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A YEAR OF FLOWER WREATHS



Icy winter wreath

When the cold January wind is whistling and the Christmas wreaths have been tidied away, it's nice to cheer yourself up with something light and crisp, such as a wreath in icy tones. In this wreath, I have mixed white and silver with a dash of blue and purple. A few picked plants, such as dried grass and silver dust from the garden, are mixed with some bought flowers, for example blue sea holly. I let the Spanish moss hang down a little, to create a natural feel, and I leave the dried bougainvillea sticking out in this asymmetrical wreath.

LEVEL: ADVANCED

- 1 Start by wrapping a metal ring with floral tape. Secure the tape and pull it lightly so that it gets tacky and sticks to the ring. Wrap around the whole ring to prevent the flowers from sliding around.
- 2 Attach myrtle wire to the ring by wrapping it around the ring and then twisting it.
- 3 Start with the silver dust: it is soft and a bit bushy, which makes it easier to build the rest of the wreath on top of it.
- 4 Secure the silver dust in place by wrapping the myrtle wire a couple of times around the stems.
- 5 Continue placing the other materials around the wreath, wrapping them with myrtle wire. Make sure the stems of the previous bunches are covered when you place the next bunch.
- 6 Repeat around the whole wreath, alternating the materials as you go. For the wreath in the picture, I have grouped different plants together in different parts of the wreath, to give some visual variety. To make the wreath bushy, try to use materials of mixed lengths.
- 7 When you reach the end, lift the first layer of silver dust and tuck the stems under to hide them.
- 8 Turn the wreath over and cut the wire with wire cutters. Secure by 'sewing' a couple of stitches into the wrapped wire.

MATERIALS

Metal ring
Floral tape
Myrtle wire, green
Wire cutters

FLOWERS/FOLIAGE

Bougainvillea, dried
Dried butcher's broom
Hare's tail grass
Reed or dried grass
Sea holly, blue
Silver dust
Spanish moss
Wavyleaf sea lavender





FACT FILE DRYING AND PRESERVING

FLOWERS

Late summer often brings an abundance of beautiful flowers. I like to grow varieties that can be dried and preserve the flowers for autumn and winter wreaths. Many of these also retain their colour well when dried.

I pick the flowers when they are dry – as in not wet from rain or dew – often in the evening after a fine day.

It's also important to pick the flowers at the right stage; I try to pick them just as they have come out in bloom. Flowers that have been left for even a few days too long will drop their petals more easily.

Many seed pods, such as scabious, are also beautiful and will dry well.

Before I hang up flowers to dry, I pick off most of the leaves, since these rarely look nice once they've dried.

It's cool in my shed, without any direct sunlight, making it the perfect place for drying flowers. Sunlight will bleach the flowers and make them more fragile.

FRUIT

Fruit slices are beautiful in wreaths but they can also be used as decoration in other contexts: in planted pots, in garlands, on Christmas presents. They also smell lovely when dried.

Slices of apple can be dried at room temperature. I slice them thinly, remove the core and hang them on a rod or string with a bit of a gap in between. They will dry in a couple of days. If I want to speed up the process, I place the slices on a tray with baking paper and put them in the oven at 75°C for approximately 5 hours.

There is no lovelier smell than drying oranges. The smell takes me back to the Christmases of my childhood, filled with warmth and wonderful moments. I slice oranges thinly, place the slices on a rack and set the oven to 50–75°C. I then leave them in the oven until they are completely dry, which usually takes 3–5 hours. You can also dry lemons and limes the same way as oranges.

