

# Decking the Halls

**D**ecorating your home for the holidays is a tradition steeped in history and culture, with decorations and styles being handed down from one generation to the next.

But these days, the abundance of readily available resources — from books and magazines, television and online media — has inspired decorators to embrace holiday decorating traditions from around the world, as well as seeking ideas to establish new traditions.

## USE CARDS

Holiday greeting cards can bring a smile to your face, but they can also pile up quickly, becoming a cluttered mess. If you can't bear to throw these cards away, and a pile of oddly sized cards is unacceptable, you incorporate the cards into a festive household decoration.

Hang a strip of decorative ribbon from an interior door or wall, and staple greeting cards onto the ribbon as they arrive in your mailbox. As more cards arrive, start a new ribbon. You can also assemble greeting cards into a montage, using tape to secure the cards in place.

## TRIMMING THE TREE

These days there's no limit to the decorating options available for your Christmas



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tree. Artificial trees, advanced lighting options and entire stores dedicated to Christmas

decorating have changed conventional expectations of the family tree.

Nonetheless, the process of adorning the Christmas tree is inherently laced with tradition. For some, these traditions might involve the ceremonial placement of an inherited tree-topper. For others it might be the establishment of new decorating traditions.

While the end result may be quite different from days of old, family members will undoubtedly reminisce over heirloom ornaments or recall the memory of loved ones who inspired them to hand down certain traditions to the next generation.

## OUTDOOR DECORATIONS

Remember the days when decorating the exterior of your home involved hanging a couple strands of Christmas lights and maybe a wooden snowman?

While there's nothing wrong with these simple displays, in many neighborhoods, hanging Christmas lights isn't just a holiday task. It's a tradition.

Creative homeowners invest countless hours and a lot of money in their light display. These extravagant spectacles become interactive shows, with lights flashing,

dancing and changing colors in perfect sync with Christmas carols blaring boldly from hidden speakers.

It's not uncommon to enter affluent neighborhoods and see signs asking viewers to tune into a specific radio station, which will play holiday music and give information about each home's display. These dazzling demonstrations have become viral sensations online, with people around the world logging on to view the holiday pageantry.

## NATIVITIES

Nativity scenes are another long-standing decorative tradition that has also evolved in complexity over the years.

These scenes, depicting the birth of Jesus, once consisted of small figurines — featuring Joseph, Mary and the baby Jesus — displayed on a mantle, shelf or coffee table.

Today, collectors seek out intricately hand painted ceramic sets, in whole or in part, including the three wise men and various animals. Nativity scenes became larger as they were incorporated into outdoor displays, and finally took on a life of their own as people began dressing the part to create live nativity scenes and reenactments.