

The Great Cookie Exchange



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

The Center for Community Arts held its annual Great Cookie Exchange on Dec. 2 at Cape May City Elementary School. The event included baking cookies, making hats and carols.



Take a walk in the woods for plants to add to terrariums

One of my earliest memories of using teaberry and partridgeberry plants goes back to making winter gardens in glass bowls, or terrariums.

I learned to do this as a 4-H member in sixth grade in Franklin Township.

My brother, sister and I soon loved making these for gifts, so our father would make a family outing and take us for walks in the woods to dig up a few teaberry plants (gaultheria procumbens) with their shiny leaves and tasty red berries.

We usually added a few pieces of ground pine (lycopodium), colorful partridgeberry (Mitchella repens) and pipsissawa (Chimaphila maculata) plants. Pipsissawa has wonderful deep-green and white striped leaves.

A friend has it growing naturally in a mossy spot in her yard near little ponds she made. I have seen it in bloom there in her yard and it spreads well too.

All four of these woodland plants are disappearing in

Lorraine's Garden Lore

By Lorraine Kiefer, Triple Oaks Nursery

our state because so many of the forests are being cleared for homes and the habitat of these woodland plants is being destroyed. They are very particular as to their requirements and need specific woodland conditions to remain. Although they rarely survive being transplanted, sometimes if they are nursery-grown, partridge and tea berries will grow in a sandy but woody, semi-shaded spot that has acid humus in the soil. The pipsissawa may grow if the conditions are matched to their woodland environment, but ground pine cannot be moved successfully.

Since the habitat for these plants is scarce, they really should not be dug from most places where they still grow.

Some folks have many on their property and carefully take only one or two, which should not hurt.

Occasionally they are available from cuttings in a nursery, but there are many small houseplants that will thrive in a terrarium along with artificial berries.

Woodland moss is very plentiful and can be added for a realistic woody look. I have found small ferns and other houseplants that look woodland to use now for terrariums.

Making the winter bowl

A thin layer of charcoal on the bottom of the bowl, a layer of pebbles for drainage, then a layer of woodland-type potting soil is all that is needed to prepare the clean



Lorraine Kiefer/Special to the STAR AND WAVE
Ground pine and teaberry can be used in the creation of terrariums.

A table near a northern window is a good place for the bowl to spend the winter. Covering it again in a few days will often work best for people who tend to forget to water.

Check it from time to time. Neither too wet nor too dry is healthy for the plants.

Remember that only woodland-type plants do well. Cacti and other plants that like a dry environment are not good for this type of planting.

This wonderful glass bowl or bottles with woodland plants and moss will usually last all winter on a table near a northern window where it is cool and bright.

I have always loved these bowls, so it was a wonderful coincidence that the first year I was away at college and didn't make one, a winter bowl full of partridgeberry and moss was the first Christmas gift to me from Ted more than 50 years ago. (He later became my husband.) A few years ago, Ted gave me a large beautiful terrarium type container for Christmas.

I filled it then, but now it needs to be replanted once more so I look forward to a walk in the woods on a crisp December day even if just to collect moss.

I have a few small ferns at home that need to be repotted so these and some cuttings from a green and white fittonia plant will also find a home in this beautiful Edwardian glass container.

Beside the traditional bowl there are many nice glass bottles and containers that can be used.

Although this project ideally works best in November, any reason to go in the woods is always good.

A walk in the winter woods at our son's nursery in historic Greenwich revives all the berry memories. There are huge patches of all of these plants, bothered only by hungry deer that like to nibble on them. I love to teach my grandkids how to make a winter garden in a bowl.

Having a winter bowl or terrarium in your home is like having a little shovelful of the woods inside.

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