



Barbie designed the stone box (shown at top of page) with a combination of cotoneaster and brilliant pansies for the plant base. "The box required more impact than just the shrubs and flowers. By using cut magnolia, I added a large leaf, which was needed, and gave the box a focal point," she says. Dried hydrangeas contribute additional texture and color, bringing unexpected lightness to the arrangement. "Using hydrangeas, and even cut magnolia, is a temporary thing. It will last for about three weeks and then most likely need to be replaced. But that's a simple thing to do," Barbie says.

Another application is to use small

conifers. A formal look is achieved by repeating one plant type across the back of the box and pansies of one color in front. A more casual look results from mixing the evergreens and using a combination of pansy colors. Ivy is a good choice to cascade over the front. Add texture with clusters of nandina berries or pinecones.

Maintenance can be an acrobat's hobby when a window box is placed in an upper-story location. In such a situation, Barbie employs a combination of cut greenery to fill this vacant space. While it requires occasional replacing through the winter, the issue of watering is nonexistent. Greenery such as magnolia and holly hold up for long periods before browning, so the box always looks well-tended.

**With planning and imagination, winter window boxes can be rich and full.**

An easy-care, whimsical technique is to add a single piece of garden statuary to the window box. A container of shrubs or cut branches takes on new personality with the addition of a small bunny or a cluster of interesting pots filled with birdseed. Moderation is the secret here. Be sure to focus on one element

and center everything else in the box around it.

"When homeowners place window boxes on the front of their home, they are committed to doing something special

and unique with that part of their landscape," Barbie says. Winter is a time when imagination and personality can take over. "Use the boxes to have some fun, and make the winter planting something special." ◇

