

Winter containers add colour

Carla Keast

AROUND THE YARD

Let's start with the dead stuff — 'cause for the wintertime container, it's all dead stuff.

One or two thrillers, a few fillers, and some spillers works for summer, fall, and winter containers. But for winter, aim for bold and simple, as nobody stops in the cold to linger over container details.

Select a pot that will withstand freezing temperatures. Also keep in mind that the pot itself makes a contribution to the composition. A deep coloured green or burgundy serves as a nice backdrop; a stately classic urn adds formality.

If there is soil in the pot from summer plantings, it can be used to anchor the material. Make sure it's thawed out and all the spent plants removed. Soil topped up to the edge of the pot and mounded up in the middle will give the best support. Insert the material deep into the soil to secure it. Cones and other small items can be attached using wire or a glue gun. Alternatively, a block of floral foam works well.

Once outside, the entire container is going to freeze into place.

Branches cut from live plants will last longest if located out of direct sunlight.

Thrillers, the tall eye-catching stuff, include bright coloured branches, such as red or yellowtwig dogwood, and berry-laden branches of mountain ash or crab apples. Branches with striking shapes or textures, such as



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Keep things simple yet bold when it comes to designing winter planters for your home.

birch tree branches, bamboo, or any curly twisting branches also make for good thrillers.

Fillers fill space between the bottom one or two-thirds of the thriller and the top of the pot and can be simply evergreen branches. If the thriller is really striking, one or two kinds of evergreen branches may be all that's needed. If the filler needs some flair of its own, berry-laden branches, a bunch of oversized pine cones, dried seed heads or pods, or some faux fruit or berries are all good choices.

The spiller simply ties the

composition to the container. Evergreen branches will do the trick. For a splash of fun, weave in a few berries or twisty branches.

Keep it bold and simple by adding some colour or textural contrasts to each layer. Birch branches stand solid and confident when paired with the lacy branches of a cedar. Red berries pop with a green fir behind them.

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