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GARDEN



Holiday cheer

Gardeners have many ways to grow seasonal spirit

BY DEBBIE ARRINGTON



Locally grown poinsettias bring instant holiday cheer.

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There's no snow on the ground in Sacramento, no frosty cues for hot chocolate and sleigh bells. When the weather feels more like September than late November, the holiday season becomes a state of mind, like Bing Crosby dreaming of a "White Christmas."

But how do you get to that warm and fuzzy happy place?

There's no shortage of opportunities to embrace that holiday spirit. Here are a few ways to kick your cheer into high gear:

Visit a Christmas tree farm. Think of it as farm to floor. Forests of fresh firs, pines, spruces, cedars and even redwoods await customers at Sierra foothill tree farms (and a few farms in the valley, too). An hour from Sacramento, Apple Hill is dotted with several growers. You can cut your own or take home a pre-cut tree. Find a map and suggestions at the El Dorado County Christmas Tree Growers' website, chooseandcut.com.

Get a locally grown poinsettia. Eisleys Nursery (380 Nevada St., Auburn; eisleynursery.com) produces thousands of poinsettias each year in a wide range of varieties. (They aren't all plain red.) Because they're locally grown, they tend to last longer and look brighter. Eisleys's poinsettias are sold at several other local nurseries, too.

Take a holiday home tour. Three days next week, the 46th annual Sacred Heart Holiday Home Tour will attract more than 5,000 patrons, who stroll through Sacramento's Fabulous Forties to see five homes decked out in holiday splendor.

Tickets (\$30) are available in advance at sacredheartmetour.com. On tour weekend, Dec. 6-8, drop by Sacred Heart Parish School (856 39th St.) for tickets and locally made gifts.

In El Dorado Hills, Homes for the Holidays celebrates its 10th year on Dec. 7 and 8. Hosted by the Assistance League of Sierra Foothills, this popular tour raises funds for disadvantaged and homeless children and families. Tickets (\$25) are available at assistanceleague.org/sierra-foothills/.

Go to a garden party. Local nurseries are holding holiday affairs. The hard part? Picking which one.

In Sacramento's Oak Park neighborhood, the Plant Foundry (3500 Broadway; plantfoundry.com) will host its fifth annual holiday open house 9 a.m.-5 p.m., Saturday, Dec. 7. There will be music, adoptable pets, beer, vegan tacos and a visit by Santa. The nursery's Christmas tree lot will be packed with trees from nearby California farms. Find locally grown poinsettias, too.

High-Hand Nursery (3750 Taylor Road, Loomis; highhandnursery.com) will host its Steampunk Victorian Holiday Faire (complete with a Steampunk Santa), 10 a.m.-8 p.m., Saturday, Dec. 7, and 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Sunday, Dec. 8. At High-Hand's historic fruit-packing shed, the real magic happens when they flip the switch on an astounding light display at 5:30 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 7.

Ride the Candy Cane Tram and sip some cider—or wine—during the holiday celebration at the Amador Flower Farm (22001 Shenandoah School Road, Plymouth; amadorflowerfarm.com). From 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Dec. 7 and 8, the destination farm—home to millions of daylilies—will host Santa while offering hot cider and cookies. In the heart of Amador wine country, the farm also will be a stop Dec. 8 during the Shenandoah School Road Holiday Open House, featuring several of its neighbor wineries. (And yes, you can uncork a bottle under the farm's massive oaks.)

That's real locally grown holiday cheer. □

Debbie Arrington, an award-winning garden writer and lifelong gardener, is co-creator of the Sacramento Digs Gardening blog and website.