

‘Tis the Season to Rethink Classic Holiday Décor

Every year, it's the same old thing: mistletoe and holly. You can thank Frank Sinatra, perhaps, for this enduring Christmas theme. Chances are good, though, that Frank wasn't much of a gardener, and even well-meaning and informed gardeners may be unaware what a nuisance these species can be during the rest of the year. Let's take a closer look at exciting alternatives to these questionable classics!

Mistletoe thrives in the southern part of the US but can be found causing trouble for foresters in states as far north as Colorado, where it climbs and can stunt the growth of (or even kill) many trees. With a truly prodigious ability to spread by climbing more vulnerable mature trees, it can shoot seeds up to 50 feet in all directions, attacking anything in its

path.

English holly, like many other Christmas traditions, came to us with European settlers from Britain and continental Europe, where much colder winter weather and other conditions keep its growth in check. Grown commercially and by gardeners for its glossy dark green leaves and startling red berries, holly may be emblematic of the season, but it threatens to crowd out native plants and doesn't provide very good food or shelter for the native wildlife that unwittingly aid its distribution.

Keep an eye out here for holly:

A small shrub that may grow into a tall, thick trunked tree with glossy dark green leaves that have sharp spines and small white flowers that produce bright red

fruits found in upland forests and the edges of wetland areas.

Help control the spread of holly:

- Avoid composting the remaining leaves and berries from yard trimmings or indoor décor – opt for tying it up in a plastic bag and sending it straight to the landfill in your weekly trash.
- Removal of holly from the landscape can be tough – try hand pulling tender young plants (relatively easy) and digging out mature stumps (much more difficult); appropriate herbicide application may be needed.

Fresh holiday décor ideas:

Why not celebrate the native bounty of Oregon this holiday season instead?

• For much the same look and feel as holly, consider bowers of **Oregon grape**.

• Replicate those bright red berries and dark green leaves with a mix of **bitter cherry and red elderberry branches with salal**.

• To replicate the look of mistletoe, consider hanging a sprig of snowberries over doorways – once people know where mistletoe gets its name (from the Anglo Saxon for 'dung on a branch'), some of the romance of the tradition may fade anyway.

This article is provided by the Tualatin Soil and Water Conservation District. For more information go to www.swcd.net.

Vernonia Lions Make Donation



Vernonia Lions Club presented a \$500 check to Vernonia Cares Food Bank for their holiday baskets. Lions Club members Randal Harvey and Wayne Marr presented the check to President of Vernonia Cares Rosie McCoy and Director Sandy Welch.

Elks Provide Children's Eye Clinic in Vernonia

The Elks Children's Eye Clinic, at OHSU provided vision screenings in Vernonia to twelve preschool children. The program's testing was held on October 14, 2013, at the Vernonia Head Start. The testing was provided for free to help detect vision disorders.

The Elks Children's Eye Clinic screened 12 children. Of those screened, 9 passed and 3 were referred to see an eye doctor for further treatment.

The Elks Children's Eye Clinic Vision Screening Program targets preschool children age 3-5 because this is the best age to detect and treat children with vision problems. Although school-based screening may be available to some of these children later, it is essential to detect a potentially blinding eye disease called amblyopia before age 7. Amblyopia, or "lazy eye" is the

most common cause of vision problems in children. Approximately 15% of children aged 3-5 have amblyopic risk factors that can threaten normal vision development.

This year, the Elks Children's Eye Clinic began using a hand held electronic photo screening system called the plusoptiX S12. To detect vision disorders, the device measures sphere, cylinder, axis, gaze, and pupil size in less than a second. Children are instantly referred by the device if their refractive measurements do not meet the referral criteria.

An important part of this program is the extensive follow up for children who do not pass the screening. Referred children are tracked to make sure that they get a complete eye exam from their local eye doctor.

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SAFE of Columbia County is in search of professionals with a heart for service to join its Board of Directors.

SAFE is the only agency of its kind, providing domestic and sexual violence response and prevention services throughout Columbia County. Volunteer directors are asked to give 6-12 hours per month to the organization, including attending a monthly board meeting. Persons with financial expertise and/or from marginalized populations are encouraged to apply.

For more information, please contact
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