Celebrate the Holiday with Poinsettias and Ferns
Lisha Utt, Frederick County Master Gardener

Poinsettias are a great holiday tradition---perfect for decorating and gift giving. They come in an increasing array of colors and a large variety of sizes, from 4” to 10” pots.

But ferns, really? A holiday plant? Why ferns? Here are three great reasons:

#1 Ferns (along with their friend ‘Hedera helix, ‘English ivy’)) are the perfect accent plants to mix and match with your poinsettias. Idea: Place 4” poinsettias and 4” ferns in a pretty bowl or basket, add some colorful Christmas balls and you have a gorgeous, living centerpiece.

#2 Ferns make a great alternative to traditional cut greens. With minimal care, they’ll last all season and beyond. And you won’t have to worry about them drying out before Christmas even arrives. Idea: Put poinsettias and ferns in individual gold or red containers and set them on a mantle. Next weave wide ribbon and little white lights among the pots and you have an easy, beautiful, living arrangement for your mantel.

#3 And the best reason of all for using ferns?….. after the holidays you’ll have fabulous easy care house plants to brighten up those cold January days!

Below are five of my favorite ferns. They are simple to grow and will tolerate the dry indoor heat of winter. They prefer bright, indirect light and regular watering, approximately once a week. And next spring, mix them in with shade loving annuals for striking mixed container gardens.

Korean Rock Fern (Polystichum tsus-simense) - A lovely fern with draping dark green fronds that have unique black veining, grows 8-10”.

Fluffy Ruffle Fern (Nephrolepis exaltata) – This fun fern is related to the Boston fern. It has triangular shaped medium green feathery fronds giving it a ‘ruffled’ appearance. It grows quickly with a dense, upright growth habit, 10-12”.

Compact Boston Fern (Nephrolepis exaltata ‘Bostoniensis compacta’) - One of the most popular ferns, this compact version has a maximum height of 12”. It has a draping growth habit and will tolerate lower indoor light conditions than other ferns.

Lemon Button Fern (Nephrolepis cordifolia) - This charming fern has tiny arching stems with golden-green round leaves that have small serrated edges, grows 10-12”.

Holly Fern (Cystrium falcatum ‘Rochfordianum’) – This delightful fern has glossy dark green fronds with holly-shaped leaflets and a draping growth habit, 6-8”.

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So there you have it, three great reasons to use ferns this holiday season, and five fabulous ferns to try. Maybe try one of each? Happy holiday decorating!

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