



10 Tips to Dress Your Home for the Holidays

story by Noelle Chorney &
photography by Sean Francis Martin

Christmas decorating techniques have been handed down in my family for generations. It's a fail-safe process: pull out a ratty cardboard box filled with a hodge-podge of tree decorations and plastic garland. Strew on the tree and around the house. On January 1, return everything to the box and store until next year.

Occasionally an extra ribbon makes its way into the mix, or we use the decorations in off-the-wall ways. My mom's fig tree has been covered in bows for the last several years and probably will be forevermore. But aside from fresh tinsel and replacement lights, our decorating ideas all come out of a box.



2. Let There Be Light

If you have a fireplace, use it. It adds a warm glow to your holiday décor. If you don't have a fireplace, fill your home with candles and votives. You don't even have to buy new candle holders. Use anything that will hold a votive or tealight: wine glasses, martini glasses, anything metal or that will reflect the light. It's a great way to use your crystal pieces.

Coloured candles in rich, warm tones can also be part of your colour-coordinated accessories. Group the candles, making them a focal point, and add fresh garland to your cluster to finish the festive look.

3. Get Fresh

Leave the plastic holly berries in storage and use fresh instead! Christmas floral décor is so much more than red and white poinsettias. Tulips make a colourful and affordable alternative. Their season starts in November and carries through till spring. Fill a vase with red or white, but not both – keep it simple.

Carla recommends bulbs as gifts or to brighten your home over the holidays. Amaryllis, hyacinth and paper whites make excellent hostess gifts. Minimal, graceful orchids are a beautiful and unusual addition. Choose white ones for gifts, coloured ones for your home.

Don't stop at flowers. Nikki and Dawn suggest using fresh fruit as a centerpiece: mound mandarin oranges high on a large platter or think of new ways to display your Christmassy-coloured fruits.

4. Bring the Outdoors in...

Choose a great outdoor pot or urn and 'plant' your indoor Christmas tree. A smaller tree (4') is more easily plantable. Use fresh garland in wreaths. Add greenery to your home using pine and cedar boughs, with red dogwood as accents. The boughs add both festive colour and aroma.

5. ...Take the Indoors Out

Weave fruit into your outdoor garlands for added panache. Oranges can be stuck with a stick and placed in your outdoor wreath, but you'll have to change them every few days. Cedar, pine and dogwood are sturdier. Once they freeze, they stay fresh-looking until spring. Fill up your outdoor pots with greenery that will last through the winter.

6. Use Ordinary Items in Extraordinary Ways

Try to see every item in your house as a possible decorative piece. Fill a vase with cookies or candies and use it as a centerpiece. Top a glass container filled with cranberries or kumquats with one floating candle. Martini glasses make unique serving dishes ... when not otherwise in use.

Think reflective. Hang your wreath over a mirror to create a layered effect. Place candles in different containers: a metal box, silver vase or pitcher. Shiny containers also look great filled with candies.

When you're wandering around your house rethinking the decorating possibilities, Nikki and Dawn offer this advice: just when you think you've done enough, add more. Oversized items help give a luxurious look. If you have smaller items to work with, use as many as you have and pile them high.

7. Cheat

Plan ahead as much as possible. If you're hosting a party, set up your table and the bar the night before. Rental facilities can provide you with affordable and hassle-free ideas for table settings—and you won't have to worry about doing the dishes.

Mix homemade goodies with a few quality purchased items. Don't fret about using ready-made stuff where you can. If you love to bake, do so, but have your flower arrangements or wreaths made for you.

8. Use Your Florist

Carla suggests taking your own vase to your florist, so they can work with its style and colour when making your Christmas arrangements. Consider purchasing a vase in a unique material – cast-iron, metal or hand thrown pottery – and have it filled with flowers. It will be one Christmas decoration you won't store in that ratty old box eleven months of the year. Instead, it will be a year-round centerpiece, given seasonal pizzazz at Christmas time.



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Christmas decorating trends? What are those?

Enter interior design professionals, Carla Scharback of Blossoms Florist and Nikki Begrand Fast & Dawn Syroishka of Urbane Furniture Design & Décor, with piles of ideas on how to give your holiday decorating a fresh twist.

1. Pick a Colour

Be creative with colour. Use it where your guests aren't expecting it – purchase tinted sugar for your sugar bowl!

For an up-to-date look, choose one colour that complements the existing décor in your home. Carla recommends layering tones – various hues of the same shade. Take green, for example. Once you've chosen a shade of green, add darker and lighter tones in your selection of decorations and accessories.

Red and green are the traditional colours of Christmas, right? Nikki & Dawn suggest going a little off balance on the colour spectrum. Try fuchsia or a reddish-orange instead of typical holly-berry red. How about lime green instead of Christmas-tree green?

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9. Spread the Joy

Instead of piling all your Christmas decorations into the room with the Christmas tree, decorate every room a little bit. If you can afford the space, consider having a Christmas tree in more than one room. If space is an issue, use a wreath.

Think of ways to share a little of your holiday light with everyone who stops by. Simple gifts such as bundles of firewood, candles tied up with ribbon or small packets of Christmas baking will go a long way to pamper your guests.



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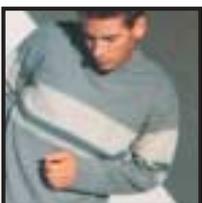
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10. But Don't Spread Yourself Too Thin!

It's easy to get caught up in the mad rush of the Christmas season. Don't try to do it all. Do what you love, but not so much that you get sick of it. Instead of baking hundreds of cookies, bake 20 and lavishly decorate them.

Be sure to leave time to enjoy your newly decorated home. Sit in front of the fire or in soft candlelight with the people you care about, sipping a festive drink and soaking in the warmth of the holidays. ❧

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