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Make natural holiday decorations from plants in your garden

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 This release is online at: http://bit.ly/OSU_Gardening1506
 11-23-11

MCMINNVILLE – Look no further than your garden if you'd like to make your own holiday decorations. Intertwined organic materials such as grapevines, evergreen boughs and berries make natural-looking wreaths, swags, garlands and centerpieces.

Linda McMahan, an Oregon State University horticulturist, uses grapevines twisted to wreath shape

as the backbone of a garland. "Boughs of evergreen foliage can provide the bulk of the material," she said. "Branches of conifers such as cedar or fir, or broad-leaved evergreens like rhododendrons and camellias can provide most of the bulk."

Thin, flexible floral wire helps bind small bundles to build wreaths. You can attach the bundles to a wreath backing or bind materials together to form a swag. A mix of two or more kinds of greens may make the arrangement more attractive, McMahan said.

"Try the bluish foliage of conifers such as juniper or blue spruce, or mix several textures together, such

as a conifer and a broad-leaf evergreen," McMahan suggested. "Including leaves (fronds) of evergreen ferns can add interest and texture. The native sword fern has long elegant evergreen leaves that would be long-lasting in any arrangement."

Gardens also are great places to find embellishments for holiday decorations. Clusters of colorful berries make good accents. Try blue juniper berries or a sprig from a native snowberry. Other accents are fallen cones and interesting seed pods or fruits.

Embellish with small clusters of moss or lichen that have fallen from a tree, or a cluster of leaves that still have their fall color. Bare twigs

pruned from garden shrubs could also be used. If you plan ahead, you can have dried summer flowers such as lavender or pearly everlasting to add as accents.

For finishing touches, use colorful ribbons, clusters of fragrant cinnamon sticks, or traditional holiday decorations in your creations. Many web sources provide detailed "how-to" instructions.

Note to editors: There are two photos available for use with this story. The wreath was home-made in November with Douglas fir, camellia branches, flowers of pearly everlasting, sedum, sword fern and dwarf blue juniper. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/oregonstateuniversity/6389759023/>
 The swag was home-made in November with Douglas fir, camellia branches, flowers of pearly everlasting, sedum, sword fern, ornamental weeping cedar and berries of snowberry and native honeysuckle. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/oregonstateuniversity/6389755237/>
 The Extension Service Gardening web page, <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/community/gardening>, links to a broad spectrum of information on Oregon gardening, such as tips, monthly calendars, how-to publications, audio programs, the Master Gardener program and "Northwest Gardeners e-News."



Beef Industry Tour well received in C.O.

Fara Brummer

The Beef Industry Tour was presented from the new Open Campus building in Prineville on the evening of Dec. 8. It was very well received. Participants were from Crook, Deschutes, and Jefferson counties including Warm Springs.

The title of the workshop was "New Concepts and Sustainable Approaches on Reproductive Management and Genetics of Beef Cattle."

Like it or not, the beef industry is changing rapidly and many producers are now aware of enhanced techniques to improve their bottom line of production. In the next issues of the Spilyay, I will talk about some key concepts that were presented at the workshop.

Basic terms associated with cattle reproduction:

- Dry – a cow that is not producing milk, and therefore not supporting a calf.
- Dystocia – difficulties in the calving process.
- Infertility – the inability of a cow to get or remain pregnant.
- Open – a cow that is not pregnant.
- Parity - Number of different times a female has had offspring.

- Postpartum interval – the length of time after calving that a cow will return to a normal cycle.
- Uterine involution – the ability of the uterus to return to normal after calving.

"Basic Concepts on Cattle Reproduction and Management" was presented by Chanda Engel, of OSU Klamath Basin Research Station.

Chanda discussed factors affecting fertility following calving which are:

- 1) Possible disease;
- 2) Uterine Involution;
- 3) A less than normal estrus cycle; and,
- 4) The length of the postpartum interval, which is the single biggest factor.

What can affect no. 4? Several issues, but a common one we see is lack of proper nutrition. Research shows time and time again that a cow that is in good condition is more likely to return to a healthy cycle and be bred back compared to a cow in poor condition.

Not only quantity, but quality of feed is very important for a cow that has calved, producing milk, and attempting to be bred back, a high demand situation for the animal.

Also, discussed was the length of breeding season, which is related to the postpartum interval and the time that the bulls are allowed out with the cows. Why is this important? Buyers are looking for consistent weights in weaned calves.

This cannot be delivered if calves are being produced throughout the year and are being sold at different weights. The other reason that this is important is that restricting the time of breeding (keeping bulls in only for a short season of 2-2.5 months) will allow a producer



to identify those cows that are coming up open and cull those cows. Why cull those cows? Those cows are eating up forage that could be used to support other cows that are carrying calves in a timely fashion and adding value to your operation.

If you would like any additional information, please contact me at the Extension Office at 541-553-3238, or just stop by and visit us at the Education Building.

Breakfast pumpkin cookie recipe

Canned pumpkin is very affordable this time of year: and can be used in a variety of recipes. Try the recipe below. Our 5th grade nutrition classes love these cookies

This recipe is an excellent source of vitamin A, which is great for keeping eyes and skin healthy.

Ingredients

- ¾ cup canned pumpkin
- ¾ cup brown sugar
- 1 egg
- ¼ cup vegetable oil
- ¾ cup flour
- ½ cup raisins
- 2/3 cup whole wheat flour

- ½ cup walnuts (optional)
- 1 ½ tsp baking powder
- ¼ tsp salt
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- ½ tsp. nutmeg (optional)
- 1/8 tsp. ginger (optional)

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 400
2. Mix pumpkin, brown sugar, egg and oil thoroughly in large bowl.
3. In the same bowl add dry ingredients
4. Add raisins and nuts.(optional)
5. Stir well, drop by spoonful onto greased cookie sheet.
6. Bake for 10-12 minutes.

Science and Engineering Workshop at OSU Put a Freeze on Winter Fires

All sixth-, seventh- and eighth-grade girls and their parents, You are invited to attend a free workshop called "Discovering the Scientist Within."

This event will be held at Oregon State University on Saturday, February 18, from 8:15 a.m. – 1:15 p.m.

The morning includes fun, hands on activities, and the oppor-

tunity to meet successful woman engineers, doctors, veterinarians, research scientists, and university professors.

Field trips to science labs at OSU will introduce girls to a variety of careers in science and engineering. Parents are welcome to attend tours and/or the parent workshop which is designed to give parents tips for encouraging their daughters in

science and engineering careers.

To register, email your name and school to Sylvia Harvey at sylviaharvey@rocketmail.com. For program related information contact Sujaya Rao at 541-740-3513. Registration opens on November 15, 2011 and closes on February 10, 2012. First girls to register get first choice of tours. More information will be e-mailed after you register.

Candy Making & Gifts From a Jar

December 20th

9am - 12pm

Join us in making fun + easy treats
 Education Building-OSU Extension
 Kitchen

Everyone will take home a plate of treats, all supplies will be provided, no cost

Call to RSVP-15 Slots Available
 OSU Extension 541-553-3238



According to the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) and National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), an increase in home fires occur in the winter season. *Put a Freeze on Winter Fires* is a special initiative designed to remind individuals and communities that fire safety awareness and efforts are especially important during the winter months.

Each winter, an estimated 108,400 home fires occur in the United States, resulting in approximately 945 deaths and \$1.7 billion in property loss. Cooking is the leading cause of winter home fires followed by winter storms. Winter weather and storms results in people using alternative heating sources, such as space heaters and wood stoves. Alternative heating fires account for about one third of home heating fires and approximately 80 percent of home heating fire deaths. Unfortunately, Holiday decorations (specifically trees) play a part in these fires.

Winter fires can be prevented! The following fire safety tips can help maintain a fire-safe home this winter season:

- Stay in the kitchen when cooking on top of the stove or when grilling or broiling food.
- Keep anything that can burn (which is almost everything!) at least three feet away from space heaters, woodstoves, etc.
- Replace damaged electrical or extension cords.
- Never use the oven or stovetop to heat a home; the resulting carbon monoxide gas can kill people and pets.
- Don't put a live Christmas tree up too early or leave it up for longer than two weeks. Keep the tree stand continuously filled with water.
- Avoid using lighted candles; try flameless candles instead.