

Whether you celebrate Christmas, Hanukkah or Kwanzaa there's plenty to do at local nurseries and garden centers during this holiday season. Or if you want to escape the holiday crowds why not make a holiday wreath out of greenery you have growing in your own garden?

This weekend, Friday December 1 through Sunday December 3, take a free wreath making class at Valley Nursery on Bond Road in Poulsbo. Call 360-779-3806 to sign up for a class from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. any of these three days. Then you can go back to use their wreath machine for free. Bring your own greens or buy them from Valley Nursery by the pound. The same weekend from 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Friday and 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Saturday and Sunday is Valley's Holiday Open House with free hot cider and cookies. You'll find theme trees, gardening items for adults and kids, live and cut Christmas trees, specialty foods, Poinsettias, greens, gifts for home decorating, wreaths and swags. Receive 10 percent off on purchases of twenty-five dollars or more and free door prizes.

Theresa Dreany of Berger's Garden Center and Gifts on Adele in West Bremerton says the nursery has "custom deluxe evergreen wreaths you won't find anywhere else." Berger's offers flocking and live Christmas trees. Customers can enter a drawing for weekly prizes and be included in a grand prize drawing for a \$100 gift certificate. While you're shopping for Christmas gifts and decorations you'll also discover many winter plants for your garden. "Come in and be charmed," says Theresa.

Wendy Johnson at Bainbridge Gardens said they've instituted a "gift registry." Gardeners can write down their wishes. Santa's helpers at the nursery will offer suggestions to potential gift givers by phone. They'll wrap gifts and make free deliveries. Call the nursery at 206-842-5888 to reserve and use their free wreath-making machine. Sign up for a bow making class on December 3 or attend a talk on gifts for gardeners by Ann Lovejoy on December 9. Cynthia Herrick will show how to make rice paper gifts on December 10. December 16 you can learn how to make a tabletop fountain. This class has a fee of \$50 but you'll take home a completed fountain as a gift for yourself or someone dear.

Why not take a drive out to Seabeck? Be sure to stop at Country Nursery and Gardens. Their number is 360-478-0288. Sandy Hardisty said they have both living and cut Christmas trees (including flocked trees) plus wreaths galore. Everything in their gift shop is on sale at 40 percent off. Sandy says don't forget their "great selection of winter plants."

Now that you're inspired why not make your own wreath? You'll still have to brave the crowds to purchase a wire frame at a local craft store or nursery. Or make your own frame by making two circles (one a few inches smaller than the other) out of coat hangers. Make one frame 12 to 14 inches in diameter and the other 8 to 10 inches in diameter. Attach one frame inside the other using wire in about four places.

The only other materials required are florist wire, wire ribbon and foliage from your garden. Try fir, spruce, pine, cedar, hemlock, ivy, hydrangea, rhododendron, salal, lavender, camellia, artemesia, viburnum, pyracantha, and huckleberry (both deciduous and evergreen). Also include seedpods and dried flowers. You'll need handheld pruners for trimming the foliage and clipping wires.

Begin by gathering up a small bundle of vegetation. Using clippers trim each bundle to about six to eight inches long. A bundle could be: two cedar, one spruce, one viburnum and one ivy sprig. Use wire to wrap the bundle tightly together. Place the first bundle on the wire frame and wrap wire around the whole bundle and frame four to six times.

Continue making bundles overlapping each one as you continue around the wreath form. Vegetation will cover up the wire as you work around the form until you come back to where you began. Don't be discouraged with your first bundle or even the second or third. I had to start over several times with my first wreath. Don't forget to include bits of seedpods and dried flowers from your garden. Your completed wreath will be quite large.

To make a bow wrap ribbon into three or four loops (each inside the other). Fold these loops flat. Bend the flattened loop in half and snip a small slice into each opposite edge. Use a piece of wire and wrap several times at the bend area. Cut another length of ribbon several feet long tying it around the bent loop. Wire the bow to your wreath. Now unfold and fluff up all the loops. Viola' you're done.

*You can email comments to Peg at [gardenmentor@yahoo.com](mailto:gardenmentor@yahoo.com) or in care of this newspaper.*