

**Historical Holidays Boredom Busters
18th-Century Greenery Decorating Activity**

Historical Context

Instead of Christmas, colonists celebrated **Twelfth Night**. This holiday takes place on January 6th, twelve days after December 25th. On Twelfth Night people would celebrate by wearing their best clothes, attending a church service, and then having a big feast. The rich would entertain family and friends by hosting an elegant Twelfth Night ball. These events were filled with gentlemen and ladies dressed in their finest clothes - men in their powdered wigs and ladies dressed in silk gowns. The guests listened to a live orchestra, enjoyed the finest foods, and applauded the arrival of the large Twelfth Night cake. It is safe to assume that George and Martha Washington enjoyed this holiday. The Washingtons were married in 1759 on Twelfth Night and their Twelfth Night balls were written about by friends. A Twelfth Night cake recipe was found among Martha Washington's papers.



Photo Credit: Wikipedia

To celebrate the winter holidays, colonists would decorate their homes with natural greenery like holly, ivy, and mistletoe. Like today, garland was hung around the front door and greenery would also be used to decorate in the main living areas of the home. Some community members would get together to decorate their churches with laurel, holly, and other garlands. Flowers and herbs were also used to give the church a wonderful floral scent. Scents like lavender, rose, and rosemary are what an 18th-century person may have remembered christmastime smelling like. Citrus fruits such as lemon and oranges were not used because food would not have been wasted for decoration.

Activity: Decorating with Greenery

Supplies

- Various greenery (pine, holly, pine cones, etc.)



Photo credit: Christmas.365.greeting.com

Instructions

1. The goal is to decorate your home like the colonists. Go outside and gather greenery you can use for your decorations. Examples of things you may find to decorate include pinecones, flowers, nuts, leaves, pine branches. Have a parent or guardian help with trimming any branches.
2. Now arrange your gathered items in the way you think looks best! You can decorate the center of your table for a holiday meal or decorate a mantle or other pieces of furniture.