like the holidays themselves which we observe each year, the borrowing of Mother Nature's bounty is an ancient tradition that connects us to all that has gone before. The living, growing things, like our annual celebrations, are temporary in nature, yet return again and again — and it is this ephemeral quality that increases their value and helps us to appreciate the gift. In addition, the plants, while growing in the garden, add beauty to our days, provide food and shelter for wildlife, and clean the air. Plant your garden for all seasons and adorn your home with the genuine article for the holidays. In the long run you'll have more money to spend on other decorations and plants you can't grow in your own backyard. Maybe a plastic poinsettia?

Perish the thought! ☪

Meet: Terri Poindexter



Terri, our plant propagator, is responsible for starting nearly 200,000 perennial and woody plants each year at our Largo nursery, as well as planting and maintaining the stock gardens.

An employee at Behnke's for over three years, Terri came to us with a BS in Business Administration from Virginia State University, and many years of retail experience. Her love of plants and gardening, coursework, and on-the-job training have enabled her to obtain her Maryland Horticulturist Certification and to become a member of the International Plant Propagator's Society (IPPS).

In her spare time Terri loves to read, embroider, and bake and decorate cakes (which she frequently shares at company gatherings).

Terri is always enthusiastic and a joy to be around. She enjoys travelling and recent trips include IPPS meetings in Rhode Island and Pennsylvania, where she represented Behnke Nurseries. ☪

Special Holiday Shopping Hours

- 🌲 Closed Thanksgiving Day, November 27
- 🌲 Open 8 am till 8 pm daily, including Sundays, from November 28th through December 23rd.
- 🌲 Open Christmas Eve 8 am till 5 pm
- 🌲 Closed Christmas Day, December 25th
- 🌲 Open New Year's Eve, 8 am till 5 pm
- 🌲 Closed New Year's Day, January 1st

A Fresh, All Natural Christmas

— by Helmut Jaehnigen, Director of Woody Plants

As Christmas approaches, it brings up memories from my childhood long ago in Germany. Back then, just a few days before the holiday actually arrived, my father would bring home a freshly cut spruce tree. The fragrance this tree brought into our home was absolutely wonderful. We children weren't allowed to decorate the tree until Christmas Eve, and those were magical hours indeed. Each of us selected ornaments and hung them with care. Then, for the final touch, we carefully attached the holders for the dozen or so wax candles that provided the illumination for the entire tree. When the candles were finally lit, we children felt that the stars had left the heavens to come inside and celebrate Christmas with us. Now, that was a long time ago, and I certainly don't suggest that you put wax candles on your tree, but I still set up a fresh tree every Christmas if only for the wonderful fragrance it imparts to my entire home.

I now have found my favorite Christmas tree of all — the Fraser fir. This tree is far superior to the Norway spruce in many ways. It only grows way up in the mountains of the Carolinas where it is cool and moist. It has the most beautiful shiny deep green needles and a strong piney fragrance that is better than that of any other tree. Best of all, the needles will last until almost February. For us, long-lasting needles are important because my wife spends hours decorating the tree with heirloom decorations collected over many years. The Fraser fir is straight and easy to set up, and the branches easily

support the weight of many ornaments. My wife likes it best of all because the needles are soft and pliable and actually caress her hands as she weaves strands of silver through the branches. Now you might say that you feel a little guilty about cutting down a tree to use for decoration. But I'd like to suggest that you look at it this way. Christmas trees are grown as a crop, and when mature they are

harvested just like peas or corn. During the ten to twelve years of their life, they have provided a beautiful home for wildlife in the area and pleasure for the occasional hikers who spend time exploring the mountains. And, as soon as they are harvested, another crop of trees is planted in their place. Furthermore, steep slopes planted with trees will not erode and pollute water supplies down in the valley. What's more, tree farms provide a steady income for the nurserymen in the mountains. Lastly, growing trees clean the air, while the production of plastics required to manufacture artificial trees pollutes the air.

This year I hope you'll consider a beautiful cut Christmas tree



from Behnke's — each tree is displayed free standing so you can see all sides. Although the Fraser fir is my particular favorite, you'll find many beautiful trees in our lot. Some good choices are Douglas fir, Canadian balsam and the Noble fir, all of which have similar characteristics, each with a slightly different fragrance and appearance. Ask our staff to help you find the perfect tree for your home — the one that will help create memories for your family. ☪

Holidays at Behnkes

Holiday Open House

Thursday, November 20, 6:30 to 9 pm
In Beltsville

The entire nursery will be decorated for the holidays in traditional garb — the fresh greenery and twinkling lights set the stage for an entertaining evening. Please join us for fun and good cheer, including: an array of goodies to nibble as you enjoy holiday music, decorating demonstrations, a special savings coupon good only for that evening, and an opportunity to win door prizes.

6:45 - 7:15 pm - Demonstration:
Fresh floral arrangements with a holiday theme.

8:00 - 8:30 pm - Demonstration:
Selecting and using natural materials to create one-of-a-kind wreaths.

8:50 pm - 3 Door Prize Drawings:
You must be present to win.

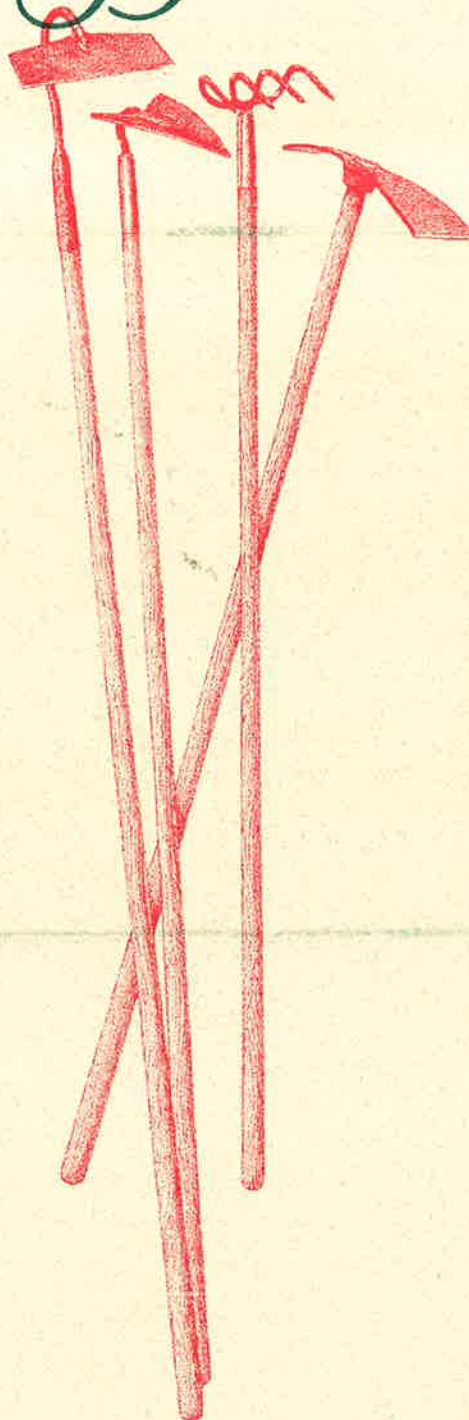
Poinsettias on Parade 1997

Sunday, November 30th, noon to 4 pm
In Largo

Holiday demonstrations, light refreshments, door prizes, and a special savings coupon enhance this once-a-year opportunity to see our fabulous poinsettia greenhouse in Largo. There will be ongoing shuttle buses to take you from our demonstrations to the production greenhouses. You'll see oceans of Behnke Signature Poinsettias at their peak. Bring your camera and take advantage of this perfect backdrop for your holiday photos!

1:00 - 1:45 pm - Demonstration:
Learn a quick and easy way to make holiday bows.

2:00 - 2:45 pm - Demonstration:
Our floral designers show you how to create festive holiday centerpieces.



After you leave Behnke's Poinsettia Tours, continue your holiday experience by driving through the Festival Of Lights at nearby Watkins Regional Park. For info, call (301) 699-2545.

Jardinage Trunk Show

Saturday and Sunday, Dec. 6th & 7th
Saturday and Sunday, Dec. 13th & 14th,
11 am to 4 pm each day
In Beltsville

Jardinage, a Bethesda company owned by Laurie McCord, is a collection of antique and collectible English and French garden tools and accessories, usually dating from the 1880s to the 1920s, the "Golden Age of Professional Gardening." Made of quality wood and steel, many with the patina of age on them, the tools were used and are still intended to be used by the serious gardener (and, of course, they should be shown off to any who show a little interest).

Available only during select shows, Jardinage's collection will be available for your perusal at Behnke's the first two weekends in December. Take advantage of this rare opportunity to select from the new collection of antique gardening tools from England and France for your garden, conservatory or potting shed. Isn't there someone on your holiday gift list who would love to own one of these collectible tools? Or treat yourself!

A special collectible book, **Gardening Tools**, with lavish illustrations and background information on the history of gardening tools is only \$25 during this show. Learn what a dibber, a cloche, a riddle, and such are, and what jobs they were designed to perform. ☪

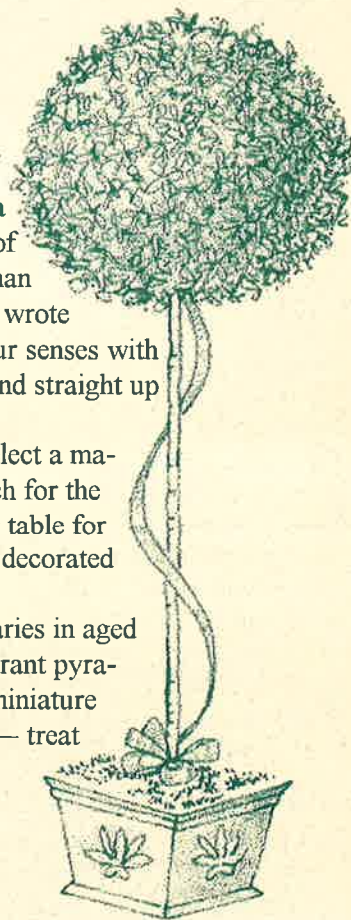
Topiaries...They're Not Just for Gardens Anymore!

— by Judith Conway, Advertising Dept.

“All topiary work requires much care and labor; but wherever it appears, whether in a single tree or in an elaborate series of gardens, it rewards the gardener with a peculiar sense of satisfaction; it is witness to the thought and time expended on it, it weds the garden to the human fancy, and is one of the fullest and most delightful embodiments of garden architecture.” So wrote Walter H. Godfrey in 1914 in his book *Gardens in the Making*. Herbal topiaries appeal to our senses with their fragrance and beauty and their special blend of somehow naive charm as they bravely stand straight up or obligingly weave in and out, pretending to be something they are not.

Whether you want to train your own topiary from an already potted herb or just want to select a mature topiary to brighten the dreariness of winter's days, there are few plants that can do so much for the interior landscape with so little effort. Try them grouped together down the center of the dining table for an aromatic centerpiece, collected together with antique garden tools in a sunny windowsill, or decorated for the next holiday with small ribbons and ornaments.

Our container gardening expert, Eric Morrison, has amassed a new collection of herb topiaries in aged terra cotta jardinières which include some old favorites in surprisingly imaginative forms: Fragrant pyramids or rings of rosemary, dense balls of glossy green myrtle atop soldier-straight stems, and miniature herbal landscapes complete with trellises, iron cathedral gates and stone walkways. Go ahead — treat your home, or the home of a treasured friend, with the gift of an herb topiary this winter. ☪



Gifts for the Gardener

— by Helen Gardiner, Buyer, Garden Shop

If you have a gardener on your gift list, Behnke Nurseries can make your holiday shopping easy. Just stop in, and an experienced gardener will help you select just the right tool or garden accessory. And don't forget the *Jardinage Trunk Shows* in early December with antique gardening tools from Europe! (See page 4)

Here are some suggestions from our staff's wish lists:

- Wellington Garden Boots 🌿 English Watering Cans
- Gloves 🌿 Gardening Aprons 🌿 Clogs
- Garden Signs & Plaques 🌿 Garden Totes and Organizers
- Antique Tools from Jardinage 🌿 Gardening Tools
- Glycerin Hand Therapy Cream 🌿 Gardening Books
- Felco Pruners 🌿 Garden Kneelers 🌿 Designs in Stone
- Gardening Hats 🌿 Bonsai Starters & Finished Plants
- Bonsai Pots and Accessories 🌿 Fountains and Statuary
- Orchids 🌿 Decorative Ceramic Pots
- Floral Arrangements 🌿 Gift Certificates



As The Twig is Bent

— by Lori Hicks, Graphics Department

An elderly gentleman I know had spent a lifetime putting in his garden. When poor health forced him to sell his home and move into a tiny condominium on the ninth floor of a huge complex, he quickly became despondent. While his body could no longer endure the rigors of gardening, his soul yearned for the connection to living things that he had enjoyed throughout his life.

His daughter bought him a bonsai. This proved to be a perfect solution. Since then, the gentleman has acquired several more miniature trees and now a large corner of his living room and his entire balcony are devoted to his new love.

A bonsai is definitely not just another potted plant. The origins of this ancient art form are shrouded in the mystery of the Orient, but it is generally believed that it was the Chinese who, over a thousand years ago, first became fascinated with the naturally occurring miniature trees that struggled to survive in the sparse, rocky soil of the mountainous regions in China. The plants were dwarfed by limited access to soil, water and nutrients, and their trunks and branches were bent and twisted by fierce winds. The desperate fight to survive and subsequent victory over adversity produced a dramatic beauty that was not lost on the Chinese. They dug up the plants and tried, with limited success, to keep them growing in their own gardens. It is the Japanese, however, who are credited with developing and perfecting techniques to create bonsai from scratch.

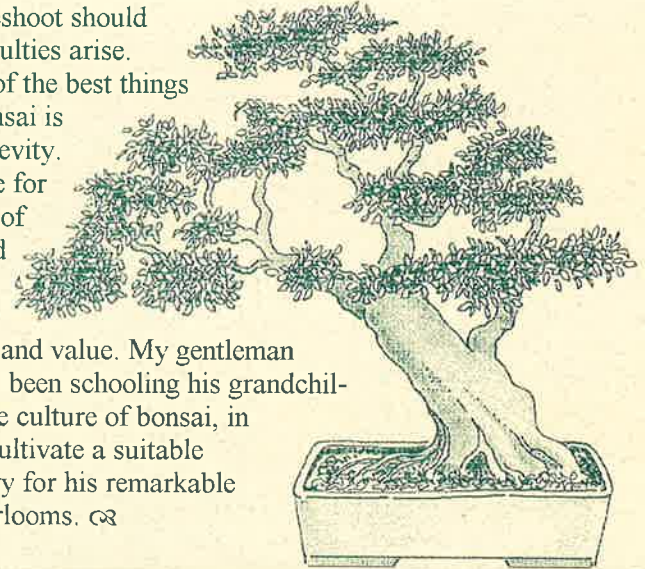
The Japanese term bonsai (pronounced *bone SIGH*) translates literally to “potted tree,” but the true meaning of the process involves complex religious and philosophical beliefs — the pursuit of which may or may not appeal to westerners. Fortunately, bonsai can be admired on many levels. My elderly friend feels that the profound beauty of

his bonsai trees cannot be fully appreciated unless one comprehends the symbolic quest for inner self that is evident in his collection. But even taken at face value, the plants are lovely and quite fascinating.

Bonsai are not for complete beginners. A novice bonsai artist is at least familiar with the basics of gardening. In our climate, indoor bonsai are best to start with, and if given as a gift, should be accompanied by a good handbook.

Indoor bonsai are adapted from tropical and subtropical plants — many of the same species commonly grown as houseplants — whose native environments are similar to the conditions of the average home. Certain minor adjustments to temperature and humidity will need to be made in order to grow some indoor bonsai successfully. Ficus, brush cherry, and serissa are among the best plants to grow as indoor bonsai. The experts in the Behnke Houseplant Department are happy to help with your selection and are always available to troubleshoot should any difficulties arise.

One of the best things about bonsai is their longevity. Many live for hundreds of years, and only increase in beauty and value. My gentleman friend has been schooling his grandchildren in the culture of bonsai, in order to cultivate a suitable beneficiary for his remarkable living heirlooms. ☺



Jardnage Trunk Show...see page 4

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