



mantel piece
Houston designer Johnathan Andrew Sage
creates an “over-the-top” arrangement »

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JULIE SOEFER

My inspiration

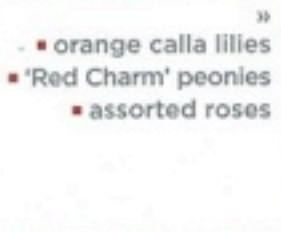
for this arrangement comes from the fall materials I chose to incorporate. I enjoy using natural materials that have a wild or organic look, which give a finished arrangement its own individual character and style. Perfect for celebrating a holiday or special event at home, this mantelpiece installation is a great way to spruce up your fireplace.

MATERIALS:

- » winged elm branches
- » maple foliage
- » purple leaf plum foliage
- » huckleberries



- » sunflower pods
- » golden amaranthus
- » green bittersweet



- » orange calla lilies
- » 'Red Charm' peonies
- » assorted roses



- » artichokes
- » enoki mushrooms
- » grapes
- » pears



- » pokeberries



1 Start by attaching a plywood base to an elm stump, which will allow you to have a sturdy base for the installation. This can be done with an electric screwdriver and deck screws.

2 Next, stand the elm stump upright and use wire to attach sturdy branches to it. This will be the structure for attaching flowers. I chose winged elm branches, but any type of sturdy branch would be fine.

3 To create the first design element and build form, attach branches of maple foliage to the structure.

4 Take some pre-soaked Oasis and place it into a crevice of the elm stump. The Oasis is good for holding some tall branches in place at the bottom of the installation.

5 Next, wire some of the purple leaf plum foliage to the branches by following their natural curves. It's important to incorporate the sturdy materials first, leaving the flowers for last.

6 When adding foliage to the arrangement, prune away any undesirable leaves or stray bracts.



7 After attaching the foliage, add the other sturdy materials (like the pokeberry stems shown here) before incorporating the flowers.

8 Then add the golden amaranthus. Be sure to allow it to hang organically as to not fight with the natural character of each material. Follow by adding in the green bittersweet and sunflower pods.

9 Next, firmly place an artichoke into the Oasis. I always use heavier vegetables and foliage at the base so the weight of the installation stays at the bottom.

10a Use wire to add the rest of the fruit and vegetables into the arrangement. Insert a strand of wire from the bottom of a pear through the top. Then "horseshoe" the wire and pull it back around the stem, which will lock the wire into the fruit.

10b Next, repeat the "horseshoe" step on the opposite end of the wire, attaching two pears together. (This trick works with most types of fruit.)

10c Once the pears are wired together, hang them over a branch and twist them around each other, which will secure the fruit in place.

11 Loop a strand of wire through a cluster of grapes. Then pull the wire down and wrap it around the stem. You will then wire it to another cluster of grapes, similar to the pears in step 10b.

CONTINUED »



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I love the variance of colors, movement, and textures of the finished mantelpiece arrangement. Working on such a large scale really allows the use of the materials to make a unique statement.

12 | After wiring the fruit and placing it into the arrangement, add the larger flowers (like the peonies shown here). Tuck some inside the branches and some out front to build depth.

13 | Next, in order to accent the larger flowers, add the smaller flowers in grouping of twos, threes, or more.

14 | Finally, finish the design with clusters of flowers, foliage, fruit, or vegetables to cover the Oasis and any other mechanics. ✦

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