

## Pelargoniums to Brighten the Patio

### *Antibes Green and Pelargonium Pink colour my Christmas Patio*

One cold, wet, and somewhat miserable weekend, I painted an old radiogram cabinet Antibes Green – chalk paint from Annie Sloan. I was in love! Hilariously inspiring, suggested a friend, so I went on to paint an old drop-down writing desk the same colour; placed just inside the front door, it never fails to raise a smile of delight. Now, on the outside of this entrance, Antibes Green brings a simple pine wood shelf unit back to life. Gone is the blah shade of cream, hello to the colour of life, renewal, nature, and energy.

As colours go, this is bright, but it sets up the pink, red and white blooms magnificently and adds gaiety to the entrance. Be generous with the quantities of plants, and add quirky touches with ornaments and pot holders. We emptied old baskets of their wares (years old medicines, ancient golf ball pins, wire ties from coffee bags that looked useful but apparently were not), and scrummaged around for metal and bead creatures from inside. And, just for this festive season, a favourite nunu bowl from Ento Ceramics is given an earthier role. And, in the corner catching a few rays of sunshine, an old pot overflows with herbs.

The Ivy-leaved Geranium, *Pelargonium peltatum*, is a semi-succulent perennial with a somewhat rambling habit making it a perfect pot plant to spill over the lip of any container. Plants thrive in both sun and bright shade and, from September to December are covered in soft clusters of flowers in colours from white to red and every variation in-between. I often find the odd flower on show at other times too. It is a Western and Eastern Cape endemic able to cope with seasonally dry and hot summers without extra water. So, keep watering to a minimum and deadhead regularly to ensure strong flowering until at least the end of December. Trim back by a third in autumn. While plants are only half-hardy, frost should not prove to be a problem tucked away on the patio. Once the season is over, I'll replace baskets and kitchenware with more practical containers.