CHAPTER 3-1
FINE ARTS: DECORATIVE

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CHAPTER 3-1
FINE ARTS: DECORATIVE

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).
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).

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 Pseuderumpodium 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 11. Thuidium tamariscinum, 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 13. Hypnum cupressiforme var. cupressiforme, a species commonly used in nativity scenes in Spain. Photo by David Holyoak, with permission.

Figure 14. Pseudoscleropodium purum, 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.
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!
Shop Windows and Displays

From *Leucobryum glaucum* (Figure 42, Figure 56) in a tailor's window to *Rhytidiadelphus* (Figure 43) in a craft display, to *Hypnum cupressiforme* (Figure 13), *Isothecium myosuroides* (Figure 44), *Pleuroziunm schreberi* (Figure 45), 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 46). In Japan, even the sporophytes are used to make decorative arrangements (Manzoku 1963).
Figure 43. *Rhytidiadelphus triquetrus*, in a genus commonly used in floral and shop window arrangements. Photo courtesy of John Hribljan.

Figure 44. *Isothecium myosuroides*, a species commonly used in shop window displays in Europe. Photo by Janice Glime.

Figure 45. *Pleurozium schreberi*, a species commonly used in shop window displays. Photo by Janice Glime.

Figure 46. 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 47-Figure 48).

Figure 47. *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 49) in North America to make wreaths and crosses to *Climacium japonicum* (Figure 50) in Japan to make ornamental water flowers (Mizutani 1963). *Hylocomium splendens* (Figure 51) 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 52) is used in Missouri, USA, for floral arrangements. More commonly, *Dicranum scoparium* (Figure 53), *Hylocomium splendens, Rhytidiadelphus loreus* (Figure 54), and *R. trigetus* (Figure 43) are popular for floral exhibitions because they form large carpets of green (Welch 1948; Thieret 1956).
Figure 53. *Dicranum scoparium*, a popular species for floral arrangements. Photo by Janice Glime.

Figure 54. *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 51, Figure 56-Figure 57), optometry displays (Figure 58), tea houses (Figure 59) (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 60).

Figure 55. A variety of mosses adorn this shop display. Photo courtesy of Irene Bisang.

Figure 56. *Leucobryum* ball in a shop window display at Paradeplatz in Europe. Photo courtesy of Irene Bisang.

Figure 57. Closer view of the variety of mosses adorning this shop display. Photo courtesy of Irene Bisang.

Figure 58. Large pleurocarpous mosses are used here to adorn a display of an optometrist. Photo courtesy of Irene Bisang.
Mosses are ideal for nursery and floral shop displays (Figure 61-Figure 62). Denoyer’s Nursery in Columbus, Ohio, USA, uses some of the same sheet mosses they sell to make displays of their garden decorations (Figure 63-Figure 66.)
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 67). Such are the creations at Moss & Stone Gardens (Spain 2012). The rocks in Figure 67 show these stylized rocks. Prices range from US $14.99 for the smallest (6 cm) to $39.99 for the largest (16.5 cm).

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 68-Figure 74). For clay pots they can reduce evaporation and absorb spills. If they are outside, they may even provide insulation.
Figure 68. Moss flower pots at Michael's Hobby Shop in Reynoldsburg, Ohio, USA. Photo by Janice Glime.

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

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

Figure 71. Vase decorated with moss-covered twigs in gardening shop near Columbus, 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. Moss decorating planter in garden shop, Columbus, Ohio, USA. Photo by Janie 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 75), maintained long enough to produce sporophytes (Figure 76). Mariaela creates jewelry with living mosses in the necklace pendant (Figure 77).

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 78).

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 79-Figure 81). The ones pictured here range US $6.95-$9.95 (Figure 79). But some of the "Supermoss" packages contain other things with the common name of "moss" (Figure 79-Figure 81).
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

Many Bryonetters have contributed to this and other chapters through Bryonet discussions, pictures, and help in finding references.

Literature Cited


Figure 79. Moss bags for decorations at Michael's Hobby Shop in Reynoldsburg, Ohio, USA. Photo by Janice Glime.

Figure 80. Supermoss package of real moss, Denoyer's Nursery, near Columbus, Ohio, USA. Photo by Janice Glime.

Figure 81. Supermoss Reindeer Moss, a lichen in the genus Cladina, Denoyer's Nursery, near Columbus, Ohio, USA. Photo by Janice Glime.