

Add a natural touch

Whether you're creating a present for a friend or looking for decorations for the home, you'll find natural, festive inspiration in your garden or local woods



The early morning frost has disappeared and the forest releases a soft smell of soil and pine. Maybe you'll come across some holly, ivy and a cone or two. The forest has long since finished its Christmas preparations, but this is the perfect time to begin yours.



Majestic cones

(above) Cones from the cedar tree have a peculiarly dense structure, so they look stunning on a mantelpiece or on the Christmas table, particularly if they're given a light touch of gold or silver spray.

Frosted fruits

(right) Create an elegant table centrepiece with these sugared fresh fruits. Select a variety of fruits in different colours, lightly beat the egg whites from one to two large eggs and brush over the fruit. Then, holding the larger fruits by their stalks, with smaller fruits fixed onto a skewer, dust thoroughly with caster sugar. Leave the fruits to dry on sugar-covered greaseproof paper or allow them to dry on the skewers. Don't touch the fruits themselves as finger marks will show. Enjoy as a sweet treat or as decoration.



Rose cornet

(left) Your children can help make this elegant tree decoration. For the cornet, use stiff card, white paper, white velvet, silk ribbon, dried rosebuds, spray glue and PVA glue.

Make a cornet out of stiff card, spray the outside with glue and cover with white velvet. Glue a silk ribbon handle onto the inside. Make a slightly smaller inner cone from the paper. Insert into the cornet. Place a row of dried rosebuds between the inner and outer cones and glue roses and cones into place. Glue a silk ribbon to the rim of the cornet.

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A blanket of heavy mist covers the landscape and for a fleeting moment the world is entirely your own.



Ice hearts on trees

(above) Make some ice art for decorating outdoor trees. Fill heart- or star-shaped ice-cube trays with water and perhaps a few drops of food colouring. To make the handles, cut 25cm lengths of thin wire, bend them in half and immerse the ends in the water for each shape. Freeze. Once they're ready, hang the ice hearts on branches outside a window.

Bark books from the garden

(right) Personalise a sketchbook or notebook with a textured bark pattern. Take a close-up picture of some tree bark and upload it to the computer. Use its natural colours and convert the image to grey tones.

Enlarging the bark can create interesting graphic effects.

Cover a notebook by printing the design onto a T-shirt transfer sheet.

Iron onto pale fabric. Cut the fabric slightly larger than the book, spray the unprinted side with spray adhesive, then place the fabric glue-side down over the cover of the notebook. Fold over the raw edges and glue them onto the inside of the covers.



Frozen stars

(above) In the early morning frost, the *Phlomis italica* looks like nature's own Christmas decorations. In summer, small pink flowers shoot up between the woolly leaves, but now it looks for all the world like a frozen star.

Festooned with holly

This garland would look just as dramatic framing the doorway of a more modest family home. Cut bunches of 25cm-long fir sprigs. Take a long rope, hold one bunch against it at a time and secure at each end with green wire. Continue until the entire rope is covered, then add holly and lights.



READER OFFER

All pictures and words taken from *Seasons: An Inspirational Journey*, by Mette Ahlefeldt-Laurvig (£27, Lime Walk Press). House Beautiful readers can buy it at the special price of £24, with free p&p by calling 0845 458 9910 and quoting code HB1. [HB](#)