



Holiday DECORATING



Save on Decorations

Sticking to a decorating budget around Christmastime can be a downright daunting undertaking. Other expenses can add up quickly this time of year, including gifts, food for holiday parties and gas for transportation.

Before you know it, your decorating budget can look pretty slim. But you can still pull off an elegant, festive theme with the help of a little thriftiness and creativity.

The important thing to remember is to stay committed to your budget, no matter how limited it may be. Your home will look even better when you know that you didn't have to dip into savings or rack up credit card debt to find the perfect decorations.

HEIRLOOMS & HAND-ME-DOWNS

One of the first places you should check when trying to find affordable decoration is the home of a family member. Someone who is downsizing or thinking of having a yard sale may be in minimalist mode, which can be great for you when trying to score their hand-me-down Christmas decorations.

Additionally, maybe there is a special decoration in your family that you've loved over the years. This could be the time to ask for it. Heirloom pieces not only help you save money but can add special meaning to your collection of decorations.

GO DISCOUNT SHOPPING

You don't have to wait for the holiday season to start buying Christmas decorations. Be on the lookout at yard sales or flea markets throughout the summertime to spot your next great find.

Thrift stores also are home to many options that families have either outgrown or replaced. You can buy these at discounted prices, even if they still look like new.

GO ALL NATURAL

Mother Nature can serve as one big discount store for holiday decorations. That's because resources such as branches, nuts and winter berries are natural — and free.

With some hot glue and yarn, you can create a stunning decoration to weave through your tree or add to your table centerpiece. Fill a vase with pine cones and pine needles to make the perfect addition for an end table.

The elements from your backyard can go a long way in keeping you on your decorating budget.



Accentuate with Lighting

Whether it be weaved throughout your tree or complementing your outdoor decorations, the right lighting can really transform a space.

There are lighting options for every decorating purpose, including various sizes, colors and applications. Finding the right lighting for you depends on how and where you plan to use it.

As with decorations, the perfect time to score low-priced lighting is immediately following the Christmas season. That's when retailers big and small look to clear out their holiday inventory, offering products at deep discounts.

Check in with your locally owned hardware stores first to support the business owners in your own backyard.

INDOOR LIGHTING

Since you will be living with the lights you choose inside your home, it's important to choose options that won't flood you out. Soft, subtle lighting is the way to go for decorating your interior, while you can get away with brighter options outside.

Look around at your overall design scheme and decide if colored or white lights would look best. Lighting is available in traditional wattage or more efficient LED styles.

Don't just light your tree. Your mantle, window frames and staircase banister all can use a little brightening up in the spirit of the holidays.



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OUTDOOR LIGHTING

Sometimes outdoor decora-

tions aren't enough. You have to accentuate them with the proper lighting to really make them stand out. Solar lighting is both versatile and portable,

and it can light up your stand-up display for all hours of the night.

Icicle lights look great hung from your roof line and can

also liven up a patio, back deck or even a barn. If you have a nearby power source and are OK with a slightly higher electric bill, nothing is off limits.

Decorate for Your Lifestyle

How do you decorate your home for the holidays? If you have children at home, you probably keep things simple. If your kids have left the roost, you might break out the crystal ornaments and elegant glassware.

We probably all have different ideas about what makes the perfect Christmas decorating theme depending on our spot in life, not to mention our personal styles and tastes. Knowing what makes sense for you and your home is key. Once you figure that out, you can dive head first into buying and incorporating your decorations.

WHERE YOU LIVE

What's the difference between decorating a home on the beach and one in the city? A lot! And knowing how to design for your geography, climate and overall style will help define your decorating strategy.

Beach-inspired Christmas decor can include seashells on the mantel or starfish-style ornaments. Vases filled with sand featuring green ribbon around the top also can combine Christmas and the beach.

Think more traditional for a city dwelling with subtle decorations. Emphasis can be put on more formal pieces, including the dining room table. This can give your decorating style a more formal feel.

HOUSE OR APARTMENT?

In an apartment? Use your



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space wisely. Even if you see a big sale on decorations, it may not be the right time to buy it.

You have to think about how things will look in your space, as well as where you will store it after the holiday

season.

If you own your home and have plenty of attic, garage or basement space, quantity should not be a concern.

Choose where and how you want to spend your decorating budget in terms of

the size of your primary rooms and the height of your ceilings. Factors such as these are important when you're trying to pull together a cohesive design.

If you live in a rental home, be sure to check with your

landlord on what you're permitted to decorate during the holidays.

Some landlords probably won't be crazy about you stapling lights into their roof, while others may let you have free reign.

Decorate Your Staircase

Your staircase is the portal between the different worlds of your home. It should look its best during the holidays.

Many aspects of the staircase make it the perfect backdrop for a variety of decorations. From stockings and Christmas cards to garland and wreaths, you can fill up the sidewall and banisters of your staircase with festive touches.

STOCKINGS

The staircase offers the perfect space for your family's stockings, no matter how tall they are. Hang them at every other spindle of your banister to give the side of your staircase a symmetrical appearance.

You also can color coordinate with tiny decorations flowing from the top of the stockings that match the color of your staircase.

WREATHS & RIBBON

Nothing sets apart a banister like a collection of green wreaths and red ribbon.

You can extend the look of one giant wreath in the middle of the banister by running red ribbon throughout the rest of the spindles. Or try affixing multiple wreaths throughout the banister.

Tie the room together by placing a vase of evergreen and red berries on a nearby table. The combination of the



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two will be a visual treat for your guests.

SHIMMER AND SHINE

Another classic staple of holiday decorating is tinsel

and garland. Vivid silver and gold strands running down the side of your staircase can help accentuate your decorated tree.

You can find metallic-colored leaves or simply add some jingle bells to your evergreen decorations for a

similar effect.

ORNAMENTS

Who said ornaments were only made for the tree? They can look just as festive hanging from the staircase banister with long ribbon or colorful

string.

Simplicity is key here, so try to avoid ornament overload. Mixing in different sizes can be an eye-catching way to design your staircase, but try to keep them all fairly large given the space you're working with.

Tech the Halls

The best Christmas decorations work together to form a spectacular theme that builds excitement and anticipation for the special holiday.

From the tree topper to the tablecloth, your home's holiday theme should have a consistent color, story or 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.

LED LIGHTS

We have come a long way from the oversized colored bulbs that used to line our Christmas trees and roofs. Many LED light strips are now on the market, offering a more efficient, customizable lighting experience.

Most LED options are dimmable and wirelessly controlled. And you aren't constrained to only using this advanced lighting inside. Waterproof strips also are available.

You also can find add-ons and smartphone apps to control your LED lights according to music. These sound-reactive lighting setups make the lights flash and change color.

SMART DECORATIONS

Do you struggle to remember to turn off your holiday lights or decorations? No more. Many Internet router mak-



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ers also sell app-enabled switches that let you control when your lighted pieces turn on and off. You can make arrangements for your Christmas tree to light up each day at sundown, or to turn off the lights every night at midnight.

Decoration customization is here, and it could make your life much easier.

3-D PRINTED ORNAMENTS

Ornaments have a special

place in our lives because of the memories they provide. And now they can be more high-tech and custom-made than ever before.

3-D printing technology continues to be a game-changer in the space of product manufacturing.

Online 3-D printing companies will take your uploaded design and turn it into a tangible ornament.

You also can work with 3-D modelers to bring your idea to life. Many of these same companies have pre-designed ornaments, as well.

Crystallize Your Christmas

Maybe you have some extra financial resources to put toward decorations this holiday season. Instead of quantity, why not choose quality?

Adding a few high-end touches to your home can turn an ordinary decoration into a stunning display. Many people turn to crystal to achieve their design goals.

Crystal has long been associated with luxury and high-end living. Many local designers and boutiques carry popular crystal brands and can even help you personalize items with high-quality sandblast etching — the perfect Christmas gift for the decorator in your life.

CRYSTAL CHRISTMAS TREE

Whether you choose to use real or artificial this Christmas, crystal ornaments or beads can turn any tree into a sparkling thing of beauty. Hang them from your tree in a balanced manner to help them work off each other.

If your tree is in a well-lit location, such as in front of a window, you will be treated to a magnificent light show during the day as sunshine bounces from crystal to crystal.

CRYSTAL VASES

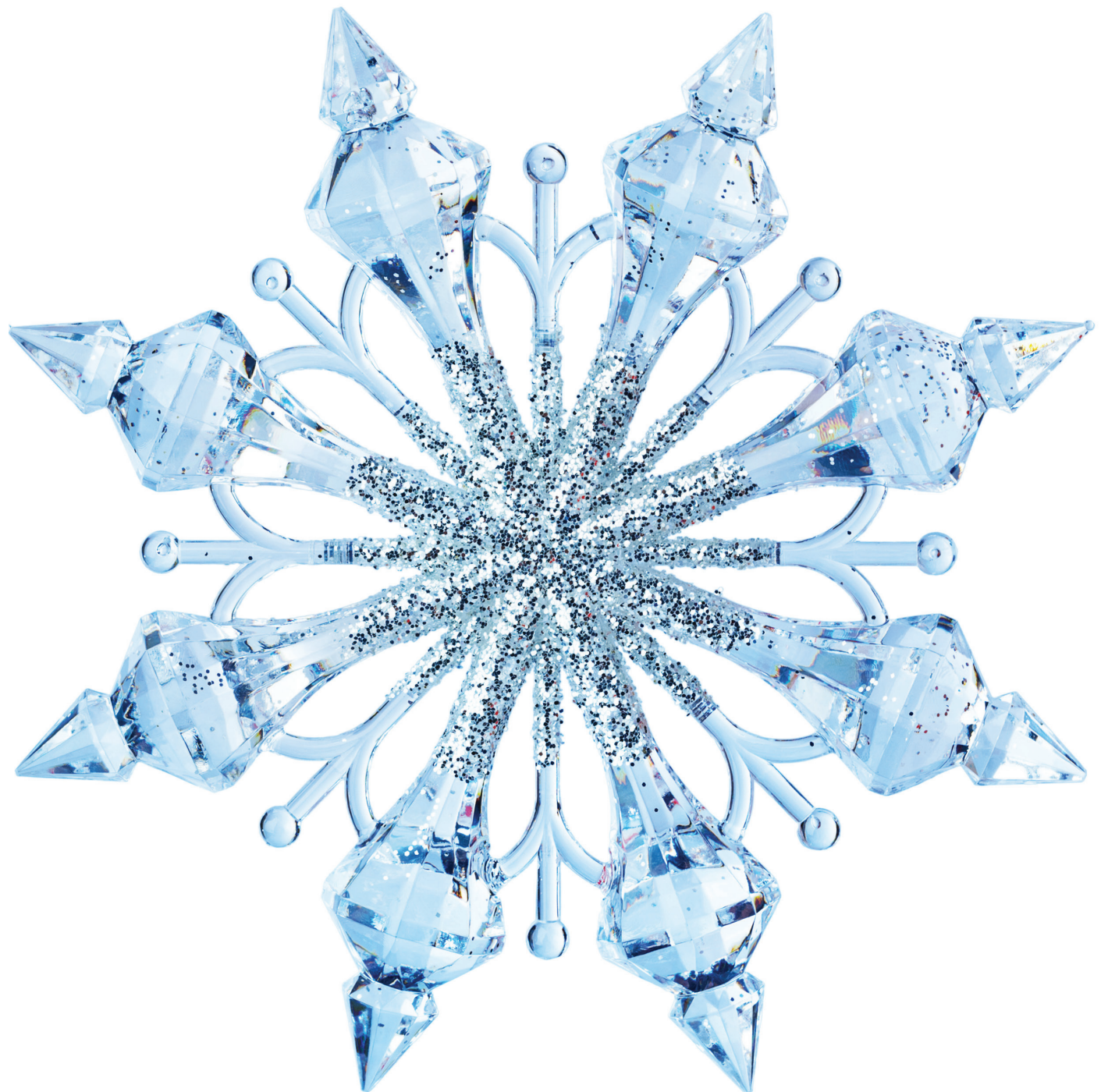
A colorful bouquet of freshly picked flowers can work well within any decorating theme, especially if they are displayed in a crystal vase. Many vases on the market come with elegant patterns at the bottom of the piece to help accentuate the flowers.

Again, it is the reflective quality of crystal that makes it a stunning decorative piece. Crystal vases are crystal clear and make the perfect home for your bouquet's bright colors.

CRYSTAL GLASSES

If you're looking to celebrate in style this year, crystal stemware from a high-end brand can help give your toast a sophisticated twist. You can find toasting flutes with etched snowflake patterns, as well as in vibrant hues.

Search for the perfect crystal glass for martinis, wine or any of your other favorite drinks to make a splash at your holiday party this year.



Storage Solutions

One aspect of decorating that can be easy to overlook is storage. Where will you keep all of the giant outdoor inflatable Santas when the New Year comes?

Fortunately, there are many tips and tools out there that can help you stow away your holiday decorations in a clean, safe location.

Your first step should be measuring the space where you'd like to store your pieces.

Having dimensions will help you map out what can go where, making the cleanup process a breeze this year.

CONTAINERS

If your organizational plans consist of throwing your decorations in a few boxes and placing them in the attic, it may be time to consider alternatives.

Plastic, airtight containers can help keep your decorations in pristine condition.

And what's more important, considering how many times throughout the years you'll be breaking the decorations back out?

GIFT WRAP

Wrapping paper has gotten expensive. And given how much you'll likely have left over at the end of the gift-giving season, you'd be fiscally wise to hold onto it for future use.

Instead of sending it under your bed to collect dust, purchase a gift wrap organizer unit that can hang from the back of a closet door.

If you're set on keeping the wrapping paper under your bed, opt for a thin, box that can be closed and hold all different sizes.



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TREE STORAGE

When choosing a tree storage solution, be sure to consider where you want to place it for the rest of the year.

Doing so can keep you safe when transferring it. For example, if you're placing your tree in a large box that is not easily maneuvered, you may reconsider battling your attic stairs.

Instead, the garage or extra storage closet are probably your best bets. This goes for any type of decoration. If you can't safely move the item, rethink your storage plan.