

Date: December 15, 2005
Release: Home Gardening
Writer: Tony Melton, County Agent
Florence County

Magnolias- A Down Home Christmas Tradition

I love to decorate with magnolias. The elegance, the grace, and just the down home charm make magnolias, in my opinion, the decor king. Watch out Scarlet, Tara has nothing on us. First of all, don't be afraid to cut some of the branches off your magnolia. When you cut the ends of the branch next year more branches will appear and the tree just gets thicker. However, never remove all the branches or limb-up a magnolia. Magnolias are notorious at making a big mess. Leave those lower branches on the tree so that they will hide all the old leaves, seedpods, and spent flowers that fall. They will just add to the mulch under the tree and you don't have to rake constantly.

Next, I know nothing natural that last longer than magnolia leaves. Even when they are dry they still have that elegant appearance. You can, but you do not need to use oasis.

Next, wreaths, swags, garland, center pieces and etc. benefit from the magnolias lasting course texture leaves. The course leaves makes an excellent contrast between fine textured Christmas tree type foliage. Attach a back drop of magnolia leaves on the back of fine textured wreaths. Stick a magnolia limb as a filler in your Christmas tree. Pile-up some magnolia leaves, Christmas tree trimmings, and some pyracantha berries and you have a center piece. Take a wire type garland, wrap the tips around some magnolia branches and you have instant magnolia garland.

Finally, don't leave out the magnolia seed pods and flowers. The seed pods add that authentic touch. The flowers are elegant and wonderfully fragrant, but they are only summertime friends. However, you can easily add some everlasting homemade magnolia flowers. Take some twisted cream colored paper (used to be called raffia) about 1 foot long. Unravel, twist once, fluff so that it looks like a petal, gather five petals and glue in the middle. Then roll-up like a bulls eye and glue some brown twisted paper for the center and you have an everlasting magnolia flower.

To learn more about decorating, gardening and country living watch both of our Emmy Award winning T.V. programs, Making-It-Grow (MIG) and Down Home with Tony and Amanda. MIG can be seen at 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday nights on regular ETV. However, at present Down Home can only be seen on digital cable and some satellite systems on the SC Channel (channel 802 on Time Warner Cable). Also, you can view both programs on the web at www.mig.org.

The Clemson University Cooperative Extension Service offers its programs to people of all ages, regardless of race, color, gender, religion, national origin, disability, political belief, sexual orientation, marital or family status and is an equal opportunity employer.