

HOME DINING RECREATION TRAVEL COMMUNITY HEALTH STYLE

805 LIVING

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joy!



Setting



the Scene

Deck the halls—and the doors and tabletops, too—with a natural touch.

BY JOAN TAPPER PHOTOGRAPHS BY GARY MOSS



The warmth of the holiday season shines through as votives illuminate a festive table centered on a foliage runner of red cedar, *gunnii* and seeded eucalyptus, ming fern, and feather acacia. Varied napkins and floral touches individualize dramatic place settings of black dinnerware on brass chargers and gold flatware.



Cymbidium adds a bright floral element to Amy Pihlar's finished wreath (left), which began with a grapevine base and includes red cedar, juniper, princess and silver pine greens, ming fern, and other accents of nandina, broom corn, kangaroo paw, rose hips, *crocosmia* pods, and lotus pods.

OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: A hand-dyed silk ribbon accents a floral napkin ring of *scabiosa*, antique hydrangea, broom corn, acacia, red cedar, and gunnii eucalyptus. A rosy-hued cymbidium nestles among the greenery of the natural runner. On a sideboard a vintage metal dish takes on a holiday look with a filling of cranberries, but a lush arrangement of antique hydrangea, peonies, carnations, *scabiosa*, *crocosmia* pods, gunnii eucalyptus, feather acacia, broom corn, and tinted oak leaves holds the place of honor. Rose Story Farm roses in a small vase add a grace note.

and use seasonal materials." Elements gathered from the environment—pampas grass, maple leaves, berries, cedar branches, juniper branches, rose hips—lend a natural foraged feel to her work. That aesthetic fits perfectly with the trend in wedding arrangements away from ball-shaped bouquets and toward "a personal handcrafted touch," Pihlar says.

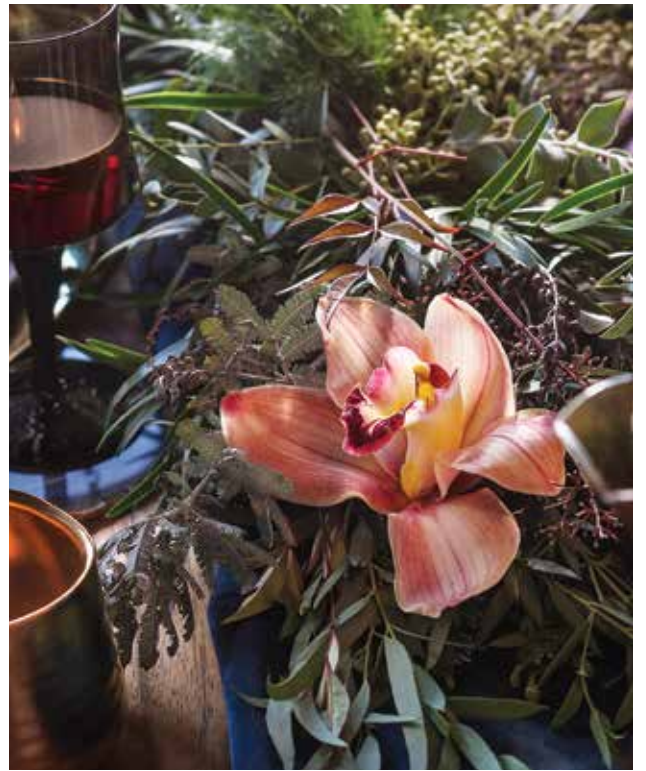
For the holidays, of course, wreaths are high on Pihlar's agenda. Often she will start with a grapevine base, then weave in moss, lotus pods, succulents, air plants, feathery thistle, even rose hips in place of traditional berries, before adding a hand-dyed ribbon. She uses similar natural elements in the holiday arrangements she creates for places elsewhere in the home, such as garlands, table runners, swags, and tabletop décor, incorporating mixed-metal containers for contrast.

And, of course, there's her family tradition to uphold. "The tree has always been a big deal in our family," she says. "My mom hangs a rich collection of ornaments, often five or six on a single branch. Now I do that with my kids." ♦

Amy Pihlar's made-to-order wreaths are available at brightinc.net/holiday. Join her at her wreath-making workshops this month in Santa Barbara on December 13 at The Mill and on December 15 at Upstairs at Pierre Lafond. Check the website for details.

WHEN AMY PIHLAR was designing clothing, a career she pursued in New York for more than a decade, she was motivated and inspired by bright colors and textures, elements she often incorporates into the floral designs that are now her focus. At the end of 2010 the Santa Barbara native had moved back to California with her family and, after recalling a long-ago stint in a florist shop, agreed to do the flowers for a friend's wedding in 2015. Buoyed by positive feedback, Pihlar launched Bright, Inc. (brightinc.net) just over a year ago and started out producing holiday floral arrangements, particularly wreaths. She has since handled the flowers for 30 weddings, designing bouquets, centerpieces, floral arches, floral installations, and more.

"I have an eclectic style," says Pihlar, "and I like to use many different textures in my work. I take things from my yard



A beautifully balanced contrast of materials makes for an eye-catching wreath: Copper refrigeration coil serves as a base for swags of gunnii and seeded eucalyptus, broom corn, crocosmia pods, tinted oak leaves, reindeer moss, and succulents, tied with a gold, hand-dyed silk ribbon.

OPPOSITE: Holiday reds and greens find a contemporary interpretation in an arrangement of peonies, garden roses, parrot tulips, carnations, ranunculus, scabiosa, crocosmia pods, ming fern, and eucalyptus.



Think Beyond *the* Wreath

Decorate for the holidays using elements from your environment and your own special touch.

1. Start with a purchased wreath and personalize it by weaving in a ribbon, berries, and other foraged items.

2. Create a garland by hand-stringing moss and pods with copper wire. Weave in some fairy lights to make the garland glow.

3. For the tabletop, find a few interesting, mismatched bud

vases, insert a flower in each, and place them together, perhaps adding a candle or two to the mix.

4. Make a swag by collecting and wiring together branches of three plants—for example, citrus, eucalyptus, and bay leaf, all of which smell wonderful. Add a silk ribbon for a finishing touch.

5. Fill a beautiful bowl, something as simple as a hand-molded ceramic piece, with cranberries, pomegranates, or persimmons for a colorful, festive look.

RESOURCES

Otis and Pearl (otisandpearl.com) furnished the tabletop items, including glassware, plates, chargers, pitcher, candlesticks, and trays. With a low \$125 minimum, the vintage décor and tableware rental company is a great way to garner supplies for home holiday parties.

The Mill (themillsb.com) provided linens and other tabletop items, including the black dinnerwear.

Rose Story Farm (rosetoryfarm.com) provided the roses in the floral arrangements.

La Tavola (latavolalinen.com) supplied the napkins and table runner.

Photographs for this article were shot on location at The Mill in Santa Barbara.

