

Brotherhood of Crabbers / Napa Quake / The Green Center's Visionary

sonoma

The Heart of Wine Country

Happy Holidays
Our favorite time of year


WINE COUNTRY WAYS
24
TO CELEBRATE p.110



NOV/DEC 2014 \$4.95



sonomamag.com



wreaths

Perfect for Every Season

Farm-to-door wreaths
a Wine Country tradition

by LAURIE McANDISH KING
photography by REBECCA CHOTKOWSKI

A wreath of olive branches and nigella seed pods from Dragonfly Farms.

SEASONAL FALL AND WINTER wreaths made from local materials are a time-honored way to welcome visitors to our homes. Ancient Egyptians, Persians, Chinese and Hebrews all made wreaths, which were usually associated with the changing seasons. Harvest wreaths have been common for centuries in many European cultures, first as a superstitious protection against crop failure and later as the happy symbol of a plentiful harvest.

Sonoma is a wreath-making cornucopia, overflowing with everything from corn husks, curly willow and catkins to manzanita branches, mustard and magnolia leaves.

On the outskirts of Glen Ellen, a single wreath hanging near the entrance to a three-story red barn welcomes visitors to Oak Hill

place
wreaths.



Farm. Made of native greasewood grown on-site and naturally adorned with moss and lichen, it is a mere hint of the bounty inside: seasonal heirloom vegetables, bouquets of flowers, local artisanal goods and more wreaths — a lot more wreaths.

A purple cirlet of lush statice looks like soft velvet, and an airy ring fashioned from textural dried mustard embodies understated elegance. The kitchen wreath is a customer favorite, a handsome mix of bay, yarrow and safflower accented with dried peppers, garlic bulbs, pennyroyal, Thai basil and oregano.

As the founding property of the Sonoma Land Trust, Oak Hill Farm epitomizes local bounty. The farm, which shares space with native oak woodlands and abundant wildlife, is home to a sustainable agricultural practice that produces more than 200 varieties of fruits, vegetables, flowers, perennial greenery and herbs.

Depending on the time of year, one might find a “fall abundance” wreath combining gomphrena, marigold, safflower blossoms, yarrow, straw flowers, statice and corn tas-



[clockwise from left] Oak Hill Farm's “fall abundance” wreath captures the colors of the season. Mustard, statice and asparagus dry in the rafters of the Red Barn at Oak Hill Farm. Jesus “Chuy” Soto fashions a wreath from dried mustard. Oak Hill Farm's colorful kitchen wreath — loaded with bay leaves, safflower, yarrow, dried peppers, garlic bulbs, pennyroyal, Thai basil and oregano — is one of its best-sellers.

sels. Closer to Christmastime, look for Oak Hill Farm's popular holiday wreath of spiral eucalyptus, bay leaves, chiles and whatever else is growing on the gentle slopes of the Mayacamas Mountains. Jesus “Chuy” Soto, Oak Hill Farm's head flower grower and wreath maker, points out that sometimes only two or three wreaths are made with the same components — it just depends on what's available at the time.

In Healdsburg, Dragonfly Floral specializes in uncontrived arrangements made with natural materials. The quaint farmstand, housed in a weathered wooden building enlivened



place
wreaths.



with bright, persimmon-colored trim, sits on the edge of a floral wonderland. Acres of roses, dahlias, sunflowers and other seasonal beauties make up a diverse organic garden stretching from Dragonfly's intimate picnic area to the horizon.

Over the last 20 or so years, co-owner and master designer Bonnie Z has built a beautiful space where locals enjoy floral design classes and wreath-making workshops, including private sessions. She said wreath-making has proved to be an enjoyable social activity for everyone from burly grapegrowers to groups of girlfriends who have met at Dragonfly over cookies and wine for more than a decade.

Inside the flower shop, you might find wreaths sporting seed pods, eucalyptus or dried yellow chiles. Vegetation as varied as sunflowers, autumn leaves, moss, pomegranates, willow catkins, dried citrus slices and the lively yellow globes of Billy buttons also make eye-catching arrangements.

Heather Frye, who crafts wreaths alongside several floral artists at Dragonfly, was trained as a sculptor and jeweler and has been honing her eye for color, texture and contrast for years. One of her favorite pieces is a wreath made from barbed wire in the form of a peace sign. It hangs in a local yoga studio, but comes home to Dragonfly every few months to be "refreshed."



[above from left] A wreath of safflower, myrtle and yellow willow. A seeded eucalyptus wreath stands out against a persimmon-colored door. Roscoe the cat relaxes in the midst of the wreath-making activity at Dragonfly Floral. [at left] Heather Frye works on a fresh boxwood wreath. [below left to right] A classic wreath of bay leaf, leucadendron and safflower. A hickory-branch wreath is studded with rose hips for a festive holiday look.



place
wreaths.



MAKE IT YOUR OWN

Prefer the do-it-yourself approach? It's easy to locate wreath-making instructions online, and you may find all the decorations you need in your own backyard. Classes, both public and private, are offered by the following businesses:

Dragonfly Floral
425 Westside Road, Healdsburg,
707-433-3739, dragonflyhealdsburg.com

Sonoma Ecology Center
20 E. Spain St., Sonoma, 707-996-0712, sonomaecologycenter.org

Wildwood Farm
10300 Sonoma Highway, Kenwood,
707-833-1161, wildwoodmaples.com

