

## The importance of plants in Singapore celebrations.

### Chinese New Year

As the Chinese New Year begins, homes blossom with traditional flowers and fruits. In addition to the decorative and festive effect, the fruits and flowers convey a rich and symbolic message. Each one has a long tradition of being a part of the Chinese New Year celebration.



**Peach blossoms symbolize growth, prosperity, long life and romance.** Because they are associated with romance, peach blossoms are popular with single people who decorate with them in hopes of finding love in the coming year.

**Plum blossoms are another popular flower as they symbolize perseverance and reliability,** two traits needed for success in life.



Tangerines in Chinese sounds similar to the word "luck" and orange sounds like the Chinese word for "wealth". Through the play of words, the Chinese is associating the gift of orange and tangerine as having an abundance of happiness and prosperity.

**The bright orange color of the fruits also symbolizes 'gold',** hence it has an auspicious meaning to bring **in good luck and wealth.**

**Melon seed** which has been dyed red to symbolize **truth, joy, happiness and sincerity.**

**Lychee nuts** which symbolize **strong family relationships in the coming year.**

**Coconuts** which represent **togetherness.**

**Candied melon** symbolizing **good health and growth.**

**Peanuts for long life**

**Lotus seed** which represents a **hope for many children.**

Rich symbolism, beauty and tasty treats are the contribution that flowers and fruits bring to the Chinese New Year celebrations.

## Deepavali



Deepavali, which literally means 'row of lights', is celebrated by Hindus across the world and is the most important festival in Hinduism. In Singapore, the Festival of Lights, as it's endearingly called, falls in the last quarter of the year and is a public holiday. Deepavali is the celebration of good over evil, and light overcoming darkness. While there are various legends that inspire this festival, the common tale is about how Narakasura won the favor of God and was blessed with the rule of a kingdom. He ruled his kingdom with tyranny, which led his subjects to appeal to Lord Sri Krishna, the divine ruler of Madura, for help. Narakasura was subsequently killed by Lord Krishna in battle and on Lord Krishna's return, the city was in complete darkness as it was the night of a new moon. To celebrate his victory and to welcome Lord Krishna, the people lit lamps, and to this day, Hindus mark the victory of Lord Krishna over King Narakasura by lighting oil lamps.



It is believed that the goddess Laxmi visits the cleanest houses first and bestows health, wealth and prosperity upon them. The rangoli is essentially a geometric floor design, which often comprises floral arrangements including carnations, roses and orchids of various colours, that is used to attract the attention of Goddess Lakshmi.



Marigold flowers have a special place during Diwali and have traditional meaning of the same. The garland of marigold is a tribute to the rejoicing spirit and is a **symbol of victory of good on evil accompanied with prosperity and wealth**. The home entrance is decorated with marigold garland and mango leaves, which is regarded as auspicious.



IN HINDUISM, an eight-petal lotus is considered a sacred flower **symbolizing purity, auspiciousness and spiritual perfection**. Its unfolding petals suggest the expansion of the soul to embrace one and all. The eight petals of the lotus correspond to the eight noble laws of living with good deeds. It is also regarded as a symbol of divine birth and unattached spiritual development to attain nirvana. Because the lotus rises from dirty and muddy water to blossom as a pure flower, therefore, it is a symbol of resurrection. This aspect of lotus reminds one to remain pure and detached under all circumstances. Thus, in Hindu scriptures, lotus is a symbol of purity and enlightenment amid ignorance caused by worldly mire and illusions.



## Christmas

Christmas Day is celebrated on December 25th of each year. It is the day **Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ**. The word "Christmas" means "Christ's Mass" - derived from the English term "Christes masse". There are many different customs and traditions around the world. American customs come from many places. Santa Claus has a Dutch origin. He was developed from St. Nicholas who was a real person. St. Nicholas, was the patron saint of school boys. He brought gifts to the children. The idea that Santa Claus comes down the chimney originated in Norway, where children hang Christmas stockings on the fireplace mantel. Christmas trees have pagan origins. When pagans became Christian, they used evergreens (a sacred tree) for the holiday by decorating them with nuts and candles. They sang Christmas carols as they danced around the Christmas tree.



Fir and Yew trees are evergreen and so **signify everlasting life with God**. Fir is also very commonly used for **Christmas Trees**.



**Holly.** The prickly leaves represent **the crown of thorns that Jesus wore when he was crucified**. The berries are the drops of blood that were shed by Jesus because of the thorns. In Scandinavia it is known as the Christ Thorn. In pagan times, Holly was thought to be a male plant and Ivy a female plant. An old tradition from the Midlands of England says that whatever one was brought into the house first over winter, tells you whether the man or woman of the house would rule that year! But it was unlucky to bring either into a house before Christmas Eve.



Ivy has to cling to something to support itself as it grows. This reminds us that we **need to cling to God for support in our lives**. In Germany, it is traditional that Ivy is only used outside and a piece tied to the outside of a Church was supposed to protect it from lightning!



Rosemary was connected with the Virgin Mary (because it was thought to be Mary's favourite plant) and people thought that **it could protect you from evil spirits**. It is also sometimes called the friendship plant and it was the most common garnish put on the boar's head that rich people ate at the main Christmas meal in the Middle ages!



Hanging a circular wreath of evergreens during mid winter seems to go back a very long way. It might have started back in Roman times when wreaths were hung on their doors as a **sign of victory and of their status**. Rich Roman women also wore them as headdresses at special occasions like weddings and to show they were posh. Roman Emperors also wore Laurel Wreaths. They were also given to the winners of events in the original Olympic Games in Greece.

## Hari Raya Aidilfitri

Marking the end of the Islamic holy month of Ramadan is the festival of Eid, known in Singapore as Hari Raya Aidilfitri or Hari Raya Puasa. Ramadan is a period of sober repentance for Muslims, with approximately 30 days of dawn-to-dusk fasting. Adherents of the faith also devote much of the month to worship, charitable deeds and acts of compassion.



Ketupat, is one of the traditional food of many varieties that there are more delicious and feels special too, when presented on Lebaran day, when we had a month long fasting fulfill its obligations as a cautious person. So Lebaran without Ketupat like such as vegetables without salt.



Ketupat traditionally served with satay, the barbecued skewered meat. Some even served the ketupat with Sayur Lodeh, Rendang, Serunding, Sambal as well as Soto. The ketupat as food has a long history. Someone in the past discovered that **by boiling rice compressed and encased in coconut leaves** will allow the rice not to spoil and to keep for quite some time. This is especially important for seafarers to keep the rice from spoiling during long sea voyages. The shape of the ketupat allowed moisture to drip away from the cooked rice while the leaves allow the rice inside it to be aerated. At the same time, pests such as insects and flies will not be able to get to the rice during those sea voyages. It is not just the sea voyages. Farmers and hunters who had to work in the farm a whole day or for a few days would also be taking the ketupat with them.