

H O L I D A Y
DECORATING



Christmas Tree Trends

If there is one symbol of the holiday decorating season, it is the Christmas tree. And though the tree itself hasn't changed much over the years, the way we decorate it sure has.

From the early – and dangerous – tradition of stringing trees with wax candles for a couple of hours each night, Christmas trees of today are layered with decorations and lit up at all hours.

IN BLOOM

Want a high-end design with a fresh look? Think flowers. Stunning silk flowers scattered throughout your tree will give it a layer of petal perfection sure to garner some extra attention this holiday season.

You can track down silk flowers at your local craft store. Mix up garden roses, magnolias and hydrangeas to match your overall color scheme for a well-balanced look. Topping the tree with a thick strand of ribbon or tinsel will provide a striking finish.

GLASS BALL ORNAMENTS

Are you thinking bright and shiny this year, or modern and muted? Big, small or somewhere in between? Glass ball ornaments come in a variety of finishes, colors, sizes and shapes to add a designer touch to your tree.

For a traditional look, stick with solid ornaments in the recognizable Christmas colors such as red, white, silver and gold. If you're feeling more adventurous, many ornaments are designed with graphics and more updated color schemes.

A balanced mix of violet and bronze ornaments, for example, will stand out nicely from the green of your tree.

GO ALL NATURAL

Bring nature into your home this holiday season with an all-natural Christmas tree. Elements such as leaves, nuts, pine cones and winterberries will make your tree appear like it would in the middle of a forest.

Add a few metallic finishes or an array of jingle bells to give the natural look a contemporary twist. You can even choose your favorite wild animal to highlight. Specialty stores carry artificial yet beautifully designed birds and snow owls that can make for the perfect finishing touch for a naturally themed tree.



Sweet Tooth Decor

We all find our sweet tooth during the holiday season. With candy canes and chocolates seemingly around every corner, can you blame us?

The best thing about candy at the holidays – besides its taste, of course – is its ability to serve as a deliciously beautiful decorating item.

From hard candies to chewy taffies, sweets are just more tools in your creativity toolbox. Bright colors allow for playful combinations with flowers or silk on the table, or with ornaments and garland on the tree for all ages to enjoy.

PEPPERMINTS

These versatile little candies are great for decorating because of their various shapes and sizes. They come in the traditional disc-shaped mint or the soft, chewable type. They also can be found in the form of a rod or in thin hard-candy strips.

Grab a large vase and fill it with four layers of peppermint candy varieties. Use the vase as a table centerpiece on top of a red or white tablecloth. The colors will work together to create sweet and stunning piece sure to catch the attention of your sweet-toothed guests.

GUMDROP WREATHS

Multicolored gumdrops can make for a vibrant wreath



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perfect for a playroom or family game space.

Start by purchasing a foam or plastic form from a craft store and then hot glue candies to it from the inside out. Continue gluing until both the front and sides are completely covered in candy.

Since this is a child-related project, get them involved by having them unwrap the candies while you operate the hot glue gun. You can also have the young ones tie on the ribbon at the end of the process and find a place to hang it.

BAKED COOKIES

Cookies make not only a sweet treat for the holidays, but also a fun decoration. Mold ready-made dough into various shapes such as stars or snowflakes by using cookie cutters – and don't forget to

punch out a hole with a straw before cooking.

Leave the cookies you'll use for decorations in the oven a little longer for easy hanging and durability. Once the baking is done, tie a ribbon through your cookies and use them as tree ornament or within a decorative display.

Hosting the Perfect Party

What is your version of the perfect Christmas party? Friendly banter and joyous laughter over the background sound of subtle holiday music? Tasty appetizers followed by a delectable main course?

Sounds great in theory, but planning and execution are entirely different things when it comes to holiday parties.

The key to staying on budget and avoiding stress is all in the preparation. So once you decide to host a holiday bash this year, the planning has officially begun. Start making your to-do list (and checking it twice, maybe three times) to make sure your party goes off without hitch.

TO DO LIST

- Choose the location, theme and date.
- Create theme-related invitations.
- Invite friends and family members.
- Plan the food and drinks.
- Send out e-mail or social media reminders.

VARIOUS TABLES

Depending on the size of your get-together, you will likely need multiple stations for the various parts of your party. You can set up a buffet table and a bar area in close proximity to each other. This will help give guests a central place to go for their meals, snacks and drinks.

A table dedicated to gifts also is also handy, especially if your tree is already covering



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multiple presents for your family. Have your guests label their gifts and stack them on the table for easy access. This will keep items organized as your party starts filling up.

PARTY THEMES

There are countless reasons to celebrate Christmas and just many ways to do so. For child-friendly parties, you can create a get-together

filled with baking cookies or wrapping gifts.

Appetizer parties offer the perfect way to get together with your adult friends for great food, drinks and

conversation. If you have any talented singers in your circle of friends, have them belt out some carols around the piano and watch it turn into a full-fledged sing-along.

The Christmas Wreath

Holiday decorating enthusiasts know that the days of hanging the store-bought wreath on the outside of your door are gone.

The plastic, uninspiring versions just don't cut it. Today's wreaths are infused with personality, craftiness and attention to detail. We use color, nature, paper and bows to dress up the decorative pieces that adorn our doors, walls and fireplace mantles.

And pulling off a high-end wreath design is a snap. You can create a wreath worthy of a decorating magazine in just a few short steps:

- **Paint your pine cones:** Gluing a few pine cones to your wreath is a great way of adding a natural touch, but consider painting them first in a rich, metallic red to really make them pop off the green backdrop of your wreath.

- **Add a Christmas card:** Affix a Christmas card to the middle of your wreath for a unique touch. The card will scream "home for the holidays" to your guests and provide a paper element to your wreath. Laminate the card or spray it with a coat of sealant to help it stand up to the wintertime weather.



- **Curled paper:** And speaking of ways to incorporate paper into your wreath, you can use scrapbook paper strips to make a version that can last forever. Choose colorful paper with

various patterns, cut into strips and curl them into loops by tightly wrapping them around a pencil. Glue your strips to a foam craft circle, alternating colors for an interesting look.

- **Square wreaths:** Christmas decorating is all about being creative. What's more non-traditional than a square wreath? Build your own square-box form out of thin plywood and secure

various leaves, berries, glass ornaments and ribbons.

- **Spray glitter:** We could all use a little more glam in our holiday decorations, right? Add a bit of shimmer to

your wreath this year with spray glitter. You can choose two different colors of spray to give your wreath a balanced appearance while also making your design shine.



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Choose a Theme

The best Christmas decorations work together to form a spectacular theme that builds excitement and anticipation for the holiday. From the tree topper to the tablecloth, your home's holiday theme should have a consistent color, story and design to help stylishly celebrate the season.

Switch things up this year by doing something different. You are sure to create special moments and lasting memories along the way.

COZY COUNTRY

Flashing lights and singing chipmunk ornaments should be nowhere near your country-themed Christmas. 'Tis the season to pare down and get back to the basics. That means swapping out your string of chaser lights for a strand of popcorn. Or replacing your standard glass ornaments with natural elements such as pine cones, cranberry twigs and dried fruit.

For some extra county charm, wrap your presents in brown paper and tie them with string or ribbon. And a country theme isn't complete until you immerse yourself in the experience of an

old-fashioned Christmas by sitting around the tree as a family, spending time together without televisions, smartphones or tablets.

VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS

A Victorian theme ditches the holiday's traditional red and green colors for a more soft-hued assortment of purples, blues and greens, accented by silver or gold. It is a throwback to the Victorian era and its lavish, overstated design styles.

Layer your Christmas tree in white lights and crystal ornaments to achieve the Victorian look. Use thick, shiny paper to wrap your gifts for under the tree to create a stunning combination. Display fresh or silk flower arrangements around your home and load your mantle with oversized stockings.

You and your family will be swept away to the more romantic, charming era throughout the holiday season.

PERSONAL THEME

If you choose to put your own spin on your holiday decorating theme this year, what better way than to incorporate some personal touches? You can sprinkle your tree with small framed cutout photos of family members or cover your mantle with heirloom items that hold special meaning.

Choose colors that you like and see what works together. Your personal holiday theme is, after all, yours, so be creative and fearless when it comes to pairing traditional decorations and homemade ones.

Decorating DIY

The do-it-yourself Christmas has taken full force as Americans look to tighten their decorating belts for more spending on gifts and trips.

Plus, it can be just plain fun. With more and more ways to be creative in designing ornaments and wall art, homes everywhere will be filled with DIY pieces as they ring in the holiday season.

COUNT DOWN TO CHRISTMAS

People young and old love counting down to the day when Santa will arrive with his sleigh full of presents. And you can help liven up the countdown by putting your own spin on the advent calendar with a few simple items around the house.

Gather and fill 25 containers or bags with holiday treats (no peeking). Then cover them with holiday designs or decorations and number them 1 through 25. Stack them up or put them in a line, and let the countdown begin.

TABLE DECORATIONS

If you're planning a big holiday bash – whether formal or informal – the table can be your greatest playground for decorative creativity. You can easily transform your dinner party into an elegant dining

experience by setting out fancy silverware and plates, designed with a holiday theme, of course.

Scatter ornaments and glitter throughout the middle of the table to create a magical backdrop for a four-course dinner. Or layer the table in

various holiday-themed craft paper for a more child-friendly version of the sit-down party.

HOLIDAY CRAFTING PARTY

If you're looking to turn your DIY ornament-making

into a fun-filled event, why not make it a party? Set up a few tables with glue, scissors, ribbon, Popsicle sticks and different-colored paper, and invite over your friends with small children.

The fun part will be seeing what they come up with

as their holiday craft. Send your guests home with their creation, a festive bag of candy and a special holiday present, and you'll be the talk of the town.



The History of Decorating



Early American Christmas decorations looked much like today's – but on a simpler scale and with a much smaller price tag. Settlers celebrated the holiday with food, friends and family, bringing their own long-standing traditions across the ocean.

There were festive songs, children's games and family fun at holiday celebrations, which were decorated simply compared to today's standards.

SIMPLE DECORATIONS

The initial Christmas decorations were made of natural materials, including holly, mistletoe, bay and evergreen. Individual homes were decorated, as were churches and other community buildings as a way to celebrate the season with a little creativity.

Much like today, town squares were the center of Christmas gatherings, with people drawing together for holiday camaraderie. The squares were decorated to help foster the spirit of community cheer during the Christmas season.

THE CHRISTMAS TREE

After Queen Victoria's family was pictured with a decorated Christmas tree in 1848, the Christmas tree became a fixture in almost every American home that celebrates the holiday, according to the American Christmas Tree Association.

Early Christmas trees were ornamented with candles, apples and nuts. Crafty decorators created handmade ornaments and started traditions of making ones that were brought out every holiday season.

DECORATING NOW

Americans today spend more than \$6 billion on Christmas decorations every year. That's a long way from some simple holly and mistletoe. From the LED lights to the high-end decorative touches, we are a generous country when it comes to spreading holiday cheer.

The National Retail Federation started tracking Christmas spending in 2005 and has seen the number steadily grow throughout the years. The number doesn't even consider the professional designing help many people enlist to make sure their home is the best on the block.