

CHAPTER 3-1

FINE ARTS: DECORATIVE



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

Decoration

Sheet mosses [large strips of pleurocarpous moss mats such as *Hypnum*, *Thuidium*, and *Ptilium crista-castrensis* 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). In Mexico (and many other places), mosses are used to simulate grass in nativity scenes (Delgadillo & Cárdenas 1990; Figure 2, Figure 3). I still have the manger scene that belonged to my parents. Among its figures was 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.

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).



Figure 2. A nativity scene in Spain, using mosses for the vegetation. Photo by Francisco Lara.



Figure 3. Nativity and village scenes use mosses for vegetation. Such scenes are often used in Christmas tree yards and miniature train yards. Photos by Francisco Lara.



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

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

From *Leucobryum glaucum* (Figure 5) in a tailor's window to *Rhytidiadelphus* in a craft display, to *Hypnum cupressiforme*, *Isoetecium myosuroides*, *Pleurozium schreberi*, and *Pseudoscleropodium purum* in a shop window (Ando 1972), mosses will probably remain popular adornments to add a fresh look to displays (Figure 6). In

Japan, even the sporophytes are used to make decorative arrangements (Manzoku 1963).

The role of mosses in decorations pervades hotels, shop windows (Figure 7, Figure 8, Figure 10), floral displays (Figure 9), optometry displays (Figure 11), tea houses (Figure 12).



Figure 5. *Leucobryum* ball in a shop window display at Paradeplatz. Photo by Irene Bisang.



Figure 6. Floral display in Göteborg showing *Leucobryum*. Photo by Lars Hedenäs and Irene Bisang.



Figure 7. 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 by Irene Bisang.



Figure 8. *Hylocomium splendens* is used in a shop window display. Photo by Irene Bisang.



Figure 9. Mosses are used here to enhance a floral display. Photo by Irene Bisang.



Figure 10. A variety of mosses adorn this shop display. Photo by Irene Bisang.



Figure 11. Large pleurocarpous mosses are used here to adorn a display of an optometrist. Photo by Irene Bisang.



Figure 12. Mosses add to the display of a tea shop window.
Photo by Irene Bisang.

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.

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