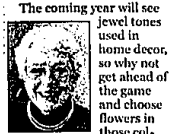


Jewel-toned flowers sparkle for holiday

If you haven't decorated your home for the holidays, you might want to join a number of people who are using bright flowers in deep shades instead of the traditional ones.



Garden Spot

Marty Figley



MARYLISLY
White flowers (roses here) and mirrors reflect light and add sparkle.

The coming year will see jewel tones used in home decor, so why not get ahead of the game and choose flowers in those colors? This is also a good way to introduce a new palette of color, in a small way so that you can see the way they work in your surroundings before you bring in a more permanent new color.
For instance, royal purple, cerise (bright red with a pinkish tinge) and red jewel tones are strong. Perhaps you have noticed them in ornaments, beads and vases that are now offered in stores.
Ruby red, deep purple and strong pink are contenders. Any of these colors are wonderful used with silver or gold bowls filled with a jewel-tone flower, and plum blooms and glass balls will complement such an arrangement.
Try a mixture of purple or

with the jewel tones. Here are some plants you may wish to use.

POINSETTIA

When buying poinsettias, choose a plant with tightly clustered, small central flowers with crisp, bright foliage. Green foliage down to the soil line indicates the plant has active, healthy roots.

Water thoroughly only when the surface soil is dry to the touch. Let the water run into the saucer and discard the excess. A window with six hours of light is a perfect place to help retain the color.

CHRISTMAS CACTUS

The Christmas cactus is another plant with regaling-toned flowers. When the tubular blooms appear, the foliage takes a background role.

The stunning flowers run the gamut of colors, from delicate salmon to white with a faint whisper of apple blossom pink, shocking magenta and sauer, deep red. The bright green stems of the Christmas cactus are arching and drooping, spineless, but scalloped. A cactus pot the color of the bloom will give it more oomph.

Keep the rich, porous soil moist, but not soggy; fertilize weekly when the plants

are growing with an all-purpose product. They like a cool, bright window.
To keep the Christmas cactus blooming successfully year after year, it needs specific resting and growing periods during the year. Ask your nurseryman, or check out a good houseplant book.

AMARYLLIS

One single pot of amaryllis used as a focal point, or a whole group of these popular flowers, makes a spectacular show.

Pink, white, large red blooms striped with white, and gorgeous bright red are colors from which to choose. Surround the red ones with white bulbs or candles or use gold accents for an updated look.

If you choose to give an amaryllis for a gift, please include a care tag with it. If the bulb needs to be potted, here's how:

Pot each single bulb into containers 1 inch larger than the diameter of the bulb, with no more than a third of the bulb below the soil line. The planting medium should be moist, well drained and rich in organic matter.

When the bulb is in place, press the soil firmly to get rid of air pockets. Water thoroughly at this time. Then water sparingly until the bulb appears to be in active growth, such as green

showing, then increase the watering schedule.

These beauties need as much sun as possible, and fertilization on a regular basis.

After flowering, the foliage will reach its mature size and stay that way until fall. Remove the bloom stalk to allow the bulb to store energy so they will bloom again the following year.

ROSEMARY

This year I am seeing rosemary trained in a pyramid shape.

Although they are beautiful and a rich green, I shudder to guess just how many will last more than a month or so.

Rosemary needs specific care when grown as a houseplant because it is very fussy.
Too much water will cause leaf tips to brown or entire leaves to dry and drop.
Yellowing leaves indicate a lack of fertilizer or that the plant is potbound and needs repotting.

Fertilize potted rosemary plants every three weeks with a complete fertilizer formula such as a 20-10-20, and good luck!

Marty Figley is an advanced master gardener based in Birmingham. You can leave her a message by dialing (734) 953-2047 on a touch-tone phone. Her fax number is (248) 644-1314.

The Appliance Doctor shares comments

We get lots of mail and comments from readers.

From Mrs. Behnke: I have a Magic Chef smooth top stove. It is about 9 to 10 years old.

The timer and clock on the control panel cannot be set. When I turn the little dial to set the timer, the numbers don't move, or only repeat the same numbers. The same thing happens when I use the push button to set the time. I had a reputable appliance repair company take a look at it. They quoted me a price of \$215 for repairs. I don't think so! I will live with a \$2 timer on top of the stove. Can you help?

From the Appliance Doctor: Please try going to the back of the timer assembly and spray with electronic contact cleaner.

From Mr. Presley: We recently purchased a used home which has a dishwasher. The rubber is burned off a big portion of both the upper and lower racks.

I looked at various Web sites for replacement parts and found them to be in excess of \$90 each. For that kind of money we would probably consider a totally new machine instead.

Is there some way to recoat the racks with a dishwasher-safe covering that would be much less expensive? Or is there a dishwasher junkyard where I may find used but undamaged racks?

From the Appliance Doctor: When the dish rack is made at the factory, it is steel. This is dipped into a large vat of the soft rubbery material that coats it and gives you a soft cushion in which to place the dishes.

Items placed inside a dishwasher should never have chips or cracks on edges, because they can wear off the rubber coating. Eventually you will have bare spots all the way down to the steel wire rack and this can create marks on your dishes and fine china. Local parts stores carry a dishwasher repair rack product that comes in a little bottle with an applicator. Apply this product on the damaged part of the rack. Make sure you take an emery board or a piece of fine sandpaper and clean off the area first. Wipe it clean and away you go.
Stay tuned.

Joe Gagnon can now be heard on WHJ-950 and WHYF-1270. He is a member and past president of the Society of Consumer Affairs Professionals. His phone number is (248) 455-7281.

Upper Michigan wreath making going strong

Nestled in the North Country, the art of handcrafting holiday wreaths is booming.

Whether you are in Marquette or a quaint, out-of-the-way resort area like DeTour Village, you'll find the cottage industry of wreath-making bustling with activity at this time of year.

Upper Michigan is ideally suited for the seasonal wreath-making business, says Michael Soczek of The Up North Co. in DeTour Village, a mail-order marketer of holiday wreaths.

With its vast evergreen plantations and forests, the natural

resources to make holiday wreaths, are abundant.

Holiday wreaths have a long history, dating from the ancient cultures of the Persian Empire. Originally, wreaths (or "diadems," as they were called back then) took the form of fabric headbands that were sometimes adorned with jewels.

Beginning in 776 B.C., wreaths of laurel leaves were used to crown victors of the Olympic Games.

Today, wreaths are a universal sign of hospitality.

Balsam fir is the traditional wreath-making bough used across

the north woods, Soczek said. Its abundance and flexibility to work with, coupled with its fragrant smell, make it the preferred choice among wreath makers.

Balsam boughs are trimmed from managed forests and cultured tree plantations. Trimming the boughs can improve the tree's health by making it more resistant to diseases and environmental stress.

Other popular boughs are white cedar and white pine.

Wreath making is more art than science. Once the boughs are sized properly and matched with boughs similar in color and density, they are

ready to be made into a wreath.

To make a wreath, a wire ring is placed in a simple clamping device. Then, a handful of boughs is placed in a fanned-out fashion, and a clamp is pressed to close a wire bracket against the boughs.

This process is repeated until the ring is full of fragrant boughs.

Soczek markets his wreaths under the Mackinac Holiday Wreath name for \$32.95 each, including shipping and handling.

For information on sending a Mackinac Holiday Wreath, call The Up North Co. toll-free at (888) 973-2847.

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