

CHAPTER 3-1

FINE ARTS: DECORATIVE

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CHAPTER 3-1

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Figure 1. Mosses used in a shop window to display trolls. Photo courtesy of Irene Bisang.

Decoration

Sheet mosses [large strips of pleurocarpous moss mats such as *Hypnum* (Figure 2), *Thuidium* (Figure 3), and *Ptilium crista-castrensis* (Figure 4) are still quite popular for decoration in store windows and displays (Figure 1), floral arrangements, Christmas tree and train yards, and Christmas ornaments (Miller in Crum 1973).



Figure 2. *Hypnum imponens*, a popular mat-forming moss used in displays. Photo by Janice Glime.



Figure 3. *Thuidium delicatulum*, a mat-forming moss that is often used in displays. Photo by Janice Glime.



Figure 4. *Ptilium crista-castrensis*, a common decorative moss. Photo by Janice Glime.



Figure 7. *Leptodontium styriacum*, member of a genus commonly used to simulate grass in nativity scenes. Photo by Michael Lüth, with permission.

Nativity

I still have the manger scene that belonged to my parents. Among its figures is a crèche, with baby Jesus nestled in a cradle filled with moss. How much nicer that would have been for the real Jesus instead of a bed of straw. In Mexico (and many other places), mosses are used to simulate vegetation in nativity scenes (Figure 5) (Delgadillo & Cárdenas 1990; Tan 2003) or to cover the roof of the nativity. These commonly include *Hypnum* (Figure 2), *Thuidium* (Figure 3), *Campylopus* (Figure 6), *Leptodontium* (Figure 7), and *Polytrichum* (Figure 8).



Figure 5. A nativity scene in Spain, using mosses for the vegetation. Photo courtesy of Francisco Lara.



Figure 8. *Polytrichum strictum*, member of a genus commonly used to cover nativity roofs or to simulate grass. Photo by Michael Lüth, with permission.



Figure 6. *Campylopus pyriformis*, member of a genus that is used to simulate grass or cover the roof of the nativity. Photo by Michael Lüth, with permission.



Figure 9. Village scenes use mosses for vegetation in Spain. Such scenes are often used in miniature train yards. Photo courtesy of Francisco Lara.

Lara *et al.* (2006) reported on the bryophytes used in nativity sets in Spain. They found that 66 bryophytes, 3 ferns, and 37 flowering plants were in use there. Most of the moss species seemed to be collected accidentally among the four favorite mosses and are similar to those used in Mexico: *Thuidium tamariscinum* (Figure 11), *Eurhynchium striatum* (Figure 12), *Hypnum cupressiforme* (Figure 13), and *Pseudoscleropodium purum* (Figure 14). Rees (1976) lists *Campylopus* sp., *Dendropogonella rufescens*, *Dicranum* sp. (Figure 15), *Hypnum* sp., and *Leptodontium* sp. (Figure 7) as the bryophytes being sold in the markets in Oaxaca city, Mexico, at Christmas.



Figure 10. Nativity and village scenes in Spain use mosses for vegetation. Such scenes are often used in Christmas tree yards and miniature train yards. Photos courtesy of Francisco Lara.



Figure 13. *Hypnum cupressiforme* var. *cupressiforme*, a species commonly used in nativity scenes in Spain. Photo by David Holyoak, with permission.



Figure 11. *Thuidium tamariscinum*, a species commonly used in nativity scenes in Spain. Photo by Michael Lüth, with permission.



Figure 14. *Pseudoscleropodium purum*, a species commonly used in nativity scenes in Spain. Photo by Michael Lüth, with permission.



Figure 12. *Eurhynchium striatum*, a species commonly used in nativity scenes in Spain. Photo by Michael Lüth, with permission.



Figure 15. *Dicranum*, a genus that is sold for decoration at Christmastime in Mexico. Photo by Janice Glime.

Salazar Allen (2001) reported the use of mosses for nativity in Panama, including *Thuidium delicatulum* (Figure 3), *Hypnum* sp. (Figure 2), *Leptodontium* sp. (Figure 7), *Breutelia tomentosa* (see Figure 16),

Rhacocarpus purpurascens (Figure 17), *Sematophyllum cuspidiferum* (see Figure 18), and the liverworts *Frullania* (Figure 19) and *Lepidozia* (Figure 20). Similar packages of sheet mosses are sold in the USA (Figure 21).



Figure 16. *Breutelia subtomentosa*. *Breutelia tomentosa* is used in Panama in nativity scenes. Photo by Michael Lüth, with permission.



Figure 17. *Rhacocarpus purpurascens*, a species that is used in Panama in nativity scenes. Photo courtesy of Jeff Duckett and Silvia Pressel.



Figure 18. *Sematophyllum demissum*. *Sematophyllum cuspidiferum* is used in nativity scenes in Panama. Photo by Michael Lüth, with permission.



Figure 19. *Frullania*, a genus that is used in Panama in nativity scenes. Photo by George Shepherd, through Creative Commons.



Figure 20. *Lepidozia glaucophylla*, member of a genus that is used in nativity scenes in Panama. Photo by Jeff Duckett and Silvia Pressel.



Figure 21. This bag of sheet moss is *Thuidium* sp., for sale in a gardening shop in Columbus, Ohio, USA. Photo by Janice Glime.

Christmas Decorations

Other Christmas-related uses also have emerged. There are wreaths made with mosses (Figure 22-Figure 23). And mosses provide a nice covering at the tree base (Figure 24), perhaps helping to reduce evaporation and to cover

bare soil for live trees. Others have created a variety of uses in making decorations and ornaments (Figure 25-Figure 27). Tan (2003) reports the use of mosses at Christmas for window dressing, showcasing gift displays, and packaging.



Figure 22. Moss in wreath in garden shop, Columbus, Ohio, USA. Photo by Janice Glime.



Figure 23. This twig wreath, decorated with mosses, was available at Christmastime at Michael's Hobby Shop in Reynoldsburg, Ohio, USA. Photo by Janice Glime.



Figure 24. Moss covering soil in pot with Christmas tree in garden shop in Columbus, Ohio, USA. Photo by Janice Glime.



Figure 25. Moss reindeer in garden shop in Columbus, Ohio, USA. Photo by Janice Glime.



Figure 26. Moss bird's nest (human-made), a potential tree decoration, at Michael's Hobby Shop in Reynoldsburg, Ohio, USA. Photo by Janice Glime.



Figure 27. Moss bird house, a potential tree decoration, at Michael's Hobby Shop in Reynoldsburg, Ohio, USA. Photo by Janice Glime.

Household Decorations

I have seen a moss table runner (Figure 28). I debated putting it in the chapter on household uses, but I consider it

more decorative than practical, so I have included it here. The distributor must expect it to be popular since the label is printed in three languages (Figure 29).



Figure 28. Moss table runner at Michael's Hobby Shop in Reynoldsburg, Ohio, USA. Photo by Janice Glime.



Figure 29. Moss table runner for sale at Michael's Hobby Shop in Reynoldsburg, Ohio, USA. Photo by Janice Glime.

If you want "matching" accessories, there are vine and moss baskets where you can store your fruit (Figure 30). Other entrepreneurial Americans have created a number of decorative pieces (Figure 31-Figure 35).



Figure 30. Moss basket at Michael's Hobby Shop in Reynoldsburg, Ohio, USA. Photo by Janice Glime.



Figure 31. Moss snail at Michael's Hobby Shop in Reynoldsburg, Ohio, USA. Photo by Janice Glime.



Figure 32. Moss rabbits and owl at Michael's Hobby Shop in Reynoldsburg, Ohio, USA. Photo by Janice Glime.



Figure 33. Moss mouse at Michael's Hobby Shop in Reynoldsburg, Ohio, USA. Photo by Janice Glime.



Figure 34. Frog made of moss, Denoyer's Nursery, Columbus, Ohio, USA. Photo by Janice Glime.



Figure 35. Moss balls, useful in floral arrangements and Christmas decorations, at Michael's Hobby Shop in Reynoldsburg, Ohio, USA. Photo by Janice Glime.

Moss Walls

Some moss walls are art in their own right, with elaborate designs using different species with various shades of green, red, and brown. But some are simply green walls, as seen in Figure 36-Figure 37. I have seen pictures of similar green walls flanking one side of a bath tub. What a relaxing background for a bath!



Figure 36. Gaia moss wall in Singapore. Photo courtesy of Ben Tan.



Figure 37. Ben Tan and Etzel at the Gaia moss wall in Singapore. Photo courtesy of Ben Tan.

In Japan, you can buy a kit for making your own moss wall (Figure 38). Thanks to Hironori Deguchi, we can enjoy this vicariously (Figure 39-Figure 42).

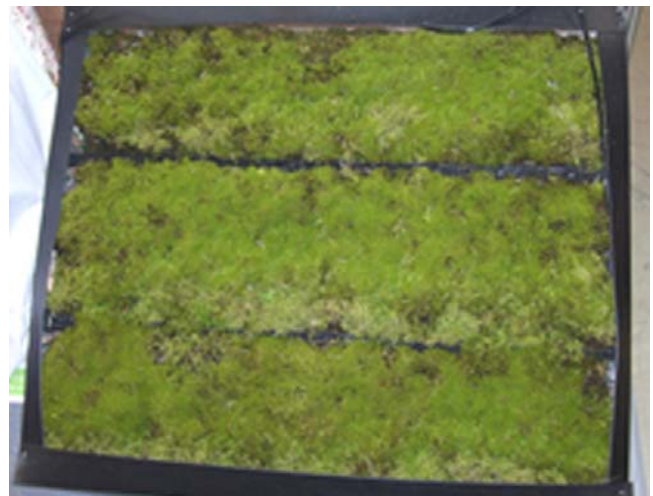


Figure 38. *Sphagnum* Greening Unit for Green Wall Kit. Photo courtesy of Hironori Deguchi.



Figure 39. *Sphagnum* Wall Kit final product on display in Japan. Photo courtesy of Hironori Deguchi.



Figure 41. Moss wall in Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Minnesota, USA. Photo courtesy of Janet Marr.

Shop Windows and Displays

From *Leucobryum glaucum* (Figure 43, Figure 57) in a tailor's window to *Rhytidiadelphus* (Figure 44) in a craft display, to *Hypnum cupressiforme* (Figure 13), *Isoetes myosuroides* (Figure 45), *Pleurozium schreberi* (Figure 46), and *Pseudoscleropodium purum* (Figure 14) in a shop window (Ando 1972), mosses will probably remain popular adornments to add a fresh look to displays (Figure 47). In Japan, even the sporophytes are used to make decorative arrangements (Manzoku 1963).



Figure 40. *Sphagnum* Green Wall Kit by Takeda. Photo courtesy of Hironori Deguchi.

The Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, USA, has used mosses and ferns to create a relaxing atmosphere in the clinic. These can be found on walls along stairways and in lobbies around the facility. They are billed as being maintenance-free – the mosses are preserved.



Figure 42. A variation on the *Sphagnum* Green Wall from the kit. Photo courtesy of Hironori Deguchi.



Figure 43. *Leucobryum glaucum*, a species commonly used in floral and shop window arrangements. Photo by Janice Glime.



Figure 44. *Rhytidiadelphus triquetrus*, in a genus commonly used in floral and shop window arrangements. Photo courtesy of John Hribljan.



Figure 45. *Isoetecium myosuroides*, a species commonly used in shop window displays in Europe. Photo by Janice Glime.



Figure 46. *Pleurozium schreberi*, a species commonly used in shop window displays. Photo by Janice Glime.



Figure 47. Shop display in USA with purse on mosses. Photo courtesy of J. Paul Moore.

Like flowers, mosses are used in floral arrangements to create aesthetic appeal or create a relaxing atmosphere (Figure 49-Figure 48).



Figure 48. Moss in bulb pot, in a cafe in Helsingborg, Sweden. Photo courtesy of Irene Bisang.



Figure 49. *Leucobryum glaucum* in floral arrangement in shop window in Vienna, Austria. Photo courtesy of James Dickson.

Floral Industry

Tan (2003) considered horticulture to be the largest market for moss products. Some of these are for gardening, but others are decorative in pots and displays.

Use of bryophytes in the floral industry spans the globe, from *Climacium americanum* (Figure 50) in North America to make wreaths and crosses to *Climacium japonicum* (Figure 51) in Japan to make ornamental water flowers (Mizutani 1963). *Hylocomium splendens* (Figure 52) has been used similarly in North America to make moss roses, but it is also a preferred species in floral arrangements (Welch 1948; Thieret 1956). *Bryum argenteum* (Figure 53) is used in Missouri, USA, for floral arrangements. More commonly, *Dicranum scoparium* (Figure 54), *Hylocomium splendens*, *Rhytidiadelphus loreus* (Figure 55), and *R. triquetrus* (Figure 44) are popular for floral exhibitions because they form large carpets of green (Welch 1948; Thieret 1956).



Figure 50. *Climacium americanum*, a species used in North America to make wreaths and crosses. Photo by Janice Glime.



Figure 51. *Climacium japonicum*, a species used in Japan to make ornamental water flowers. Photo by Li Zhang, with permission.



Figure 52. *Hylocomium splendens*, used here in a shop window display. Photo courtesy of Irene Bisang.



Figure 53. *Bryum argenteum*, a species used in Missouri, USA, in floral arrangements. Photo by Tushar Wankhede, through Creative Commons.



Figure 54. *Dicranum scoparium*, a popular species for floral arrangements. Photo by Janice Glime.



Figure 55. *Rhytidiadelphus loreus*, a popular species for floral arrangements. Photo by Malcolm Storey <www.discoverlife.org>, with online permission.

The role of mosses in decorations pervades hotels, shop windows (Figure 52, Figure 57-Figure 58), optometry displays (Figure 59), tea houses (Figure 60) (Tan 2003; Irene Bisang & Lars Hedenäs, pers. comm.), and even displays in the Ford automobile showroom (Kenneth Adams, pers. comm. 1 November 2013). They can enhance the flowers that often serve to greet those entering a building (Figure 61).



Figure 56. A variety of mosses adorn this shop display. Photo courtesy of Irene Bisang.



Figure 57. *Leucobryum* ball in a shop window display at Paradeplatz in Europe. Photo courtesy of Irene Bisang.



Figure 58. Closer view of the variety of mosses adorning this shop display. Photo courtesy of Irene Bisang.



Figure 59. Large pleurocarpous mosses are used here to adorn a display of an optometrist. Photo courtesy of Irene Bisang.



Figure 60. Mosses add to the display of a tea shop window. Photo courtesy of Irene Bisang.



Figure 61. Floral display in Göteborg showing *Leucobryum*. Photo courtesy of Lars Hedenäs and Irene Bisang.

Mosses are ideal for nursery and floral shop displays (Figure 62-Figure 63). Denoyer's Nursery in Columbus, Ohio, USA, uses some of the same sheet mosses they sell to make displays of their garden decorations (Figure 64-Figure 67).



Figure 62. Mosses are used here to enhance a floral display. Photo courtesy of Irene Bisang.



Figure 63. Mosses adding to the decorations in a Paradeplatz florist shop window. This combination of mosses and flowers is reminiscent of the Japanese "kokedama," plant decoration with moss-ball and associated phanerogams. Photo courtesy of Irene Bisang.



Figure 64. Moss base for decorative dolls in garden shop in Columbus, Ohio, USA. Photo by Janice Glime.



Figure 65. Garden furnishings displayed with moss, Denoyer's Nursery, Columbus, Ohio, USA. Photo by Janice Glime.



Figure 66. Garden furnishings displayed with moss, Denoyer's Nursery, Columbus, Ohio, USA. Photo by Janice Glime.



Figure 67. *Leucobryum glaucum* memorial cross. Photo courtesy of Roy Perry.

Moss Rocks

Mosses conjure up a peaceful experience, as recognized so clearly in the Japanese moss gardens. Some entrepreneurs have capitalized on this feeling by creating indoor miniature gardens that are stylized versions of a moss and rock habitat (Figure 68). Such are the creations at Moss & Stone Gardens (Spain 2012). The rocks in Figure 68 show these stylized rocks. Prices range from US \$14.99 for the smallest (6 cm) to \$39.99 for the largest (16.5 cm).



Figure 68. Three sizes of moss rocks available from the Moss & Stone Gardens, Raleigh, NC, USA. Photo by Moss & Stone Gardens.

Flower Pots

The use of mosses to encase flower pots seems to be popular. The mosses are attractive and look natural without detracting from the flower as the center of attention (Figure 69-Figure 75). For clay pots they can reduce evaporation and absorb spills. If they are outside, they may even provide insulation.



Figure 69. Moss flower pots at Michael's Hobby Shop in Reynoldsburg, Ohio, USA. Photo by Janice Glime.



Figure 70. Moss flower pot, showing plastic liner, at Michael's Hobby Shop in Reynoldsburg, Ohio, USA. Photo by Janice Glime.



Figure 71. Moss and vine flower pot at Michael's Hobby Shop in Reynoldsburg, Ohio, USA. Photo by Janice Glime.



Figure 72. Planter decorated with moss-covered twigs in a gardening shop near Columbus, Ohio, USA. Photo by Janice Glime.



Figure 73. Vase decorated with moss-covered twigs in gardening shop near Columbus, Ohio, USA. Photo by Janice Glime.



Figure 74. Moss decorating planter in garden shop, Columbus, Ohio, USA. Photo by Janie Glime.



Figure 75. Mat of twigs with epiphytic mosses, presumably to put under a flower pot. Are there enough mosses to absorb spills? Photo by Janice Glime.

Jewelry

Mosses imbedded in glass or clear plastic have been around for some time. But some enterprising artists have endeavored to create jewelry with living mosses. One example of this is a ring (Figure 76), maintained long enough to produce sporophytes (Figure 77). Mariaela creates jewelry with living mosses in the necklace pendant (Figure 78).



Figure 76. Moss ring with live *Ditrichum pallidum*. Photo by Brandon Holschuh.



Figure 77. Moss ring with living mosses (*Ditrichum pallidum*), including capsules! Photo by Brandon Holschuh.



Figure 78. Moss necklace from Mariaela at <www.etsy.com>.

Collection Dangers

Bryologists in Venezuela are concerned that moss harvesting in the Andes during the Christmas season for use in nativity scenes is endangering the fragile cloud forest and páramos ecosystems (León & Ussher 2005). Similar harvesting occurs in the Pacific Northwest of the USA (Figure 79).



Figure 79. Branch showing removal of bryophytes harvested for use as sheet moss. Photo courtesy of JeriLynn Peck.

Sheet moss (e.g. Figure 4) can be collected at any time, but preferably in summer (I know not why – perhaps because it is dry and light weight then), with a single wholesaler supplying about 14,000 pounds of dry moss per year (Nelson & Carpenter 1965).

These mosses may be packaged and sold for individuals to use in flower pots, tree yards, or other displays (Figure 80-Figure 82). The ones pictured here range US \$6.95-\$9.95 (Figure 80). But some of the "Supermoss" packages contain other things with the common name of "moss" (Figure 80-Figure 82).



Figure 80. Moss bags for decorations at Michael's Hobby Shop in Reynoldsburg, Ohio, USA. Photo by Janice Glime.



Figure 81. Supermoss package of real moss, Denoyer's Nursery, near Columbus, Ohio, USA. Photo by Janice Glime.



Figure 82. Supermoss Reindeer Moss, a lichen in the genus *Cladonia*, Denoyer's Nursery, near Columbus, Ohio, USA. Photo by Janice Glime.

Moss Celebration Day

Khoroshyy Petro announced to Bryonet that 22 January was Moss Celebration Day in a short-lived calendar created following the French Revolution, in the French Republican calendar (Khoroshyy Petro, Bryonet 21 January 2021 EST). This calendar, designed to celebrate the arts and nature, lasted only a decade because the church objected. The calendar did not include the traditional recognition of important dates.

Summary

Sheet mosses such as *Hypnum* spp. have been common in decorations, especially nativity scenes, shop windows, and floral arrangements. Some are used for wreaths and crosses and even jewelry. Gathering of bryophytes for Christmas decorations in some countries can lead to conservation concerns due to over collecting and collection of rare species lurking among the common ones being collected.

Acknowledgments

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