

The Poulsbo Garden Club has adopted me as an honorary member and am I ever glad. The members seem to have such fun together at their meeting the second Saturday of each month. At their May meeting Anne McKay from the Indianola Garden Club was the guest speaker. Anne showed us how to make a living wreath using sedum and sempervivum plants.

To make your own living wreaths you'll need a wreath frame. Find the kind that has a u-shaped channel, you'll need this kind because you'll be filling it with moss, potting soil, and the plants. In addition collect or buy sheets of moss. Many of us have plenty of moss in our own gardens, but if not buy it in bags at a craft or garden store. Try to find the green kind but dried golden or tan is all right too. You'll also need potting soil, some timed release fertilizer beads (10-10-10), clear fishing line and hairpins (the u-shaped kind, preferably in black or dark brown). For tools gather up fingernail clippers and a spoon or short stick.

Now you're ready to start your wreath. Place the form with the curved part down on a flat surface and the open channel facing up at you. Line the wreath frame with moss, leaving enough to fold over the top, just to the center. Fill the center with potting soil, sprinkle in a bit of fertilizer (one or two teaspoons for a twelve-inch wreath) and fold the moss over the top to cover the soil. Your wreath form will now be filled with a tube of moss enclosing the fertilized soil in between.

Next take one end of the fishing line and tie it securely to the wreath frame. Then wrap the wreath with the fishing line to hold everything together. Don't worry how messy you are in your wrapping, remember that the line is clear and will not show when you're finished with your living wreath. You'll tie the line onto the wreath at the end of wrapping and snip off excess ends of the line with fingernail clippers.

Anne brought sedum and sempervivum from her own garden. We all held a discussion about where to find these great plants this time of year. I've found an abundant crop of plants to purchase at Roadhouse Nursery on Central Valley Road in Poulsbo. I'm sure other local nurseries have them. I bought quite a few and so far I've been planting them in my garden so they can happily multiply. But that's another story. I'm on my way out soon to buy some more for the wreath I'll be making in about a week or so. I have just the place for it on our picnic table on the deck.

Anyway, you can all be resourceful and find enough sedum and sempervivum to continue your wreath project. Gather up the cute colorful, textural plants and decide which ones you want to place around your wreath. The more the merrier. Poke a hole for each plant using a stick (even a pencil or pen will work). Sometimes you'll need to dig a hole with a spoon. Insert each plant into the hole you've made. Anchor the plant with one or two hairpins. The hairpins will help hold the plants in place until their roots form and take hold of the wreath. Keep going until you've covered the wreath to your satisfaction. Remember: "There's no right or wrong in gardening." If you make a mistake you'll have lovely compost and can try planting again.

When your wreath reaches what you consider "done" soak it in water until the moss and soil are wet through. Use a large container to do this part or lay the wreath on the ground and soak it with water from your watering can or spray from a hose. Make sure the moss, soil, and plants are watered thoroughly. This will help it all hold together and the plants will be able to begin growing new roots.

You can hang the wreath on a fence, trellis, or the side of your house. But the most successful wreaths, according to Anne are the ones that lay flat on a table, bench or wall in the garden. If the hens and chicks on your wreath get flowers, cut the flowers off or the parent plant will die. If you forget and the plant dies, just remove and replace with another.

Anne told us that we can also make wreaths using ferns, primulas, violas, and small herbs (try thyme). However these wreaths require more watering than the sempervivum and sedum which only need to be watered every few weeks and barely at all in our rainy wintertime. Sempervivum and sedum grow for a long time on a wreath form, but herbs and other plants would have to be replaced frequently.

Anne learned how to make sedum/sempervivum wreaths from the Seattle Garden Club. She's been making these wreaths ever since and sharing them with her friends. The wreaths are great gifts. Thank you Anne for showing us how to make the wreaths and for letting me tell all our readers about them.

Send a S.A.S.E. and Peg will send you Anne's printed directions and plant list for the wreaths. You can email comments to gardenmentor@yahoo.com or write in care of this newspaper.