

# How to...

## MAKE A NATURAL CHRISTMAS WREATH

**The weather has turned**, there's a chill in the air and soon winter will be upon us. What better time to think of Christmas and the opportunity to decorate our home with the abundance of berries, twigs and the gorgeous nature that surrounds us?

Ages before one could pop down to the local store and buy an advent calendar, simple country folk adorned their homes with evergreens, believing they harboured nature spirits that needed a warm haven to shelter them from the hardships of a harsh winter.

But we love, along with holly, ivy and mistletoe, birch twigs woven into large wreaths, blackened seed heads in vases and fabulous sea kale with its bleached white baubles hung in windows or perched on window sills. Ruby Taylor, who is part of Native Hands, a small collective that focuses on foraging and sustainable crafts, is keeping this tradition of bringing nature inside alive by using plants such as bramble to weave simple baskets. Our country's traditional basketry developed by makers experimenting with whatever plants grew abundantly near by, and her bramble baskets make beautiful vessels for displaying Christmas treats such as nuts and fruit.

In the same way florist Alexandra Ball weaves simple birch wreaths that can be left undecorated or adorned with rosemary and bay to hang in the kitchen over the festive season; not only are they beautiful but useful too...

These days most people are unaware of the beliefs and customs surrounding the use of natural decorations: but we like to think there is something mystical and magical about using nature to decorate our homes over the festive season and, well, anytime really. ••• **Gina Portman, [www.folkathome.com](http://www.folkathome.com)**

### How to make a Birch wreath

1. Find some young birch saplings or use side branches from bigger trees, the thinner the better as they bend without snapping at this time of year.
2. Strip leaves if the leaves are not wanted or leave on if you like them.
3. Make a wire loop to your required wreath size.
4. Now start weaving the birch around the loop: it may be easier to attach the end of the birch to the loop using florist's wire. Getting it started can be a bit fiddly until you get used to it.
5. Keep adding the birch, starting from a different part of the loop each time until it is evenly covered. Keep adding birch until you obtain the desired width.
6. When you have completely covered the wire with birch you are finished.
7. If you can still see the wire add more birch or other natural decorations such as seed heads or berries.
8. If you are confident that the wreath will stay together you can cut the wire and slide it out. Be warned: this takes practice and perfect birch lengths.

**Kindly passed on by [Alexballflowers.com](http://Alexballflowers.com)**

So now is come our joyest feast  
Let every man be jolly  
Each room with ivy leaves is drest  
And every post with holly.

GEORGE WITHER 1588-1667

