

After the Christmas holidays and a houseful of guests, the floral arrangements in the bedrooms and baths were rapidly approaching their shelf life but still had the charm of flawed beauty. I wasn't quite ready to toss them, but on the other hand — what to do with them?

I decided that, first, I would dry them, which I did, simply by hanging them upside down and suspending them from kitchen and dining room cabinet knobs. Then, I would figure out a way to use them.

I loved my first idea, but when I attempted it, I quickly realized that the project didn't warrant the time required to do it. So, on to Plan B, which at that moment I didn't have. I quickly used up my Christmas leftovers and started scrounging for other flora.



A summer view: the kitchen window onto the deck.

A few years ago, I decided that my orchids and houseplants needed more light, so I removed my kitchen curtains. My plants loved this, but I missed the softness in the ambiance of the kitchen. So Plan B — use the dried flowers to make kitchen curtains. A plan that satisfied both my houseplants' need for light and my own need for softness.

Using a heavy-duty needle I poked a hole in each dried flower stem. (Note: the stems are tiny and split easily. Make the hole just after the flower is dried, while the stem is still a little bit soft.) String each flower on 26-gauge floral wire, giving a little crimp after each to hold it in place. The strung flowers are very fragile, so as I made each new tier for the valance and side panels I hung them all over the house. They looked a-d-o-r-a-b-l-e.

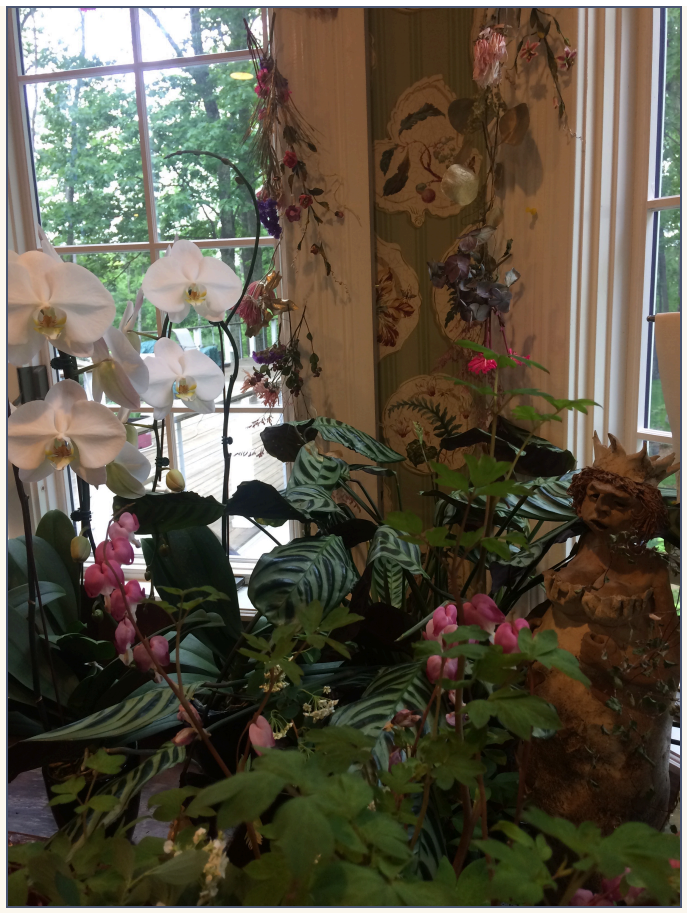
(Hung, for protection, in a doorway. Yes, I have grandchildren, if you're wondering why there are unicorn reindeer hanging from the chandelier.)

As I ran out of Christmas flora leftovers I looked for odd bits and pieces to add: eucalyptus leaves and berries sprayed gold, seed pods painted with pink and gold luster, evergreen needles, statice, and on and on. What fun I had.



A view through the houseplants.

My dried-flower curtains are now seven months old and still look wonderful.



Hung in a doorway during construction.



Odd bits and pieces — eucalyptus, statice, evergreen.



Poppy pods painted with pink and gold luster.



Detail of the finished valance.