

Additional Plants Used for Holiday Decorations

Other plants you may wish to decorate with include:

- Southern Magnolia
- Sweet Bay
- Cat Briars
- Wild Grape vines
- The large variety of Pine Trees common to our area
- Camellias (ornamental).

For more information regarding the toxicity of plants or their protective status, please consult the websites below.

Poisonous Plants of North Carolina:

<http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/consumer/poison/poison.htm>

ASPCA-Toxic and Non-toxic Plants:

<http://www.asPCA.org/pet-care/poison-control/plants/>

United States Dept. of Agriculture Plants Database

<http://plants.usda.gov/threat.html>

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The Dos and Don'ts of Using Natural Plants for Holiday Decorations in South Mississippi

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Plants both wild and cultivated have been used for holiday decorations for centuries. However, some of our native species, such as American Holly have been so overharvested that their populations are being threatened in some areas of the country. Additionally, some plants are somewhat toxic if ingested. If you are planning on using natural plants for your decorations, here are some dos and don'ts for you to know and follow:

- DO** Make sure you know which plants you are using are toxic, and take precautions so that young children and pets cannot come in contact with them. Remember that often parts of the plants such as the berries can fall to the floor even if you have them hanging up high. Substitute cranberries for the native berries!
- DO** Mist your plants regularly to keep them from drying out .
- DON'T** Do Not Harvest any part of a species of concern such as a threatened or endangered species.
- DON'T** Do not harvest your decorating materials from public lands such as national parks, national and state forests, national wildlife refuges and reserves or state parks and preserves unless you have permission to do so.
- DO** Harvest plants or their parts in a sustainable way from private property that you have permission to do so on. Prune wisely in the wild just as you would in your own garden or orchard. Make sure that you do not cut off the growing tip of a plant. Take a little bit off one plant and move on to another so that you do not permanently harm any one plant.
- DO** Buy native living plants from your local nursery , and grow your own decorations! After the holidays, plant them in your own yard , so you won't have to harvest decorations from the wild in following years. Remember to ask if the plant you are buying is toxic .
- DON'T** Do not discard cuttings from invasive species such as the Popcorn or Chinese Tallow Tree in your yard or adjacent woods. The berries and plants of invasive species are often still viable and will sprout when the weather warms up. Dispose of these in a plastic bag in your trash can.

Selected Local Plants with Berries* Used for Holiday Decorations



Mistletoe-*Phoradendron flavescens*

This is a parasitic shrub that is often found growing in large clumps in the crowns of several varieties of local trees. These clumps are very obvious in deciduous trees after all the leaves have fallen off. Harvest it by carefully climbing up into the tree.



American Holly-*Ilex opaca*

This native tree is commonly associated with the Christmas season. This genus often has separate male and female trees. American Holly berries are found only on the female trees, so if you purchase one make sure you buy one that has berries on it, and make sure there is a male nearby.



Yaupon Holly-*Ilex vomitoria*

This holly and the related Dahoon Holly are both small-leaved native trees that have small bright red berries. These trees can be found in local pine flatwoods and other wetter habitats along the coast. The berries first turn yellow then turn red just in time for Christmas.



Eastern Red Cedar-*Juniperus virginiana*

This native evergreen tree is commonly used as a Christmas tree or to make wreaths. The small bluish "berries" are not actually berries but small cones. This species provides food and cover for numerous birds and mammals and is often used to make windbreaks.



Heavenly Bamboo-*Nandina domestica*

This plant is a rapidly spreading non-native and is often found in yards and as an escapee in the woods. The red berries grow in large attractive "clumps" that are easy to harvest and display.

*Children and pets should be kept away from the berries.