

Holiday Decorating





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Deck the Halls with Boughs

The song says boughs of holly, but other winter plants are just as festive, if not sung about.

Try these winter blooms to give your home a holiday flair all year round.

HOLIDAY CACTUS

There are several species of Schlumbergera, commonly known as Christmas cactus or Thanksgiving cactus. They are native to the coastal mountains of Brazil and grow in nurseries and homes everywhere come Christmas time. They bloom around the holidays, giving them their name.

The flowers are several colors, including white, pink, red and gold, often depending on the temperature during bud formation and growth. Temperatures below 57 degrees tend to produce pink tones and deeper pink and red cultivars. Iron in the soil can also affect flower color.

AMARYLLIS

This flowering bulb is often found bearing showy red-and-white flowers reminiscent of peppermint candy. Each

bulb produces one or two tall stems topped with a cluster of flowers that can be up to four inches in diameter. While red and white are the common colors, pink or purple blooms can also be found.

ANTHURIUM

With heart-shaped leaves and brilliant red spathes, these plants have a cheery holiday vibe. Anthurium are also called tailflower, flamingo flower or pigtail plant. They're easy to care for, but be aware if you have plant-curious pets that they are toxic to cats and dogs.

POINSETTIAS

Another vibrant holiday favorite, poinsettias are indigenous to Mexico and Central America. It was introduced to the U.S. in the 1820s by Joel Roberts Poinsett, the first U.S. minister to Mexico.

There are more than 100 cultivated varieties of poinsettia, bearing red, white or pink blooms.

Water them only when the topsoil feels

dry to prevent death from overwatering.

MISTLETOE

Mistletoe in the wild grows as an evergreen, hemi-parasitic shrub that grows on other trees, including apple, lime, hawthorn and poplar trees. The traditional mistletoe is a European species, *Viscum album*, but there is a similar species in North America, *Phoradendron leucarpum*. Tradition holds that a couple under the mistletoe must kiss, and it's a common Christmas decoration.

CHRISTMAS FERN

Polystichum acrostichoides, or Christmas fern, is a perennial fern native to eastern North America. It's found in moist, shady places, such as woodlands, stream banks and rocky slopes. They grow in clumps that remain green in the winter, hence the name.

The ferns are popular in natural gardens and as Christmas decorations in areas where they grow.



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If you're competing with your neighbors for the most dazzling display, you've come to the right place. Here are some trends in holiday lighting to decorate your yard this year.

SMART LIGHTING

Smart Christmas lights can change color with the tap of an app, or even be set to music or in intricate patterns. Look at Twinkly,

Govee and other brands of smart lights. If your home has a digital assistant, such as Siri or Alexa, look for lights that sync with it for the ultimate in convenience.

MINIMALIST DISPLAYS

In contrast to the elaborate displays, consider keeping it simple with one color of light or simple strings outlining a doorway, windows or the eaves of your house.

Choose smaller lights for a magical, less-intense glow. If you're looking for a warmer display, choose amber string lights. Incorporate natural elements such as wood or greenery and aim for a clean, tidy display.

LAYERING LIGHTS

Layering strands of lights can call attention to the foreground of your display and add dimen-

sion and texture.

Choose more than one style or size of light, or get the same effect using different color bulbs or by layering solid and twinkling lights.

For instance, string larger bulbs along the roofline and smaller sized lights in another color along pathways or in the foreground. Spotlights on decorations such as sculptures are also an effective way to layer light.

SCULPTURAL DECORATIONS

While inflatables have long been popular in American front

yards during the holidays, lighted sculptural displays are gaining in popularity. Choose materials that complement your existing decorations and your landscaping, or embrace the chaos and put out whatever makes you happy. Deer, large piles of presents, ornaments and lampposts are popular this year. Also look for large, prelit trees to add to your displays.

Just make sure to not overload your electrical circuits and, when you can, choose LED lighting to save on your energy use and electric bill. Using timers or smart controllers can help minimize your energy use.



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Homemade Holidays

You don't have to break the bank to get great Christmas decorations this year.

Handmade decorations aren't just heart-warming, they can be customized to fit your own decor. Try these fun crafts on for size this year.

METALLIC NATURAL ELEMENTS

This craft needs spray paint, so it might not be the best choice for little hands. Find natural elements, such as pinecones, acorns and more, and give

them a quick coat of metallic spray paint. Just add hooks, and you're all done.

Marbled Ornaments

Start with clear glass balls from the craft store and add two shades of paint mixed with marbling medium. Swirl to coat the inside, and dry overnight. Attach the hooks to the top and you're ready to decorate.

CUT UP CARDS

Celebrate Christmases past by gathering up old holiday cards to make ornamental balls. You'll need enough cards to cut out 20 circles about the size of the bottom of a glass. Cut an

identical circle from cardboard and draw an equilateral triangle with each point touching the edge, then cut out the triangle. Trace the triangle onto each circle cut from the cards, then score along the lines and fold it. Use craft glue to join the flap from each of two circles, making sure the triangles point in the same direction. Attach three more circles to these two, making the top. Repeat the process to make the bottom, then glue the remaining 10 circles together with the triangle points alternating up and down to form a line. Glue two end flaps to form the middle, then glue to the top and bottom to its flaps, making

a ball. Use a hole punch to make a hole for thread to go through and hang.

CLASSIC SALT DOUGH ORNAMENTS

Combine 2 cups of flour and a cup of salt, then slowly mix in a cup of warm water. Knead for 7-10 minutes, then turn onto a floured surface. Roll it out to 3/8-inch thickness and freeze for 30 minutes. Preheat the oven to 200 degrees, then use cookie cutters to cut festive shapes. Freeze again for 30 minutes, then bake for 4-6 hours. Cool, then paint, add glitter or whatever your heart desires.



Simmer pots are everywhere suddenly. These smell-good concoctions work like a candle, spreading good scents around the house and offering a pinch of humidity for those dry winter days.

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Scents of the Season

Simmer pots are good for using up fruits or spices that are about to go bad.

Here are some simmer pot recipes to have your home smelling heavenly for the holidays.

LEMON THYME SIMMER POT

Ingredients

- 5 sprigs of fresh thyme
- 3 slices of grapefruit
- 1 sliced lemon
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon peppercorns
- 8 cups of water

Directions

Add water to a Dutch oven and combine with all the other ingredients. Bring to a simmer over low heat. Simmer,

uncovered, for a couple of hours. Check water level often and top off as needed.

APPLE CIDER SIMMER POT

Ingredients

- 1 apple, halved
- 1 orange, cut into slices
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- 1 teaspoon whole cloves
- 1 teaspoon fall spice blend, such as pumpkin pie spice
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 bay leaf
- 8 cups of water

Directions

Add water to a Dutch oven and combine with all the other ingredients. Bring to a simmer over low heat. Simmer, uncovered, for a couple of hours. Check

water level often and top off as needed. This recipe also works in the slow cooker set to medium or low heat.

WINTER SIMMER POT

Ingredients

- 1 whole orange peel
- 1 whole Granny Smith apple peel
- 1 whole lemon peel
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract
- 3 whole star anise pods
- 1 fresh pine sprig
- 8 cups of water

Directions

Add water to a Dutch oven and combine with all the other ingredients. Bring to a simmer over low heat. Check water level often and top off as

needed. Simmer, uncovered, for a couple of hours.

SOLSTICE SIMMER POT

Ingredients

- 1 cup fresh cranberries
- 1 orange, sliced
- 3 sprigs of fresh rosemary
- 1 apple, sliced
- 2 sticks cinnamon
- 2-3 whole cloves
- 2-4 star anise pods

Directions

Add water to a Dutch oven and combine with all the other ingredients. Bring to a simmer over low heat.

Check water level often and top off as needed. Simmer, uncovered, for a couple of hours.

Trending Colors



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Just like in home decor, biophilic is big this year for the holiday season. To stay on trend in 2025, look for natural materials such as wood and glass. Bold is also big, with a return to traditional red and green as well as modern metallics.

Here's a look at the color palettes trending this season.

BRIGHT & BOHO

Make it a hard candy Christmas with blazing yellows, pinks and blues. Hot hues are the perfect foil for snow white, so accent an iridescent, snowy faux tree with bold ornaments in these tones, complemented by strings of white lights.

Look for gift wrap in these searing hues as well (bonus: It can be used all year for birthdays and other occasions). Make it even more whimsical with big botanical patterns and vintage motifs.

JEWEL CHIC

Deep jewel tones of emerald green, ruby red and sapphire blue make the season sparkle. Offset your

tree with sparkling jewels of ornaments and choose a gift wrap in these rich tones or in metallics for a particularly luxe look. These colors lend themselves to warm, candlelit spaces, so don't be afraid to (safely) pair them with lots of flickering candles, textured throws and other hygge accessories.

VIOLET VISAGES

Several color companies have picked purple hues as their color of the year this year. PPG and Glidden chose a dark violet with mauve undertones, while Benjamin Moore went with a heathery plum with a hint of brown. These dusky colors pair well with classic Christmas gold

and other metallics for a sophisticated holiday look that's on trend. Look for purple ornaments, gift wrap and bows, and incorporate the color into floral arrangements such as mantelpieces and centerpieces.

SOFT SCENES

Muted pastels are also having a moment, and they come into the holiday season in tones of soft blue, mint green, cream and warm pinks. These pair well with metallics, which can warm or cool as needed. Linens are a great way to work in this color scheme, along with botanicals, ornaments and gift wrap. This color palette works well with vintage holiday decor, which is trending.

Showstopping Centerpieces

Stealing the scene from the roast beef or the golden turkey this year will be your beautiful centerpiece.

Generally, greenery is big this year, as are varying heights of classic holiday symbols such as trees and candles. Here's how to build the perfect centerpiece that will last all season long.

USING FLOWERS

Fresh flowers are always a classic and beautiful option for holiday centerpieces. Martha Stewart recommends these long-lasting stems:

- **Peonies:** Big, ruffly blooms and an equally bold scent come with peonies. These plate-sized flowers come in hues of white, blush, coral, yellow and even some purple. They're out of season for late winter, so may cost more, but with a shelf life of nearly a week, they'll be worth it.

- **Lilies:** Palm-sized structural blooms that come in all colors of the rainbow can last up to two weeks in a vase. Epic Gardening recommends lightly scented varieties such as L. speciosum and K. japonicum. Ask your florist to trim off the pollen to protect your linens.

- **Roses:** Available in scented and unscented varieties as well as an assortment of colors, roses can last up to 21 days properly cared for in a vase. It's a classic option for a traditional holiday table.



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TWINKLING LIGHTS

Pair strings of battery-operated fairy lights with glass for a sparkling centerpiece that will light up your table. Use vases, jars, bowls and any other vessel that's clear or mostly clear. Faceted glass will add extra sparkle. Group

them in varying heights for interest, but keep them short enough to allow for conversation.

Miniature lights are safer than the open flame of candles and provide the same warm ambiance, making this a great option for families

with small children or pets. Or just clumsy adults.

RIBBONS AND RUFFLES

Give your table some texture with mounds of ruffled ribbons surrounding a vase or candleholder. If you choose a candleholder, make sure the

holder keeps the flame well away from the ribbon or choose a battery-powered candle. Use ribbons of varying sizes and textures for interest, and if it needs more, consider adding floral picks that include glittery berries or other festive decor.

Tannenbaum Trends

The Christmas tree is the heart of many a holiday display, and while many families opt for a traditional, eclectic vibe full of family ornaments, some people take Christmas tree decor to a whole other level.

Here are some trends to keep an eye on.

MONOCHROMATIC

Pick ornaments that are all the same color, but vary the size and textures. Go with jewel-toned green and a real tree for a sophisticated look. Decorators with Elle recommend 15-20 ornaments per foot of tree for the best look. For lighter colors, add more. Darker colors, less.

GO BIG OR GO HOME

Push the boat out with a maximalist tree covered in big, bold decorations such as luxe ribbons and ornate ornaments that scream style. Pair this tree with simple, solid gift wrap in complementary colors for a balanced look.

CHRISTMAS VILLAGE

Move the Christmas village from the mantle to the tree. Nestle the houses and other buildings into the branches of your tree and add other ornaments in textures and colors to match. If the village lights



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up, wind the cords around the inside trunk of the tree. Secure the village with twist ties and hooks for additional support.

AU NATURELE

For a home with a more natural look, surround the tree with lots of houseplants. Decorate it with natural items

such as dried orange slices, wood garlands and faux mushrooms. Scatter those natural decorations around the room to tie it all together.

GORGEOUS GLAM

Deck the tree (and the halls, and the walls) with combinations of gold, silver, copper and white ornaments,

garlands and lights. For more luxury, add texture with feathers and luxe ribbons and for more bling, pick crystal garlands and ornaments. Top, of course, with the biggest, shiniest star you can find.

SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW

Mix and match vintage and

contemporary ornaments in a color scheme that complements the year-round decor and color palette. Choose neutral metallics and meaningful antique pieces for a curated, collected look.

If the room is cool-toned, choose warmer lights and for a warmer room, choose cool lights for balance.