

# WINTER- FRESH SURPRISES

*for your holiday table*



As the temperatures drop outside, warm up your creativity inside. Two Milwaukee experts offer advice on fresh floral arrangements and table setting ideas. There's more to work with than you might think.

**FRESH FLOWER ARRANGEMENTS** at this time of year offer a classy contrast to wintry weather. Making your own gives you a chance to play with colors and textures—and find a surprising array of fresh materials. Hydrangeas, lilies, curly willow, chinagrass, hypericum berries or ever-popular roses are a mouse-click away on the Internet or as close as your local florist.

For design pointers, we turned to Michael Gaffney, owner of Tulipomania European Flower Market and the Milwaukee School of Flower Design, to explain a few simple techniques, including pavé (pronounced pah-VAY) and zoning. Pavé is a jeweler's term and describes a close-together, cobblestone effect designed to hide a metal base. Floral designers use the concept to divide arrangements into sections; each boasts distinct colors and textures. Zoning groups similar colors or types of flowers in vases.

Michael frequently works with Dana Golubeff, display designer and linen buyer for George Watts and Son, a 135-year-old department store in Milwaukee. Her tabletop tips are on page xx.

## ORANGE YOU GLAD IT'S CHRISTMAS

The 11-inch-tall main arrangement uses a pavé technique (see story, left). Place floral foam in a silver vase, then set peach 'Tropical Amazon' roses head-to-head like jewels in a tennis bracelet around a silver ornament. Fill the edges with ivy, Fraser fir and hypericum. The small arrangements represent a zoning technique. Michael grouped flowers in similar but non-matching holders. The short silver vases hold alstroemeria and 'Candida' floribunda roses in the same peach hues.



## Design ideas from a pro

Even novices can create fresh arrangements, designer Michael Gaffney says. Here's how to get started:

**BEGIN WITH A COLOR PALETTE** For Christmas, you may want traditional variations of red and green (think roses and evergreens) or white, such as lilies and tulips. But don't be afraid of something different, such as peach-colored roses and chartreuse hypericum berries.

**CHOOSE FROM A LARGE SELECTION** You can order almost any type of flower from a floral shop or online vendors (see our buying guide on page xxx for sources). Look in your own yard for fresh evergreens and holly to snip as filler greenery, Michael says.

### PLAN A FOCAL POINT

Flower design is based on how the human eye works, Michael says. Look for something your eye can focus on. An element that is heavier, more pronounced or darker goes in the center.

### DETERMINE YOUR SCALE

Decide the height and width you want your arrangement to be (low? tall? wide? narrow?), then fill that space with flowers. It sounds almost too easy, but this tip helps you select a container and determine the look.

### MAKE FLOWERS LAST LONGER

A cut flower starts to deteriorate in two ways: surface evaporation and bacteria in the water, Michael says. To combat the first problem, spray the arrangement with a preservative such as Clear Crowning Glory to seal the surface. To prevent bacteria, make a fresh stem cut and let your flowers take up water for about 12 hours before adding a preservative to the water. (Small grains in the preservative can block the flower pores if you add it first.)

### ZEN PAVÉ ROSES

(Below) Fifteen red 'Charlotte' roses set close to each other in a rectangle demonstrate the pavé technique. English ivy and assorted evergreens, including juniper, Fraser fir and cedar, surround them. To make it, find a short, rectangular container, cut a piece of rigid floral foam to fit inside, then soak the foam with water. Use a dowel or pencil to poke holes in the foam if the stems of your flowers aren't rigid enough to do the job. Place one rose head in the center of the arrangement, then work out from there until you have a rectangle of three roses across and five down. Fill the edges with evergreens and ivy.



## IT'S EASY BEING GREEN

For an urban, single-color look, use a nontraditional hue such as lime green for your tabletop design.

Michael filled a ceramic square container with floral foam, then added hydrangeas, hypericum, artichokes, limes (first insert floral picks), magnolia leaves, seeded eucalyptus, Bells of Ireland, pine, cedar, Fraser fir, chinagrass and 'Casa Blanca' lily buds.

## Tabletop tips

Dana Golubeff has thousands of items to help create the George Watts & Son display tabletops, but her ideas work just as well at your house.

**MIX AND LAYER DIFFERENT PATTERNS** "I mix a lot of expensive pieces with inexpensive items on a table, such

as little vases or napkin rings," Dana says. "I will use all the same style of water glasses, but I may add a different style of champagne flute, or add a colored goblet, or chargers, or a service plate." She also layers china styles to give her settings more depth. "It's fine to mix silver and gold," Dana says. "I like to mix shapes of plates and bowls, such as square plates on round." For layering, Dana also likes Annieglass, a dishwasher-safe pressed glass with either gold or platinum rims.

## CHOOSE A COLOR THEME

"Christmas can be hard to change out because of the tradition of using red and green, but you can vary the shades, such as burgundy with lime," Dana says.

## SWITCH GEARS FOR A FRESH LOOK

Each year, try a few inexpensive ways to change your table's look. Use different tablecloths, napkins, place-card holders or individual salt-and-pepper shakers at each place setting.

## ADD SOME FUN TOUCHES

Decorate individual place settings with ornaments that can double as take-home gifts for your guests.





### TOPIARY LILIES

(Above, left) Begin with long-stemmed 'Casa Blanca' lilies. Strip the leaves off the stems, tie the stems together and push them into floral foam inside a 7-inch-tall silver urn. Our design is 32 inches tall. Lilies usually last about two weeks from bud to bloom.

### FLOWERING MARTINI

(Above, right) Remove the metal hook holder from an ornament and fill the small opening with bits of flowers or evergreens, such as cedar, hypericum, seeded eucalyptus and paperwhites. You can add water, or simply allow the flowers to wilt. Any ornament will do, but a simple one in white or silver will be a pretty foil for any flowers you choose.

### ORNAMENT-AL

(Right) Fast. Easy. Effective. Fill a martini glass with 1-inch holiday balls for a festive look. You can give them to your guests as party favors at the end of the evening.

### CURLY WILLOW

(See photo, page xx) Cut a block of floral foam to fill a rectangular tray. Measure the three square votive holders set side by side, then hollow out the foam to accommodate them. Insert twigs of curly willow cut as high as you'd like them (they're about 2 feet tall here) around the candle holders. Then cover the foam with paperwhites, 'Casa Blanca' lily buds, red 'Charlotte' roses, Fraser fir and hypericum. ■  
Stylist: Sue Ellibee  
For resources, see page xxx.

