

## Container Winter Glamour

For those who live in apartments and can only garden on a balcony, winter can seem a bit bleak without the abundance of colour in your containers. At the end of the season when a lot of gardens are being put to bed, the apartment gardeners are struggling with the question of where to store everything. It is an organizational feat to pack the containers away for the winter when the balcony space is so limited. Instead of emptying and storing the containers try adding some winter glamour to brighten them up. This can be done with any size or shape of containers, including hanging baskets. It can be done anywhere – ground level or 20 stories up, sea level or mountain top.



To add winter interest in the containers you'll need evergreen cuttings. These can be purchased or cut from the garden. I've seen pine and cedar branches for sale at my local grocers and other types of greens at the nursery. I also collected some redwood trimmings from a working landscaper. If you have access to a garden then prune anything that catches your eye. Pine, cedar, pieris, rose hips, fir, holly, silver dusty miller, fuzzy magnolia buds, bright green Mexican mock orange, blue berries of viburnums, spruce, twigs of red osier dogwood and burning bush, gold dust plant – any and all of these can be used in a containers.

After pruning the material you want use start filling in the container. If the soil is damp and lose it is easier to insert the branches. Start at the outside edge and fill in with the greens and berries. Keep filling until the soil is covered. To make the containers festive for the holiday season add some gold pinecones and ribbons, or gold glitter spray to add sparkle. I find that keeping the container moist helps it to last for about 3 month. If a branch dries out simply removed it and replaced with new.

If you don't want to use cuttings another idea is to plant a miniature evergreen, which you can also find at grocers or the nurseries. Some of these trees come already decorated as Christmas trees and they can be planted into the for the winter. Fill in the empty edges with ivy plants, pinecones or top with sphagnum moss and enjoy the holiday season.

By adding some interest to your window boxes and containers you'll be able to enjoy your garden all year long. Another idea before adding the winter glamour is to plant some bulbs at the bottom, then stuff in the greens to your hearts' content. In the spring when the bulbs begin to grow, you simply remove the cuttings and voila, your spring containers are ready to bloom.