



Holiday Decorating GUIDE



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Get Your (Real) Greens

Green is having a moment this holiday season, not just as a color, but as a decor item.

Green garlands are cascading down staircases, crowning doorways and slipping over mantles. Wreaths grace doors and windows and, of course, there's trees galore. But where

does all that come from? Here's how you find and keep real bundles of holly, fir and other holiday greens.

GARDEN CENTERS

Go forth to your local garden center. They'll have a wide selection of real garlands, wreaths, trees and more. If you're just looking to fill a few vases, ask the staff there if you can take some of the trimmings off their hands.

Want to go beyond your

basic fir and juniper? Look for giant, glossy magnolia leaves that develop a beautiful golden patina as they dry. Also consider fresh rosemary, which also comes with a wonderful smell, bay leaves, eucalyptus, cypress and ivy. Rosemary, especially, makes an attractive tree shape that makes a lovely table decoration.

KEEP IT FRESH

Home expert Martha Stewart advises to keep your greens

fresh by spraying them with an antidesiccant spray, found at garden centers. These help keep your greens fresh by sealing in moisture in dry winter environments. Mist loose greenery daily and it will last about two weeks. The misting, by the way, also helps boost that perfect evergreen Christmas smell. Lowe's suggests trimming the ends of your greenery and soaking them in water overnight to properly condition them before twisting

them into wreaths or garlands.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Choose greenery that doesn't feel dry, isn't brown and, if it's evergreen, has all or most of its needles. Needles and leaves should bend but not break. And use your nose; your fresh greens shouldn't smell musty or moldy. Also be mindful of any parts of your chosen plants that could hurt people or pets. Ask your garden center experts before bringing them in.



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Picking the Perfect Tree

For many people, it just isn't Christmas without a tall, glorious real tree.

Here are some popular varieties of trees and their pros and cons.

SCOTCH PINE, PINUS SYLVESTRIS

Grown in the northwest,

Midwest, Great Lakes and northeast. These trees have sturdy branches that are dense and tightly spaced, so if you have a ton of decorations, this is the tree for you.

DOUGLAS FIR, PSEUDOTSUGA MENZIESII

These blue-green trees grown in the northwest, Great Lakes and northeast are the classic Christmas tree. It's fuller and thicker than a Fraser fir, but it will drop needles, so keep the vacuum handy.

BALSAM FIR, ABIES BALSAMEA

This dark green beauty has a strong, classic Christmas smell and tough branches to hold all your heavier ornaments. It's branches also make it a great choice for garlands and wreaths.

NOBLE FIR, ABIES PROCERA

These trees can grow up to 230 feet tall, but also go great in your living room. They have a strong fragrance and equally strong branches.

WHITE PINE, PINUS STROBUS

This bluish tree is grown along the Canadian border. It doesn't smell as strongly as other varieties, so it's great if you've got sensitive noses in your house. It also has flexible branches that do better with lighter decorations.

VIRGINIA PINE, PINUS VIRGINIANA

These medium-sized trees are lightly fragrancd and easily identified by their short, twisted needles that grow in pairs.

LEYLAND CYPRESS, CUPRESSUS LEYLANDII

The South's Christmas tree has delicate, feathery branches. It's a good keeper and perfect for those who decorate for the entire season, but doesn't smell.

BLUE SPRUCE, PICEA PUNGENS

Also known as a Colorado blue spruce, this tree has a knockout smell and waxy, gray-blue needles. It has strong branches for decorating.



Candle Safety

You want the warm glow of candles to light your holiday decor, but those happy dancing flames come with a lot of risk.

According to the National Fire Protection Association, more than half of December home decoration candles were started by fires, and Christmas is one of the top three days for home candle fires. Here are some tips for keeping you and your family safe.

KEEP AN EYE ON IT

Don't leave burning candles unattended and make sure you blow out all the candles in your home before leaving or going to bed, the NFPA says.

LOCATION, LOCATION

Keep candle flames at least a foot away from anything flammable. When you light a candle, keep your hair, clothing and jewelry well back from the flame. Use sturdy candle holders and keep candles on stable surfaces. Don't let candles burn all the way down so that it's a danger to its holder. Never place an open flame in a window where it can catch blinds and curtains. For window displays, use LED or electric lights.

CANDLES AND CHILDREN

Never leave candles, lighters or matches alone with children. If you are planning a celebration that involves holding a candle, consider using battery-operated LED candle for the kids.

CHECK SMOKE DETECTORS

Before you kick off the holiday season, check all your smoke detectors to make sure they're working properly, the NFPA says. Your home should have smoke alarms on every level, outside each sleeping area and inside every bedroom. Interconnect the alarms so that they all sound when one sounds. Practice your fire safety drill with your family. Your fire plan should include two ways out of every room and an outside meeting place.

Vintage Decor Is Back

Last year, those ceramic light-up Christmas trees of yore came raging back. And seeing the old become new again is going to be a trend that continues.

Here are some old-time decorations you might see on this year's trees.

KUGELS

These Christmas-light shaped glass ornaments were originally sold as window decorations. First made in the 1800s, kugels (German for spheres) were the first iteration of glass ornament. Original pieces still in their vibrant colors are coveted by collectors; most have faded.

INDENTED BALLS

Balls with silvery indentations were introduced in Victorian times to amplify the candles used to illuminate Christmas trees. They had a resurgence during the middle of the 20th century and are back again even now.

BUBBLE LIGHTS

The original bubble lights were manufactured in England and introduced in the U.S. in the 1940s. A vial of liquid is heated by an incandescent bulb, causing it to boil and bubble up from the vase. In the 1970s, they were replaced by



miniature fairy lights, but are making a comeback.

NEEDLEPOINT

Handcrafted needle arts like knitting, crocheting, embroidery and cross stitch are back

in a big way, and that means on the trees and mantles, too. Look for ornaments, tree skirts and stockings.

BOTTLE BRUSH TREES

Conical bristly tiny trees,

usually flocked, show up along mantles and dining tables and even in clear Christmas ornaments.

PAPERCRAFTS

Gather up the kiddos and

whip out some good, old-fashioned paper chains and cut outs to adorn the tree. Look for colorful paper choices at your local arts store in the scrapbooking or paper craft section.

Picking the Perfect Strand

Nothing gets the Christmas spirit flowing like stringing up the lights outside.

Keep reading to find out how to make those lights safe, keep yourself safe (hint: just stay off the roof), and still have a spectacular holiday display.

INDOOR VERSUS OUTDOOR

Here's what it boils down to: You can put outdoor lights inside, but never put inside lights out, BobVila.com says. If you don't want to spend time separating lights, choose a strand that can be either/or.

LED VERSUS INCANDESCENT

LED lights are more popular nowadays, but they use about 10% the amount of energy than similar incandescent lights. They also burn cool, so they won't toast your fingers, and can have plastic shells that are less prone to flaking and shattering. However, incandescent bulbs have a warm glow that has a vintage look that LEDs can't mimic. And they're less expensive to purchase than similar LED strands.

WHAT DO ALL THOSE LETTERS AND NUMBERS MEAN?

BobVila.com breaks it down.

- C6 bulbs are strawberry shaped and good for indoor



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trees. They are 1 1/8 inch long.

- C7 bulbs are a little rounder and longer and look great on larger trees and outdoors. They are 1 1/2 inch long.

- C9 are teardrop shaped and are perfect outdoors.

They're a whopping 2 1/2 inches long.

- G12 bulbs are round with an etched design. They are 1 1/2 inch in diameter.

Still confused? Go to your local home center. They usually have a display that shows each bulb.

HOW MANY TO GET

Yeah, those 100-foot-long strands may look appealing, but remember that the longer the strand, the harder it is to wind up and put away neatly. For trees, aim to string up to 100 lights per foot of tree height. When estimating foot-

age, like to go around your home, always round up in length and make sure you account for connections and cords.

About those connections, always read the instructions carefully and don't string too many together.



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Tips for Adding Texture

Layering isn't just for outside. Put together piles of fantastic texture for a hit holiday look. Here are some tips for getting it just right.

FABRICS

Get cozy with a variety of fabrics on the floors (rugs), in seating areas (blankets and throw pillows), and even on the table (tablecloths, runners, placemats and more). Mix and

match patterns and weights, shiny metallics and luxe velvets, knits and beading. Big this year are warm Buffalo check plaid and fuzzy faux furs. And don't forget the little design elements like roped edging, ribbons and tassels.

NATURAL ELEMENTS

When we think of texture, we think of fabrics. But texture can come from other places. Wood, sisal, greenery are all going to be big this year. Add pinecones and feathers, berry sprigs and branches for a deeper, more rich look.

Also look for winter blooms like the Christmas rose and other members of the striking hellebore family. Seasonal citrus, like pops of yellow lemons and ruby grapefruit, also make for a chic rustic vibe.

HEIGHT

Get all those candlesticks out and arrange them along a table or a mantle. Don't be basic lower to higher; mix and match according to color, width and height. Factor in your candle height in the overall look, and watch your placement when it comes to

other flammable materials. You can also bunch up trees, real or fake, in a variety of colors and shapes.

PAPER

Start with gift wrap. Play with colors, stripes, dots, finishes and more. Also look to paper decorations like giant cut out snowflakes, garlands and pleated snowballs.

Find a wide array of colorful papers at your local hobby and craft stores. Big colors this year are at either end of the spectrum — big and bold or lovely pastels.

Advent Calendars

Coined by German Lutherans, Advent calendars are used to count down the days of Advent toward Christmas.

Many reusable calendars start Dec. 1, even though the actual first Sunday of Advent may be before or after, depending on the Christian liturgical calendar. They come in an astounding variety of forms, from wooden ones with drawers, cards with windows, blankets, Yes, blankets.

COUNTDOWN

So even if you're not a practicing Christian or particularly religious, you can still have some form of Advent calendar as a Christmas countdown. If you're looking for a reusable one, there are many to choose from that can fit your decor.

Traditionally, each window or drawer holds a candy, picture or other trinket. You can also wrap up children's books, however, or come up with another daily reward for your family to celebrate the season.

RELIGIOUS OBSERVATIONS

If you're an observant Christian, you can get Advent calendars that open up to an image, poem or part of the Nativity study. If you have a reusable calendar, consider putting in a Bible verse or prayer that can be part of your family's Advent devotions.



NONTRADITIONAL ADVENT CALENDARS

The popularity of advent cal-

endars means there's now an Advent calendar for everything. Beauty products, pop culture

figurines, toys, wine and more now come in Advent calendar collections. These make great

early season Christmas gifts (don't make it too late, then they can't countdown!).