

PINE CONE WREATH

(*Pinus elliottii*)
for the
Farmer Florist



MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY™
EXTENSION

Pine cones are abundant in Mississippi and, for this reason, may be overlooked as floral design material. However, the cones produced by adult slash pine (*Pinus elliottii*) trees have unique patterns and texture and are

great to use in fall and holiday decorations. Many south Mississippi farms have some slash pine trees, and flower farmers should consider value-added products using their cones.

PRODUCTION

Slash pines have a broad range but are best grown in sandy, subtropical forests. They do not tolerate extreme cold and are especially sensitive to ice damage. Slash pines can grow across a large range of soil types but prefer sites with high soil moisture, typically near bodies of water. They are great for coastal communities because of their tolerance to saltwater intrusion.

Slash pines grow at a relatively fast rate, attaining about 14 to 24 inches of growth per year. They reach heights of 75 to 100 feet at biological maturity.

In the landscape, slash pine trees are generally planted in spring, when seedlings are easily found at greenhouses and nurseries. Reforestation occurs in the winter with bare-root or containerized seedlings. Growing slash pine trees isn't difficult, as this is a hardy species. Avoid high

pH levels and make sure they get plenty of sun (about 4 hours per day) to ensure success.

Fertilize newly planted trees using a slow-release, general-purpose fertilizer that won't burn the sensitive roots. A regular, balanced fertilizer with an NPK ratio of 10-10-10 is fine once the trees are a couple of years old. Slash pine trees also benefit from a layer of mulch around the base, which keeps weeds in check and helps keep the soil evenly moist. Replace mulch as it deteriorates or blows away.

Slash pine needles may be 5 to 11 inches long. Cones measure 3 to 6 inches long and are made up of thin scales that are glossy and reddish-brown. Be warned: slash pine is the most susceptible pine tree to fusiform rust, a fungus that can prove fatal to the tree.

HARVEST AND HANDLING

Collect pine cones as they fall from trees throughout the year. Select cones that are a rich brown color with open scales. Shake or tap the cones on a hard surface to release loose seeds. Avoid slash cones that have turned gray and brittle as well as those chopped by mowers. Store cones in boxes or baskets where they can remain dry. There is no need to use pesticides on cones that have been stored dry because any moisture source needed by insects is eliminated.

PINE CONE WREATH

The wreath shown in this publication was made with 92 slash pine cones individually wired to an 18-inch wire wreath frame. We used paper-covered wire cut into 20-inch lengths, but 22- to 26-gauge florist wire will also work. Bind the cone with wire at its halfway point, leaving two equal-length arms of wire remaining. Then, bring these arms around the wreath framework and tightly bind them together so that each cone is firmly attached.

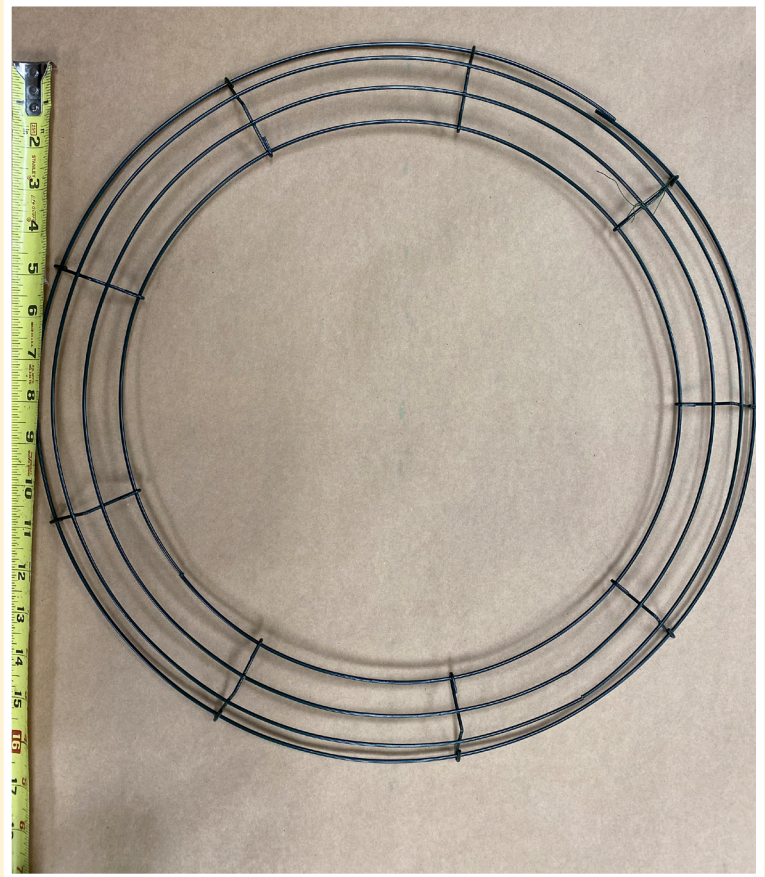
It is best to assemble this wreath in stages: wire all of the pine cones first, and then bind them to the wreath frame. This wreath has an outside diameter of 22 inches and weighs between 4½ and 5 pounds.

Our survey found that consumers like this design, rating it 5.5 out of 7 points, and are willing to pay about \$30 for it.

If pine cones are plentiful, the cost of this wreath is negligible. It does take over an hour to create it, with most time spent wiring individual cones.

This a viable product for Christmas tree farms. Because pine cones are so durable, you can make wreaths during slow times of the season to sell during the holiday season. It is best to make wreaths before Thanksgiving because you may have little time to devote to wreathmaking once the busy season begins.

Display a sample wreath and remember to add a price tag to the design. Charge a profitable retail price because many customers are willing to pay for this decoration. Check online retailers to learn how much other designers and producers charge for this and similar products.



Wire wreath forms are available at floral wholesale supply companies and craft stores.



Wire each cone individually, then attach them to the wreath form.



Display a sample wreath and add a price tag to it. Customers are willing to pay about \$30 for this design.

The Southern Christmas Tree Association (Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi) assists growers in the production and marketing of high quality, real Christmas trees for consumers. For more information, visit <http://www.southernchristmastrees.org/>.

REFERENCES

Posadas, B. C., and J. Del Prince. 2019. Consumer Preferences and Willingness to Pay for Wreath Designs. Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station Bulletin 1227, Mississippi State, Mississippi.



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