
Living Homegrown Podcast – Episode 78
How to Create Living centerpieces
Show Notes are at: www.LivingHomegrown.com/78

Theresa: This is the Living Homegrown Podcast, episode number 78.

Announcer: Welcome to the Living Homegrown Podcast, where it's all about how to live farm fresh without the farm. To help guide the way to a more flavorful and sustainable lifestyle is your, host National PBS TV producer and canning expert Theresa Loe.

Theresa: Hey there everybody, welcome to the Living Homegrown Podcast. I'm your host, Theresa Loe, and this podcast is where we talk about living farm fresh without the farm, and that can mean preserving, fermenting, small space food growing, and just taking small steps towards living a more sustainable lifestyle. All the different ways that we can live closer to our food even if we have little or no garden space at all. If you'd like to dive deep into any of these topics or learn about my online canning academy, just visit my website, livinghomegrown.com.

The first announcement that I wanted to make before we dive into this week's episode is that I'm hosting a brand new live webinar in just a few weeks. I'm hosting it the first week of November 2016. Now, this is a brand new webinar that I've never shared before and I'm really excited to talk about it. It's 100% geared towards people who have absolutely never canned before. People who want to learn how to can but are maybe a little intimidated or maybe they just quite literally are absolutely afraid to start canning.

The webinar focuses on the top rookie mistakes that people make when canning and I go over what they are, how to avoid them, how to stay safe while still packing a ton of flavor into your pantry. The focus of this webinar is on water bath canning for complete beginner.

If you've never canned before and you'd like to learn how, this is the training for you. I talk about what canning can do for you and how you can get started, all of that. The webinar is going to be live the first week of November 2016, and I can't say the date right now, because at

the time that I'm recording this, I'm not 100% sure what the date will be. If you'd like to sign-up for the free masterclass, then just go to livinghomegrown.com/class. That's C-L-A-S-S.

By the time this episode comes out, I'll have it all setup for you to sign up there for the masterclass, or signup sheet to get notified when the masterclass is ready. If you'd like to learn how to can and do it properly and safely, plus learn some of my chef tips for making your preserves taste fantastic, then this is the class for you.

The second announcement is that this episode right now that you're listening to is a special encore presentation of an episode from early 2015. Now, you're probably wondering, "Why in the heck would I be putting out an encore presentation?" The reason is that I'm working on this brand new project for Living Homegrown. I'm super excited about it. For the last few months, I've been having a little trouble scheduling in time for this project. Different things just kept getting in the way.

We just finished filming our PBS season, or PBS show season for Growing a Greener World, and I really wanted to take just a couple of weeks to focus on this new project. To do that, I decided I needed to take two weeks of a hiatus from producing the podcast. Now, really, two weeks isn't really enough to do this whole project. It's actually going to take me a few months, but this will give me a really great jump start.

I certainly didn't want to just stop producing the podcast for two weeks and have it just be air silence, because I know as a podcast listener, that really annoys me when podcasters just stop producing their podcast for no reason and then they start-up again randomly. I understand it, because podcasting takes a tremendous amount of time. People who have never tried to produce their own podcast don't realize the huge amount of work it takes to get your podcast in a rhythm. When you stop, it can take you a little while to get going back up again. I didn't want to do that to you guys.

Instead, I'm going to just bring up this encore presentation so you still have something to listen to, and it's from so far back that you may have never heard it. I have a lot of new listeners just in the last six months, so you may have missed this particular episode. It's filled with really solid information about pantry storage and about how to take care of your jars after you have done your canning. It's also been

extremely popular. People always write and say that they didn't understand or know this information before listening to this episode, so it's a really valuable episode, and that's why I picked it.

I'm just going to let you dive into this encore presentation on pantry storage and taking care of your jars after you can. Remember, that if you'd like to participate in my free masterclass training for brand new canners, just sign up at livinghomegrown.com/class. Okay? All right. I'll let you dive right in.

Today's episode is about canning jar rings. I know that doesn't sound really exciting, but I get a lot of questions about how to store your jars after you have made your preserves, and a lot of people don't realize you're not supposed to store your jars with the rings on them. You know what I'm talking about, right? Those standard, two-piece canning jar lids and rings. The flat part sits on top of the jar and then the ring tightens around the jar lid and holds it in place while you're processing it either in a water bath or a pressure canner.

Most canners use this type of lid. A lot of people don't know that after you're all finished processing that jar, you're supposed to remove the ring before you store the jars. When I teach my classes, or when I'm dealing with some of my students that are within my canning course, when I talk to them about this, I get that, "What?" look in their eyes or in their responses and e-mails. I wanted to make sure that I covered it since we're in the middle of canning season and a lot of you guys are starting to put up your preserves and store them in your pantry. I want you to understand the why behind this rule, because it will make a lot of sense to you and I think it will help you a lot in the long run.

The reason most people don't know about this rule is because when you look online or you look inside some of the canning books, they show these beautiful pantries filled with all the homemade preserves and they all have the rings on them. I have even been guilty of this myself, I like to photograph my jars as soon as they come out of the canner, because I'm so excited. Their bright colors, and they look fantastic. I'm taking a picture of them while they're cooling. When they're cooling, you're supposed to leave that ring on.

The jars are sitting there, they're photographed, and then when you look at them, you make the assumption that that's how they should be sitting on the pantry shelf all the time. Just to be clear, you do need

those rings to stay on the jars while they're cooling down after processing. The ring should only be removed after the jars have reached room temperature. The rings have a very very specific purpose, but once that purpose is over, they're supposed to be removed.

Let me explain. The main purpose of that canning jar ring is to align the lid properly on to the jar and to hold it in place while you're trying to create that vacuum seal during processing. After that, it's served its purpose, so then you're supposed to remove it when you set your jar on the pantry.

Three things can happen if you do not remove the rings, and this is what I want you to know. First of all, you can get a fault seal. The ring can inadvertently hold a lid on to the jar that actually has a broken seal. In other words, the vacuum seal is compromised and that ring will make it look as if that jar is okay and perfectly sealed while it's sitting in your pantry.

Later, when you go to pull that jar off the shelf and you open it up, you may or may not notice that the jar was already open. Depending upon how long that jar has been sitting there, you could really have something that's potentially starting to spoil or even if you're talking about a low acid food, you could be dealing with something a lot more dangerous. That's the first reason, you can get a fault seal by leaving the rings on.

The second reason you want to remove that ring is because when you leave it on, you can get rusting happening under the ring along the jar. Have you ever had one of those jars that you pulled off and you left the ring on and it's like sealed with cement? It's just totally stuck and you can't get that ring off. That's because of the corrosion and rust that happens under that ring. It makes sense, you've pulled it out of a water bath or you've pulled it out of a steamy pressure canner, and there's a lot of moisture under that ring.

You start to get the rust and corrosion, and that rust and corrosion can actually break your seal of your jar, especially when you're having to really crank down to open it up. You can end up breaking the seal. When that happens, once again, you pull the ring off, you don't know if that lid came off right then or if it's been sitting on the shelf unsealed for days, or weeks, or even months. You start to wonder, "Is this jar

okay?" It takes us back to step one again if you've gotten a fault seal. That's the other reason for taking the rings off.

The third reason is you can get mold growing under that ring. That mold can lead to a vacuum seal being lost. This happens because some of the food can siphon out of the jar during processing and it can get trapped under that ring. As it sits, it begins to mold and grow, and that mold can actually push up on the edge of the lid and break your seal.

In fact, after your jars are completely cooled, you're supposed to remove the rings and wipe down the jars to remove any sticky residue, especially if you're working with anything that has a sugar content, like jam or jelly. The way it's supposed to work is that you fill your jars, you place on the flat lid, the ring, and you process it in your water bath or your pressure canner, and then when you take them out, you let them cool down to room temperature, usually overnight, and then you remove the rings and wipe down your jars. You can add your labels or whatever you're going to do so that you remember what's inside those jars and then you place them on your pantry shelf.

While we're on this topic, let me give you one more little bonus tip. When you store those jars in your pantry, you're supposed to avoid stacking them on top of each other. Again, a lot of times, photographs, and books, or on the internet will show those jars stacked and it gives the illusion that it's okay to leave them like that while they're sitting on the pantry. Actually, there's two reasons you should not do that. One; is that the weight of the jar can break the seal of the bottom jar, and that makes sense.

The second reason is that stacking the jars will prevent you from seeing if the bottom jar has a problem, or is spoiling, or has lost its seal. This is especially important when you're dealing with something like botulism, because when a jar is sitting there and something starts to happen inside the jar, it usually will pop the lid off of that jar, and that's a really good indicator that there's a problem and that you should not eat the contents of that jar. If you have them stacked, you won't know. That is the reason for not stacking.

I know it's a total pain to have a single layer of your jars and not stack them on top of each other, but at least now you understand the reason behind that recommendation.

All right, thank so much for listening to this special encore presentation. Remember that if you'd like to participate in my free masterclass training for brand new canners, then you can sign-up at livinghomegrown.com/class, and this masterclass will be the first week of November 2016. Thanks so much for joining me today you guys. I really appreciate you taking the time out of your busy day to listen. IN the meantime, just try to live a little more local, seasonal, and homegrown. Take care.

Announcer: That's all for this episode of the Living Homegrown Podcast. Visit livinghomegrown.com to download Theresa's free canning resource guide and find more tips on how to live farm fresh without the farm. Be sure to join Theresa Loe next time on the Living Homegrown Podcast.

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Announcer: Welcome to the Living Home Grown Podcast where it's all about how to live farm fresh without the farm to help guide the way to a more flavorful and sustainable lifestyle here's your host, National PBS TV Producer and canning expert, Theresa Loe.

Theresa: Hi everybody. Welcome to the Living Home Grown podcast. I'm your host Theresa Loe and this podcast is where we talk about living farm fresh without the farm and that means preserving, fermenting, small space food growing and just living a more sustainable lifestyle. If you'd like to learn about any of these topics or my online canning academy just visit my website livinghomegrown.com. Today's episode is all about small space gardening. Now I really should say micro-space gardening. Now last week I talked about gardening with children in the wintertime and we talked about having a little kitchen growing project.

This is kind of the same thing only for adults. What we're going to be talking about here today is about making nature-scapes or making small little gardens on your tabletop. One of the masters at doing that is my friend Baylor Chapman. Now, she lives up in the San Francisco area. She actually lives in the Mission district of San Francisco. Now, she has a business there called Lila B. Designs. We featured her on an episode of Growing a Greener World. I will be sure to link in the show notes of this episode to that television episode so that you can actually see her beautiful gardens and get a feel for her style. She is just so

fantastic because she's been designing with plants from estate flower beds to intricate table top living centerpieces professionally for over 15 years. She was raised on a farm in the midwest but she's now a city dweller. She loves to think about different ways to bring beauty or nature into the home

The reason why I'm doing two episodes on this in a row is because we are just now going into the winter months. Over the next few weeks we're going to be getting colder and colder but also we're going into the hustle and bustle of the holidays and I really think that having something that pulls you back into nature is a great way to keep yourself a little bit stress free during the holidays. That is one of the things that Baylor is so good at. I think you'll really enjoy this interview.

Now, aside from her business Baylor is also an author. Her latest book is called The Plant Recipe book. It's kind of like an interior plant design book. It's all about creating plant décor in your home. I have to tell you that she is absolutely a master at this. What she creates are always stunning stunning arrangements and she does things for corporations and for private clients. I have been to her home and I have seen her 500 square foot patio which although is small is absolutely stunning as well. If you get a chance to watch the episode where we featured Baylor I think you'll understand what I'm talking about.

What she did with this book was she created little recipes or step by step instructions for how to create some of the plant displays that she's so famous for. I think you'd really enjoy this book if this is the sort of thing you want to learn how to do. This is your step by step manual on how to do it. Also Baylor has been featured in all sorts of magazines. She's been in Sunset Magazine, Better Homes and Gardens, and she's been a DIY Expert on HGTV. She speaks nationally on how to beautify the home with living centerpieces. You can find her work all over the place. As usual I will have in the show notes for this episode I will have links to everything that she talks about and to her website and her instagram page, all of that. To get the show notes for this episode you just go to livinghomegrown.com/78 and I'll have everything there for you.

What I'm going to have Baylor talk about today is I'm going to have her walk us through a really cool centerpiece design. This is something that you could do for a holiday party but your could also do it year

round for whatever event you might have going on or if you just want to have a living, growing miniature tiny garden within your home, that's what she's famous for. She's going to walk us through one that's really unusual, very zen and simplistic and yet absolutely beautiful at the same time. She has some really good tips on how to do that. That's what I'm going to have her talk about today and so without further ado, here is my interview with Baylor Chapman of Lila B. Design. Hey Baylor, thanks so much for coming today.

Baylor: I am thrilled to be here. Thanks Theresa.

Theresa: Sure. What we're going to talk about today is something I know my audience is really into which is small space gardening but we're going to talk about super small space gardening or microspace gardening. You're the perfect person for this because of everything that you do both in your business and in your home and with your books that you do. Why don't we start off with having you tell everybody a little bit about your business and what it is you do.

Baylor: I consider myself a plant designer. I know there are floral designers out there. There are garden designers. I consider myself just a plant designer and that's because I like to play with plants no matter how small, either if it's a tiny bit of moss or a tiny little succulent on a widow will or something on someones back deck but I've really started to trend and to focus in on very small space gardening because I want to make accessible for anybody whether you have a tiny apartment in New York or you have a huge sprawling backyard. Let's bring everybody a little bit of green into their home.

Theresa: Yes. I love that. One of the things that you do I know is you do floral arrangements and you do plant arrangements so when we were talking about your business on Growing A Greener World we called you a certified green business owner. Could you explain how that ties into what you do?

Baylor: Oh, that's part of this neat program in San Francisco and they have a certificate program about being green and you have to go through all sorts of rules and regulations about recycling and repurposing and energy use in order to be a certified green business and we went through that. I think it happens every couple of years.

Theresa: That's fantastic. When you're doing this with your business are you working mostly with commercial operations? Are you working with the general public? Who is your clientele?

Baylor: You know my clientele really ranges from a tiny apartment dweller to a big corporation. I worked for a hotel helping them with their botanical strategy around the world which was really fun but then I also help people in the neighborhood in San Francisco in the mission when they come to Stable Café and they just see a tiny little plant there and they want to take it home. I love that because it's accessible to almost anybody.

Theresa: Well let's talk about that for a second because when we went to film you it was just so awesome. You have this great set up. You are in the mission district of San Francisco so it's kind of urban. There's a lot of concrete. Then you have created this little oasis both in your home, your flat, and then across the street where you have your offices. Explain to everybody how your office is set up right now.

Baylor: Sure. Concrete is the right word. It's very industrial and this neighborhood is zoned for, I think it's light industrial work meaning light sort of manufacturing. You have to create something. There are woodworkers on the street. There's a clothing person on the street. There's a framer. It's very kind of business oriented. The street is wide and moves fast. Then you enter the gates of this courtyard at Stable Café and all of the sudden you're transported into a green oasis and I love it because when I first started working with Stable and coming to Stable I think over 10 years ago there was nothing here. They planted about 6 plum trees. They're Santa Rosa plums and in the spring it rains with beautiful white petals. Later in the spring it drops lovely yummy plums everywhere and that was our basis.

From there we've just started planting along the edges of this garden, of this courtyard and then also inside of a sun room and on top of a shipping container where we store our things, and up the walls because we don't have a lot of space and the space is really meant for the customers. They want to have weddings here or events here. They want to have lunch here so they need space to sit and to move around this small courtyard but we have brought in all of the greenery to help them enjoy their space a little bit more.

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- Theresa: You actually have a garden on top of the shipping container? How does that work?
- Baylor: Yes, a ladder. I invested in one of those ladders that stretch up. It gets a little neglected I must say but now my office overlooks it so I've moved into the building and now I really want to take more care of it. It's more of a place to store our extra plants and our extra succulents and grow some really nice greens. We grow boxwood or we grow a lot of planetariums up there and things like that.
- Theresa: Oh, okay I get it. The arrangements that you do. I know you use a lot of living plants so is it a combination of like a floral arrangement and living plants together? Is that how you would describe it?
- Baylor: It is. I try to design them so that they can, I don't know if mimic is the right word but people I think their go to thinking on a centerpiece is a cut floral arrangement because it's full and it's colorful and it's beautiful. I'm trying to kind of help people switch their thinking or at least open their thinking to, wow maybe a plant arrangement in the center of my table could be just as lovely and it will last a lot longer. I do both just plant arrangements and then sometimes I sneak in some cut flowers in there to to give it that extra bang. I use water picks to do that.
- Theresa: Yes. For anyone that doesn't know water picks are these cool little plastic vials. They have a pointy end. They hold water and they have this little plastic cap on top with a hole and you can stick the plant into the top and it has it's own little vase of water. That works great. Then you can change them out. If they start to go you can just pull them out but you still have your base design.
- Baylor: Yes.
- Theresa: Before we go into more of the centerpieces I still want to talk a little bit more about your garden style because when we featured you on Growing A Greener World I just fell in love with your style. I guess it's hard to describe but it's like an industrial minimalist vibe. We went and we filmed you on your patio of your loft. Now this patio is only 500 square feet and you had ... I can't even describe it. It's another oasis or a sanctuary away from the cement. We walked out there and you would never know that's where you were but it still had that industrial vibe. Is that how you would describe your gardening style?

Baylor: I think so yeah, because it's in the city so I don't want it to depart to far from that. The other thing is I guess I'm really interested in repurposing items and reusing items and a lot of things on my deck are just that. We've taken shutters and we've planted them or we've taken extra metal and wrapped a plastic pot in it to make it look like it has a proper pot. Yeah. I guess it is a little bit industrial and repurposed.

Theresa: Where do you find your inspiration for that?

Baylor: Gosh. I think the inspiration for my garden would be traveling around to local places in San Francisco that have those kind of items. There's a place called Builders Resource which is really great. There's also a scrap metal place that I go to. Because I live in this industrial neighborhood I have easy access to all that kind of stuff. I go there and it's not expensive. I've picked up these copper sinks. They were rectangular and they're beautiful because they're copper. They were inexpensive and they had a little tube on the bottom because they were sinks so my neighbor Pseudo, called Pseudo Studios put this wood base on them so now they're planters. I like to do things ... I don't want someone to know they were a sink but they're so beautiful and I know they were repurposed and they were meant to get melted down and turned into something else.

Theresa: How fantastic.

Baylor: Yeah.

Theresa: And they have a drainage hole so it works perfect.

Baylor: Yes. It's rather large but they do have one. I have to put a screen over it.

Theresa: That is really I think what is your genius is you look at something where someone else may see it as trash and you imagine succulents or something trailing out and I will link to the episode that we did on you for Growing a Greener World because we took a lot of shots of some of the pots you had done and they were just beautiful. You have a wonderful talent.

Baylor: Thank you. Thank you. I was tickled that you guys came to see me. I mean come on! PBS! Great show. I love your show.

Theresa: Yeah. It was fun. We had a really good time and good food. There's really good food at that café so yes. What I would love to talk about now is your book because I think what I loved about it was it's kind of step by step. Your book is called the plant recipe book. I loved that it had all the pieces like laid out and then you show how to put together these arrangements for your table, these living arrangements. That was just so clever. What was your motivation in doing that book?

Baylor: I think I want a book for anybody from someone who's a total novice to someone who is very experienced and I wanted to touch the people who are interested in decorating with plants, kind of might be a little nervous about bringing home a plant and what would I do with it? I wanted to show people that you can take that single plant, that aenium succulent or whatever it is. It can be beautiful on it's own or then you can combine it or you can combine in with begonia or ferns in more of a temporary arrangement or you can put it together in kind of something that's very long lasting. The book I guess is meant to inspire people and to get people to think about oh, here are the possibilities with these plants. It's less about following the recipe exactly and more about, oh I can combine those two plants together and that might make a really nice feature in my house.

Theresa: I think it does exactly that because you show all these different containers that we can use. Of course none of use will have the exact container but it really strikes up ideas about how you tie the colors together. There's like a feel. There's an essence you can get where it all ties together. It's almost like when you're designing a garden and you have the echoes of color in a garden. You do that in the arrangements. If you're not a floral designer you don't know how to do that. It's a wonderful teaching book but it is definitely inspiration. It's very accessible to everybody.

Baylor: It's interesting what you said about garden design because I went to the Berkley extension, University of California Berkley extension for garden design. These are the same concepts that shrunk down into a micro sized garden. I did gardening for awhile and I loved it but I like instant gratification a little bit and what I figured out is when you do these table top gardens or these container gardens or these houseplant arrangements you can transform your small space or your living room in a flash and you don't have to wait for those seeds to grow.

Theresa: Yeah, you know I hadn't even thought of it that way but that's absolutely correct. It is an instant garden but not a huge scale where it would cost a lot of money to buy huge sized plants. You're still working with small plants.

Baylor: Yeah.

Theresa: I know you always talk about the benefits of having greenery inside the home. Can you tell everybody a little bit about why we should be bringing greenery into our space?

Baylor: Oh my gosh. I just always knew it and I always felt it but lately I've been looking at more scientific research about what it really does. Then you always read about, oh it purifies the air which is fantastic but there are these other fun studies I've been reading that make your attendance at work or at school better for people who have plants in their workplace which I thought was really interesting. Also it helps with concentration which I'm kind of surprised about but not because I always know if I walk into a place that has plants it tells me they put the final touches on their home. They really care about it. They want to soften the spaces but I didn't realize all these other things like it lowers blood pressure or it raises job satisfaction and all these things are quite curious to me but really exciting as well.

Theresa: Oh I love that. Yes absolutely. I know it doesn't take a lot even in your own space everything that you have done is very intentional. People don't have to feel like oh they're going to have to buy tons of plants and landscape the whole inside of their house. It doesn't take that much. It's a very intentional arrangement that is the centerpiece of a room is really all you need.

Baylor: I agree. You don't have to fill your entire windowsill with loads or plants or a corner with this huge ficus or something. You just need a few that you put in the right places that you see and enjoy and absorb their benefits visually and otherwise.

Theresa: I know you go to Japan a lot. Doesn't your sister live in Japan?

Baylor: My sister lives, she travels between Hong Kong and Thailand so I go over there. Last year we went to Japan. Oh my gosh have you ever been?

- Theresa: No I haven't but I can tell the influence of it from you because so much of what you do, a single blossom or a single plant coming out, it's just very intentional. That's what I meant by intentional. It definitely has that feel for me.
- Baylor: That's a compliment. I was just blown away. We on went to Kyoto. My favorite thing there was a moss garden. You just wanted to take a little nap in the moss but you weren't allowed. It was just so simple but so lovely and peaceful.
- Theresa: And peaceful. Yeah.
- Baylor: Really peaceful.
- Theresa: We need that. We definitely need that. I think having that not only in the house but in our offices is huge. I talk about it in the episode that's coming out before this one, I talk about how important it is to have some way for kids to connect with nature and I do always have something growing on my kitchen table and I always have for my kids so they always have something growing in the house year round. I think having something in your office space is just as important. For me it's I always have something that I picked from my garden sitting on my desk but it can certainly be a center piece or something planted in dirt so it will last longer.
- Baylor: Or it could just be an air plant for an office because maybe you don't want to get your office all dirty. Just a nice little tillandsia or xerographica like just sitting on your shelf. Just sitting there looking at you.
- Theresa: Yeah and the advantage of those is that they really are easy to take care of. You do have to water them but what I do is soak it in a bowl of water. Is that how you do yours?
- Baylor: Yes if I'm doing it the right way or the way I want to do it I soak it in a bowl for a little while then I shake it off really really well. You don't want the water to stay on there to damage your surface or to rot your plant.
- Theresa: Right.

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- Baylor: Depends on the air plant but generally I like to soak them and give them a good shake.
- Theresa: Yeah and that's it.
- Baylor: That's it.
- Theresa: That kind of also dusts them off when you dunk them in the water but that's it. Then they sit on the shelf and they look green and tropical and little flowers will come out of them. It's amazing.
- Baylor: Yes. Yeah. They're gorgeous.
- Theresa: Okay. Let's dive into you teaching us how to make one of your incredible projects. I think this is one from your book isn't it?
- Baylor: It's kind of a combination of a variety of ones from the book but yes. I want to give different options for people if they don't have all the material so I thought I'd choose something kind of fun. A little bit different, maybe a little bit quirky. Another centerpiece if you were doing it for some sort of holiday or dinner party, each of your guests could take home a piece of the arrangement.
- Theresa: Oh I love that.
- Baylor: I thought that was fun, a fun little hostess gift or the opposite of a hostess gift. What is it a guest gift I guess?
- Theresa: A guest gift.
- Baylor: A guest gift. That's a mouthful.
- Theresa: Yes it is.
- Baylor: I thought we'd start with, it's kind of this mossy woodsy take home dining table living arrangement. What you'd start with is sheet moss is one of the main ingredients but if you don't have sheet moss I have other options for you and should we talk about sheet moss and what it is?
- Theresa: Yeah let's talk about sheet moss first because some people might not know what it is. What is it and where would we get it?

Baylor: Okay so sheet moss, there are different kinds of moss. I don't know all the botanical names of all the different kinds but I just call this one sheet moss and the reason it's called that way is I get them from the flower market. It's brought in Oregon or Florida so somewhere in the United States. They literally are like sheets. I pick up this banana box that's usually a Chiquita banana box. I don't know why they use those but they often do, and you can literally peel up one thin piece in a whole maybe 12 inches by 12 inches of one piece of moss and it's green on one side and of course brown on the bottom where it was growing out of the earth.

You don't have to go to your farmers market. You don't have to get it in a Chiquita banana box but I see them now in stores and they're sold in bags which is really weird. You can also find them if you google there's a few moss nurseries or farms that you can also order it from. I like sheet moss because it's basically going to be wrapping paper for my plants. That's why I want sheet moss versus reindeer moss or clump moss because I basically think of it like a piece of fabric that you're going to wrap a little present and you're going to wrap your plant in a little ball. It's called Kokedama. When I went to Japan recently or awhile back I learned from these two women. They own a floristry shop in Kyoto called Pheobus and they were lovely and they were so patient with me because I like to do things quickly. I'm kind of messy and they did things so beautifully. They taught me the proper method of Kokedama.

Theresa: Is that just a method or a style?

Baylor: Gosh. I would say a method but I've seen kokedama taught various ways and the way I learned it from them was using this special soil, this special clay that I believe it's bonzai clay and it's thicker and you basically make a vase out of that and we spread it out. We made it so nice. The way I do my kokedama here, the quick and dirty method, the might shudder if they ever saw me. I take the sheet moss and I put it bottom side up so the green side is catching the ground or touching the table and then I set my plants on top. I may have taken away some of the soil around the plants and made it more of a nice round ball and you definitely want to keep some of your soil because you want it to grow. Then I take the sheet moss and I gently wrap the sides of the soil on my plant like a little present.

Theresa: Ah okay. Okay so you're using the sheet moss to hold the soil and everything around that plant. Before we go any further let's talk about some of the plants we would be using.

Baylor: Right.

Theresa: We have the sheet moss.

Baylor: Yep.

Theresa: Then what else would I have?

Baylor: I would recommend any plants that are 2-4 inch. You can definitely go bigger meaning the grow pot is a 4 inch pot. If you grow or go bigger to a 6 inch or an 8 inch I think that's going to be too big for your dining room table. Here's where you can get really creative. You don't have to stick to anything that I say. If you like a begonia or if you want a fern use that. If it's springtime by the time you're listening to this or are inspired to do it and there are some amazing blooming daffodils or tulips or crocus it'd be beautiful to wrap your plant in this kind of present of the Kokedama ball.

Theresa: Yes absolutely.

Baylor: Those are the plants that you're going to start collecting and you can even collect succulents. I've done it in succulents. Then I would say it's always nice if you have some air plants you can add those on the side and we aren't going to wrap those in moss of course.

Theresa: How many plants you have kind of depends on how big of an arrangement you're making.

Baylor: Exactly. If your table is a long dining room table you're going to go down the center of your table. If it's a round circular one you're going to stay in the center. Things to think about when you're doing your centerpiece either on your long table or your round table. You have to leave room for your guest to eat or drink. You want to leave room for the glassware, for the silverware and for the plates.

Theresa: Yeah, okay that makes sense. All right so we kind of think about how big of an arrangement we're going to do and what can fit in that particular space so everyone's will be a little bit different. We pick

plants that maybe we enjoy so maybe for Christmas time we might be doing ferns and we could even do succulents because you can still get those at the nursery if you're not in too cold of an area but whatever plants you can get for your area at the time that you're doing this you buy a few plants and you get the sheet moss. What else do we need?

Baylor: What else I would recommend is some sort of stick for the center or a few sticks. When I say a stick it could be an oak branch from your back yard. It could be some driftwood if you live near the beach. It could be grape wood. In a pinch honestly I've used a stick of firewood and why not. You can just take off the bark if you want to or you can leave the whole piece of firewood there. That's going to be kind of your quote "vase" or your centerpiece and you could put those, depending how long your table is you could stack them on top of each other or just do one across the table.

Theresa: Your wood is the base of this arrangement?

Baylor: It could be the base of the arrangement. One thing to think about on this arrangement to go back a step is I always tell my client to protect their surfaces and you really need to think about your table surface. If you've got a long metal table and you're not worried about damaging it with any moisture that's great but if you have this antique wood table or favorite wood table that you want to preserve and you don't want to even think about getting damage from any moisture. Your plants aren't going to be soaking wet but they might still be a little damp. You're either going to want to put a piece of burlap down or you could put a platter down. You could put a flat piece of wood or you could put a cutting board down. Just think about setting it on something if you're worried about your table.

Theresa: Oh yeah I love that. A platter would be fantastic. You could have a beautiful platter that maybe is going to go with whatever holiday you're doing this for and you can set everything on there and have no worries and you can pick it up and move it if you need to.

Baylor: Yes definitely. Definitely.

Theresa: I didn't mean to interrupt you so go ahead. Let's say we have our platter and we have our wood and we have the plants and we have the moss. How do we put this together?

Baylor: You only need one more ingredient and that would be something to hold this moss together on your plants. You could use things like fishing line. You could use beautiful ribbon. You could use twine. You could use wire. Honestly the easiest thing I've used is office rubber bands.

Theresa: Ah.

Baylor: You use those to hold your sheet moss to hold your plant. Your going to create this little ball around it.

Theresa: Fantastic. Okay. Now if you use rubber bands do you have to worry about trying to hide them after you use them?

Baylor: That's a good question. I went to the craft store recently and found these awesome tie dye, I don't know what they were but they were camoflaue rubber bands. They were amazing.

Theresa: No.

Baylor: Yeah. They were great. You can also get clear rubber bands or black rubber bands and I mean the rubber bands. I use the office ones that are thin because I think they really blend into the moss and I didn't say but I meant to say if you don't have sheet moss don't fret. You could use fabric. You could use burlap. You could use cool napkins or something. Just make it festive and you can wrap it with fun colored rubber bands too.

Theresa: Okay let's say we've wrapped with moss or we've wrapped with pieces of burlap so we wrap the plant and we tie it up so that it won't come off so that it's being held together as this little bundle. It's almost like we're creating a little round parcel. It's almost like the pot. That's like the pot now.

Baylor: It is the pot and one thing to think about when you're wrapping your plant in this moss or in the burlap you want to wrap all the way up to the neck. You don't want the top to be open because then the soil can fall out. You're really creating this ball, kokedama. I think Kokedama means moss ball in Japanese.

Theresa: Okay.

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- Baylor: It's a moss, it's literally a ball so think of it all the way around, not just like a cup. It's not a cup. It's a moss ball.
- Theresa: Okay so it's a moss ball but with the plant sticking out one side.
- Baylor: Yes.
- Theresa: Okay. Got it. I can see that now. I've got a good visual of that. Okay. How do we put this together?
- Baylor: I think that's where you have the fun part. You've already found your plants, you've wrapped them all in moss and you've collected your firewood or your sticks and you could even add some rocks if you wanted to add some rocks. You can add anything you want to it. I would put my platter down first or my barrier whether that's burlap, whether that's fabric or a piece of wood. Then I would start building with my sticks next. Then after that I would start placing my little moss balls with the plants. I like to clump things together in threes but you certainly don't have to. You can sprinkle them down the center of the table. Then I would start adding the little adornments like your rocks or your pine cones or your ornaments.
- Theresa: It's like a naturescape.
- Baylor: It is a naturescape. That's a good way of putting it.
- Theresa: Yeah. I love that. Okay. Yeah, you're almost like building a little mini environment.
- Baylor: Like a mini meadow right down the center.
- Theresa: There you go. A mini meadow. This must be really beautiful if you did this in the springtime with tulips.
- Baylor: That would be really pretty.
- Theresa: Wow.
- Baylor: One tip that I have for people who are building or making centerpieces is the elbow rule. This is big when I did a lot of events or weddings or things like that. You put your elbow on the table and you put your fingers up and you want your centerpiece to be no higher than that

because you're having a dinner party so that your guest can converse across the table and you don't want to block their view so you want to make sure that your centerpiece keeps a clear view from one guest to another.

Theresa: Ah, that's really important yes. Okay good. This is what you were talking about where if you wanted to when your event was over if you did this for an event everybody could take a little parcel home.

Baylor: Yeah I think it's so sweet to go home with something and if everyone takes home a little moss ball how adorable is that? They're easy to take care of. I've just set them on a tiny little plate and you can water them and care for them that way and honestly I did a wedding once and we did them down the center and at the end I think we had some extras and I literally plopped them in my garden in my container garden out on my deck and they started to root. Now I have some ferns growing in my garden so it's an easy way to plant as well.

Theresa: Yeah they could just root right through the moss.

Baylor: Yes, definitely.

Theresa: When you have, if you you were to just take home one of these little root balls would you water it by soaking it or how would you water it?

Baylor: I give it a good soak. Most of my plants in my home except my big ones I bring over to the kitchen sink and I place them in there so that the water can thoroughly drain all the way through. That's what I would probably do with this. I would take it over to my kitchen sink and I would make sure it gets water all the way through and then I would put it back on it's plate or on it's bowl or on it's garden.

Theresa: Could you also if you wanted to, let's say you had something in your garden that needed to be divided, could you include that?

Baylor: Yes. I've been known to go scavenging in my own garden and dig things up but yes you can certainly do that. I believe you may take from your garden and then give back for your centerpieces. It's a way of sharing them a little bit more.

Theresa: I love this and I love that it's got it's japanese roots so it's something that we might not normally here ever think to do but it just sounds so beautiful. I'm going to have to try this. I have never done this before.

Baylor: Good. I would love that.

Theresa: Yeah.

Baylor: Send me some pictures.

Theresa: I was going to say I'll send you pictures.

Baylor: Please do.

Theresa: Yeah, I just love this and I think it's such an easy thing for someone to do if they're having a party or even if they're not having a party doing something like this as a tablescape somewhere in their home whether it's on their table or their buffet table or on their coffee table this would just be so lovely so I really appreciate that you took time to show us how to do this. Thank you so much.

Baylor: Oh Theresa of course. Anything for you. You do great things. I love following your podcast. I love watching everyone on Growing a Greener World so thank you. I'm really honored to be part of your little show so thanks.

Theresa: Oh sure. One more thing before we go, I'd love for you to tell everybody what are you working on next? What do you have coming up next?

Baylor: Well I'm excited about the next year because I've really been focusing on plants in the home and how they really influence the people who care for them or own them or are just really around them. I'm working on another project related to that so hopefully that will be out soon. It's really exciting.

Theresa: I'll be sure to have, in the show notes for this episode I'm going to have links to everything on you and your book and even the episode we did with Growing a Greener World so if anyone wants to catch up on what you're up to they'll be able to go to your website and see what's your latest greatest thing.

- Baylor: Ah thank you. Thanks a lot.
- Theresa: Thanks for coming and I'll have to have you come back when you're finished on whatever next project you're working on.
- Baylor: Yeah I would love that. It would be a little while but I would love that.
- Theresa: That's okay. We'll have you back. Whatever comes up next we'll have you.
- Baylor: Thanks Theresa.
- Theresa: Okay so that was my interview with Baylor Chapman of Lila B. Design. Now remember everything that she talked about will be in the show notes for this episode and you can get that at livinghomegrown.com/78. You know what I really loved about the arrangement that she was showing us how to do on this episode is that you can really customize it to whatever you love or whatever you have available. If you think about it you could do this with bulbs or you could do it with ferns but you could also do it with edible herbs. After we were done with the recording she was saying, you know I forgot to mention you could do this with herbs so I wanted to mention it here. You could create an arrangement exactly how she was describing but you could use edibles and that way it's not only beautiful but it would smell wonderful and it would be a completely edible centerpiece so keep that in mind but whatever time of year you decide to make a centerpiece like this you can use whatever you want including herbs. That's it for this week. Thanks so much for joining me and in the meantime until next week just try to live a little more local, seasonal, and home grown. Take care.
- Announcer: That's all for this episode of the Living Home Grown podcast. Visit livinghomegrown.com to download Theresa's free canning resource guide and find more tips on how to live farm fresh without the farm. Be sure to join Theresa Loe next time on the Living Home Grown podcast.