

Plants, flowers and imagination fuel the living wreath



A little elbow grease yields a big payoff amid a living wreath's beauty.

PHOTO BY LINDA MARRONE

By LINDA MARRONE

A living wreath can be planted with almost any type of plant, succulent, herb and flower to suit the season or holiday, and the combinations of plants and decorations you can use are as endless.

From time to time, I add branches, artificial flowers, seashells and holiday decorations to my wreaths. By the end of June, I plan to add red, white and blue flowers along with small flags as a salute to the Fourth of July.

I have one wreath on my garden door, one outside my kitchen door, filled with sun-loving herbs, and another by my front door, with plants that prefer shade, such as variegated ivy, angel vine and ferns. I've had a living wreath in one form or another on my garden gate since 1999, and last month, someone decided to steal it in broad daylight. I've replaced the wreath, and my husband ingeniously secured to the gate so that it will not walk away again!

Following are ways to make your own living wreath. You can take a tour of my garden on

www.LindaMarrone.com and see some examples of my ever-changing wreaths.

Materials

- 20-inch, 2-piece coated metal, snap together wreath frame (forms are available at Green Gardens Nursery in Pacific Beach or online)
- 12 dry quarts of sphagnum moss (Approximately 3 4-inch pots of plants or flowers)
- 2-3 six-packs of plants or flowers
- Quality organic potting soil
- Peat moss
- Wire or hanging device

Step 1

Add wire or a hanging device to the center top portion of the bottom wreath frame. Soak the moss in water for a few minutes and squeeze out the excess water. Remove the top portion of the wreath frame and cover the entire bottom portion of the bottom with a thick layer of the moss.

Step 2

Mix several cups of potting soil and

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some peat moss together and add several inches of the mixture to the top of the moss. Place the top piece of the wreath frame on top and snap in place.

Step 3

Plant your 4-inch plants, placing them at each corner in a triangle design. Plants that trail, such as ivy, work well in these locations. Pack more moss around the plants, making a nest for the roots and leaving room for the smaller plants to come.

Step 4

Fill in the entire wreath with the six-pack plants or flowers, planting them very tightly together. Fill the spaces between the plants with more moss, pressing it into the wreath as tightly as you can. Lay the wreath flat and water it thoroughly. Hang your wreath on a large, sturdy hook, since it will become quite heavy.

Maintenance

The amount of water your wreath will require depends on the plants you use and its exposure to the sun. In a few weeks, fertilize your wreath lightly, as you would container plantings. Lay your wreath flat to water and fertilize. As

your plants grow, pinch them back, remove the declining plants and add new ones in their place with a little fresh moss.

Linda Marrone is a Realtor with Coldwell Banker. Stories about her historic La Jolla garden have been published in local and national magazines.



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