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## A magical time to visit best-loved gardens

By [Joel M. Lerner](#)

Saturday, December 5, 2009

The holidays bring out the best at the Washington region's most beloved gardens, many of which offer special programs and displays through December. Here's a list of some of my favorite upcoming events, many of which are free. Be sure to call ahead to make sure there's no required pre-registration.

### The District

**Evergreens 101.** (Daily through Dec. 31.) A display of the area's nine species of popular cut trees accompanied by text explaining which ones last the longest, smell the best and make for easy decorating. 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m. U.S. National Arboretum, 3501 New York Ave. NE, [http://www.usna.usda.gov](#).

**Holiday Magic.** (Daily through Jan. 10.) Explore the National Mall in miniature and see displays made from plant-based materials, including an enchanted storybook garden with Snow White's cottage and the Owl and the Pussycat's pea green boat. 10 a.m.-5 p.m. U.S. Botanic Garden, 100 Maryland Ave. SW, [http://www.usbg.gov](#).

**Holiday music.** (Tuesdays and Thursdays through Dec. 29.) The U.S. Botanic Garden will stay open until 8 p.m. and feature live performances of seasonal music.

**Wreath workshop.** (Dec. 5) Learn about the Hillwood Estate's holiday decorations on a short outdoor walk with horticulturalist Bill Johnson, then create your own wreath. Supplies are provided. Classes are limited to 15 people. \$50. Registration required. From 10 a.m.-12:30 p.m. and 2-4:30 p.m. Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens, 4155 Linnean Ave. NW, [http://www.hillwoodmuseum.org](#).

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**Wreath workshops.** (Dec. 5 and 11) Use cedar boughs, magnolia leaves, holly, pinecones and boxwood to build your own wreath at Tudor Place in Georgetown. All materials provided. 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. on Dec. 5; 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. on Dec. 11. \$35. Registration required. Tudor Place Historic House and Garden, 1644 31st St. NW, [http://www.tudorplace.org](#).

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*Winter Silhouettes exhibit.* (Dec. 5 - 20)

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Winter is the best time to enjoy the art of bonsai by observing the "bare bones" of the trees. The trees on exhibit are from the National Arboretum's permanent collection. 10 a.m.-4 p.m. National Bonsai & Penjing Museum, Special Exhibits Wing, U.S. National Arboretum.

*Holiday wreath class.* (Dec. 12) Create a beautiful and fragrant wreath with a mix of evergreens, cones and ribbon. Bring special ornaments and pruners.

All other materials provided. 10:30

a.m.-12:30 p.m. and 1:30-3:30 p.m. \$40. Pre-registration required. U.S. Botanic Garden.

*Invasive plant removal.* (Dec. 12) Sponsored by the Anacostia Watershed Society. Conservation biologist Jorge Bogantes Montero will lead the group. 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Meet at Fort Dupont Park. For directions to restoration event or more information, call

 **301-699-6204**, or e-mail [info@anacostiaws.org](mailto:info@anacostiaws.org).

*Serene Sunday.* (Dec. 27) Stroll through the gardens and enjoy the estate's holiday decorations. 1-5 p.m. Hillwood.

## Maryland

*Garden of Lights.* (Through Jan. 3) Brookside Gardens has more than 900,000 lights arranged in imaginative displays representing the four seasons, with designs including giant sunflowers, autumn leaves, snowflakes and geese. 5:30-9 p.m. The event includes musical performances nightly in the visitors center from 6:30 to 8 p.m. Weekdays, \$15 per car (cash only), Friday-Sunday \$20. Brookside Gardens, 1800 Glenallan Ave., Wheaton,

 **301-962-1400**, <http://www.brooksidegardens.org>.

*Beginner bird walks.* (Saturdays) Sponsored by the Audubon Naturalist Society.

Approximately one hour. Bring binoculars or use theirs. Meet in front of Sanctuary Shop at 8 a.m. Audubon Naturalist Society Woodend Sanctuary, 8940 Jones Mill Rd., Chevy Chase,

 **301-652-9188**, <http://www.audubonnaturalist.org>.

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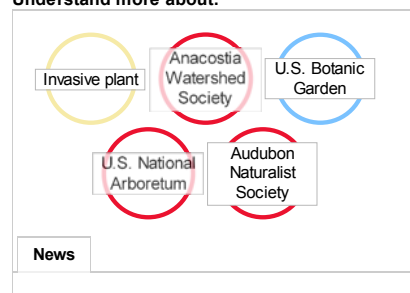
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*Conservatory Winter Display and Train Exhibit.* (Through Jan 3) The Washington, Virginia & Maryland Garden Railroad Society returns to Brookside Gardens with a "G" scale train exhibit inside the conservatory. Trains weave around evergreens, poinsettias, salvias, and other flowering plants as they travel through model towns and countryside landscapes. 10 a.m.-5 p.m., free. Evenings, the fees are the same as for Garden of Lights.

*Mixed Greens Wreath.* (Dec. 5) Using a variety of freshly cut and fragrant greens, an assortment of pods, cones, and berries, you will use a straw base and florist's pins to make a lush wreath. Fee includes materials. Bring your own special embellishments. 1:30-3:30 p.m. \$45. Registration required. Visitors Center, Brookside Gardens.

*Holiday wreath and centerpiece sale.* (Dec. 5, 11, 12) Sponsored by the Friends of Brookside Gardens. 4-8:30 p.m. Visitors Center, Brookside Gardens.

*Nature's Holiday decorating.* (Dec. 12) Make natural holiday decorations that highlight the colors, textures, and smells of nature. Ages 5 and up, accompanied by adult. Supplies included. 10-11:30 a.m. \$18. Registration required. Woodend Sanctuary, Audubon Naturalist Society.

*Invasive plant removal.* (Dec. 19) Sponsored by the Anacostia Watershed Society. Conservation biologist Dr. Marc Imlay will lead the group. 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Magruder Park, Hyattsville. For directions or more information, call 301... , or e-mail [info@anacostiaws.org](mailto:info@anacostiaws.org).

*Invasive plant removal.* (Dec. 26) Sponsored by the Anacostia Watershed Society. Conservation biologist Dr. Marc Imlay will lead the group. 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Little Paint Branch Park, Beltsville. For directions or more information, call 301-699-6204 , or e-mail [info@anacostiaws.org](mailto:info@anacostiaws.org).

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### Virginia

*Holiday trees display.* (Through Dec. 24) The estate house at River Farm will be decorated with trees and other decorations. American Horticultural Society, 7931 East Boulevard Drive, Alexandria, 703-768-5700



*Wreath-making.* (Dec. 5) Create your own holiday mixed evergreen wreath using Blandy's greenery. 9:30 a.m.-Noon and 1:30 p.m.-4:30 p.m. Fees range from \$28 to \$44. Reservations required. Blandy Experimental Farm, State Arboretum of Virginia, ☎ 540-837-1758 , <http://www.virginia.edu/blandy>.

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*Gifts From the Garden.* (Dec. 5) Horticulturalist Nancy Olney leads a workshop on how to decoupage pressed ferns on glass candle holders. Includes all plant materials, votive

holders, and battery candles. 9:30-11:30 a.m. \$20. Green Spring Gardens, 4603 Green Spring Rd., Alexandria, ☎ 703-642-5173 , <http://www.greenspring.org>.

*Grow paperwhites.* (Dec. 5) Learn how to force bulbs to bloom indoors. Class includes bulbs, container, and soil. 2-3 p.m. \$18 per project. Green Spring.

*Wreaths With Individuality.* (Dec. 5) Bruce Nash will guide you through creating your own wreath. Materials included. 1:30-3:30 p.m. \$48. Green Spring.

*Holiday crafts workshop.* (Dec. 5 and 6) Make your own wreath or centerpiece from local greens, pinecones and other natural materials. 1 p.m. \$18. Reservations required. Potomac Overlook Regional Park, 2845 North Marcey Rd., Arlington, ☎ 703-52...

*Gardener's holiday open house.* (Dec. 6) Spend a day in the garden making holiday-inspired decorations, listening to seasonal music and enjoying free refreshments. View decorations designed by volunteers and staff and an exhibit from the George Mason Printmaking Guild. For gardeners of all ages. Noon-4:30 p.m. Green Spring.

*Wreath-making workshop.* (Dec. 7) Make a seasonal holiday wreath using a variety of fresh greens and a selection of accent items. Sessions: 10 a.m.-Noon; Noon-2 p.m.; 2-4 p.m.; 4-6 p.m.; 6-8 p.m. Materials included. \$40. Reservation required. Meadowlark Botanical Gardens, 9750 Meadowlark Gardens Court, Vienna, ☎ 703-255-3631 , <http://www.nvrpa.org/parks/meadowlark>.

*Invasive weed control.* (Dec. 10) Work with The Nature Conservancy to control invasive plant species on National Park Service lands in the Potomac Gorge at Turkey Run Park. Wear work gloves and sturdy shoes; bring water, snacks, and pruning tools. 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Call Alan Ford at ☎ 703-732-5291 for exact location.

*Invasive weed control.* (Dec. 12) Join fellow volunteers in the RiP program and Arlingtonians for a clean environment with the cleanup of trash and invasive plant removal in Lacey Woods Park. 10 a.m.-Noon. More info, call ☎ 703-228-6406 .

*Joel M. Lerner is president of Environmental Design in Capitol View Park, Md.*

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