

Dressing the Garden

DECORATING FOR WINTER

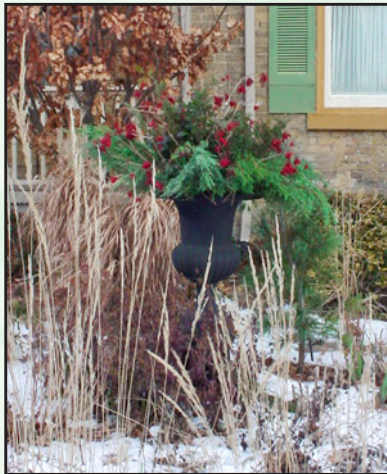
As Canadians we tend to ignore our gardens over the winter months; it is a time for rest and relaxation; where we read through the pornographic seed catalogues contemplating next year's choices. We can, however, take a different approach to this lacidasional period of lust, even though we may be reluctant to venture forth into the snow and cold, and begin to admire our well dressed gardens from the comfort of a warm room on a clear, brisk, sunny winter's day.

'Dressing The Plants', last months column, is helpful in ensuring their survivability through the winter months, but what about our garden features such as winter urns and planters? I watch in dismay as unknowing gardeners attempt to give themselves hernias each autumn as they push, pull or drag their urns and pots into isolation in the garage. I don't understand what they fear will happen, for if they had purchased a durable product it should withstand the rigors of winter quite well. An urn or a pot, as a 'garden feature' would remain in the garden the entire year. Impervious to moisture they are often cast concrete, cast iron, fiberglass, or resin; for the big budgets there is cast stone or even the genuine thing. Clay and clay based materials, often produced in South East Asia do not withstand the temperature and moisture extremes and will eventually crack and flake apart.

Urn and planters, the architectural elements or bones of the garden, act as sentinels to future spring promises. Dusted in snow they are, themselves, a focal point whose prominence is personified during the gardens darkest days. Placed at key points in the garden, they should reflect the architecture of the house and garden. Although in a single garden several different materials and styles can be combined successfully. Used as punctuation or focal points in the landscape, they are also very effective as welcoming centerpieces at the front entrance.



First layer



Adding colour



Finished urn

Garden urns and planters can be further enhanced with a little creative dressing. Using material from the garden, that would otherwise be under the cover of snow, you can seasonalize and theme your landscape.

Tips and Tricks

- When collecting material for urns always look for plants that have some degree of resilience.

- Junipers, Pine, Cedar and Spruce are ideal materials for the base layer of the planter. This can be followed by the body of the planter arrangement using branches of plants with more fullness to them. Sprigs of Holly, Boxwood and Juniper are ideal plants to add this necessary bulk.

- Once you have the base and body of the planter arrangement developed, now you can accessorize and decorate to achieve the overall theme.

- Coloured stems of Dogwood are an ideal element to gain height and airiness in the arrangement, while plants that produce berries such as Viburnum or Hawthorn are the punchy colour that enlivens the entire piece.

- Detail can be added with dry Hydrangea flower heads, stems of Stonecrop or plumes of ornamental grass.

- As a final detail add cones from pine or spruce, Norway Spruce being the best as the cones are quite long and achieve prominence in the planter.

- Themed for Christmas with a bow the arrangement should last into the early spring when pansies can be plunged, until it is warm enough for us to begin planting annuals once again.

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