

Lantern and Evergreens Holiday  
**CENTERPIECE**



MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY™  
EXTENSION

Natural, fresh evergreens make the best holiday decorations, and Mississippi's lush landscapes provide a wide variety that can be used in floral design. Your home garden and garden center are ideal starting places for this exceptional centerpiece that can also be used to adorn a kitchen island or sofa table in your home, or a focal area in your church or business.

Professional florists can create dozens of these designs at a time and successfully refrigerate them for weeks until delivery. This arrangement has the potential to be displayed for months if cared for properly. Considering the small number of supplies it takes to complete the design, this charming arrangement is a classic for the holiday season.

Mississippi is a big, green garden! The following beautiful plant materials flourish in our state and are recommended for floral design:

Arborvitae	<i>Thuja occidentalis</i>
Aspidistra	<i>Aspidistra elatior</i>
Boxwood	<i>Buxus</i> sp.
Camellia	<i>Camellia</i> sp.
Cedar	<i>Juniperus virginiana</i>
Holly	<i>Ilex</i> sp.
Juniper	<i>Cedrus</i> sp.
Leyland cypress	× <i>Cupressocyparis leylandii</i>
Magnolia	<i>Magnolia grandiflora</i>
Little Gem magnolia	<i>Magnolia grandiflora</i> 'Little Gem'
Pine	<i>Pinus</i> spp.
Pittosporum	<i>Pittosporum tobira</i>
Smilax	<i>Smilax</i> spp.
Southern wax myrtle	<i>Myrica cerifera</i>
Sweet olive	<i>Osmanthus fragrans</i>

Commercial outlets, including lawn and garden stores and Christmas tree farms, sell cut foliage by the type or in mixed bunches.

They may offer these evergreens as well as others:

Douglas fir	<i>Pseudotsuga menziesii</i>
Fraser fir	<i>Abies fraseri</i>
Noble fir	<i>Abies procera</i>
Virginia pine	<i>Pinus virginiana</i>
White pine	<i>Pinus strobus</i>

## Step 1: Gather Materials

Gather the materials needed for the design. A variety of at least three different types of foliage will provide a harmonious arrangement.

#40 red ribbon, approximately 3 inches wide, about 2 yards	Pruning shears
12- to 18-inch-tall lantern	Ribbon scissors
9- to 12-inch-wide plastic tray	Vinyl sheeting
Artificial berry spray	Waterproof tape
Fresh flower foam	Wired wooden picks
Pillar candle, traditional burning or battery-operated, proportionate to lantern	A variety of cut greenery



## Step 2: Prepare Ribbon Accents



First, cut the ribbon into three 24-inch lengths.



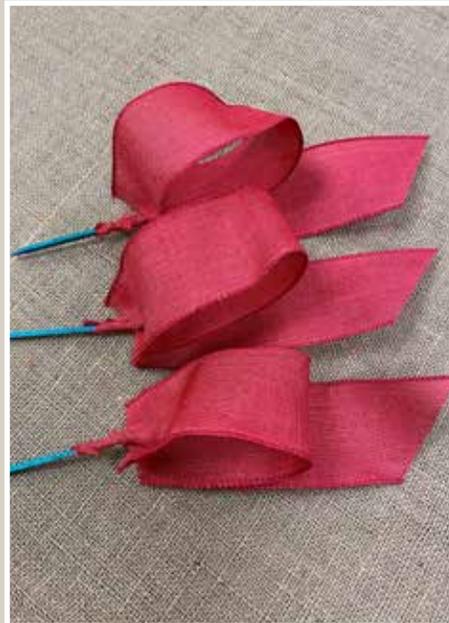
Fold the ribbon so that it follows an S shape.



Cut the ribbon at the end of the S where the curve and an end meet, making two notches on the sides.



Use a wired wood pick to hold this notched area tightly in place.



Create three of these looped ribbon accents.

### Step 3: Prepare Floral Foam and Container



Next, cut a dry brick of fresh flower foam to the right size for the plate. This example needed approximately two-thirds of the original brick size. Free-float soak the brick in water.



Do not force the brick below the water line. It takes the foam less than 1 minute to fully hydrate.



When it has taken up the maximum amount of water, it will float just beneath the surface of the water. Note: The depth of the water must be greater than the height of the foam. Otherwise, the foam may not fully hydrate, and pockets of air may remain inside the brick.



Place the soaked foam on the plate, and then add a layer of vinyl film over the top of the foam. This layer keeps the metal lantern base from rusting. We used plastic shelf liner. Using waterproof tape, adhere the foam/vinyl unit to the plate, bringing the tape all the way around the container in a crisscross pattern.

## Step 4: Place the Greenery



Make the first three placements in a triangular pattern.

- The placements should be impaled at least 1 inch in the foam.
- The stems should be touching the rim of the container.
- The foliage should gently rest on the tabletop.



Add more foliage at this level, resting on the rim of the container and touching the tabletop.



Broad aspidistra foliage quickly fills in a design but can be too large. Curl the leaf over itself and use its stem to pierce through the leaf blade. Next, insert the stem so that at least 1 inch of the stem is within the foam.



Continue making placements in order to achieve a circle of greenery, concentrating on the base of the foam and covering the plate.



Add more foliage toward the upper edge of the brick. These placements should be shorter in length than the longer, initial placements. The greenery portion of the design should taper in a mound shape.

## Step 5: Add Decorations



Add the ribbon loops in a triangular pattern.



Cut a stem of berries into three separate placements and add in a triangular pattern between the ribbon loops.



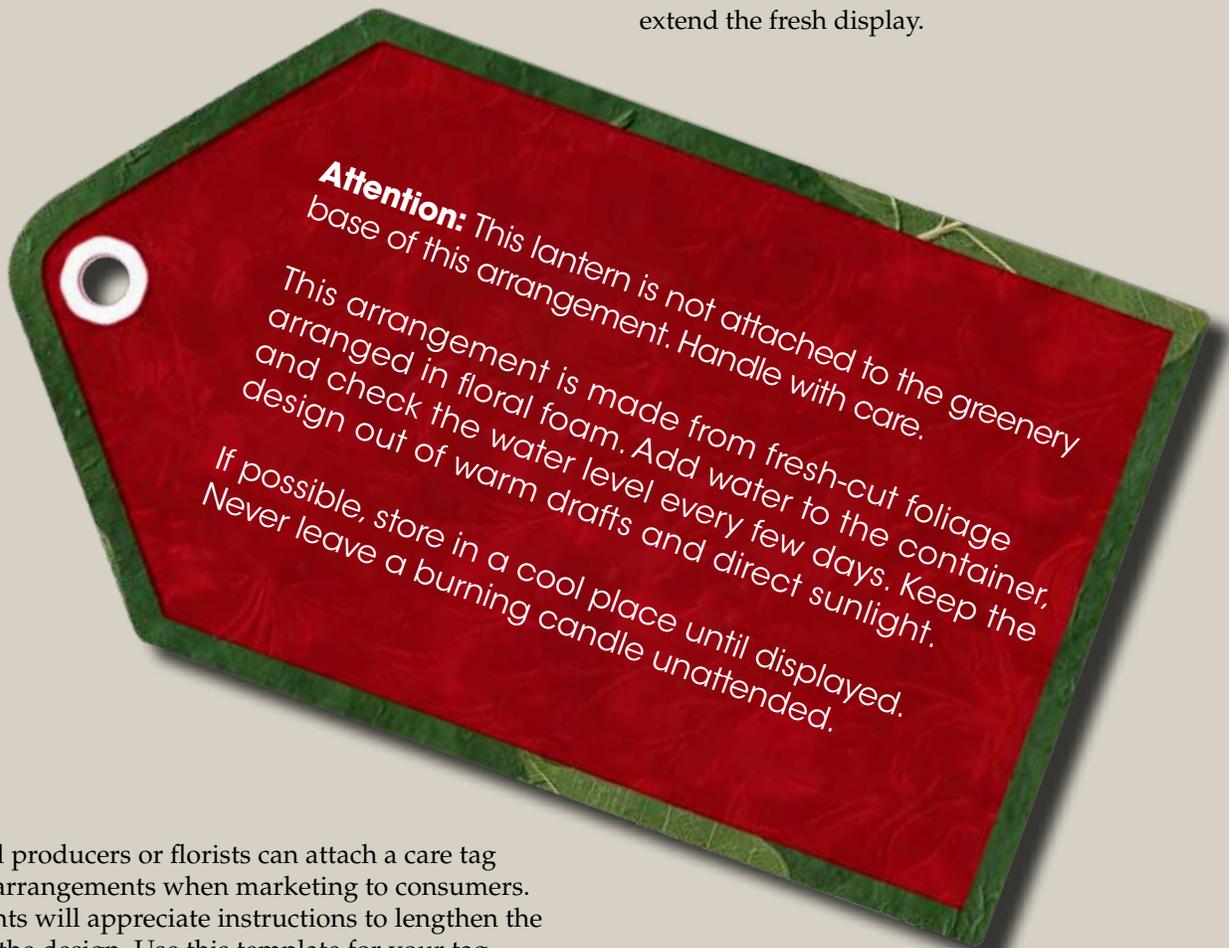
## Step 6: Add Water and Enjoy



Set the lantern on top of the vinyl sheet. If any foam is showing, add very short stems of greenery. Keep in mind that the sides of the lantern should not be obscured by greenery.



When finished, remember to add water to the container because the fresh-cut foliage will drink it up very quickly. You can keep the centerpiece in an unheated garage or covered porch overnight to extend the fresh display.



Commercial producers or florists can attach a care tag to finished arrangements when marketing to consumers. Gift recipients will appreciate instructions to lengthen the life span of the design. Use this template for your tag.



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