

# Holiday Decorating

Holidays  
2010

## All Hands on Deck

No hand is too small to help decorate  
for Christmas! Here's how to get  
everyone involved

**PLUS:**

**Tree trimming 101**

**The one seasonal splurge worth making**



## HAPPY HOLIDAYS!



Image courtesy of "The Farm Chicks Christmas: Merry Ideas for the Holidays" by Serena Thompson (Hearst Books, 2010)

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### **ANATOMY 101**

The perfect Christmas tree does exist. Here's how to bring it home

### **DRAMA QUEEN**

Some stale holiday traditions don't need to be tossed. They just need a modern twist

### **GAME CHANGERS**

Why less is more this Christmas, and why the more yellow in a room, the better

### **A FARM CHICK IN A PEARTREE**

Serena Thompson, founder of "Farm Chic" décor, shows how to go out on a limb this season and craft a unique holiday home with items like umbrella stands, antique mailboxes, and simple balls of yarn

### **STRAIGHT FROM THE HAND-MADE HEART**

Grab the shredded coconut, old photos, sequins and a trusty glue gun and get ready for a Christmas to remember

### **LOST AND FOUND**

The living room may be the star of the holidays, but often-ignored rooms can find their decorative calling with these stylish tips

### **THE HOLIDAY DECORATOR'S TOOLBOX**

Here are the go-to décor items to have on hand before Santa comes

### **THE LIGHTER SIDE**

Color, technology and hippos help the holidays shine bright this year

### **CAUSE FOR CELEBRATION**

Seasonal décor basics like candles, white lights and silver bells are all any host needs to keep the house ready for an impromptu holiday gathering

### **DECORATING 911**

Santa might be busy, but these local experts are on standby ready to rescue any home in need of help and holiday cheer



# Anatomy

## 101

The perfect Christmas tree *does* exist. Here's how to bring it home

BY ANNA SACHSE  
CTW Features

**W**ant a Christmas tree that's more than just a reason to dust off old ornaments? Start by considering an overall color scheme, says Michelle Workman, a Los Angeles-based interior designer who has composed spaces for celebrities like John Travolta and Jennifer Lopez.

For traditionalists, traditional colors like red, green, white, gold and silver never get old. For a bold effect, Workman suggests trying hues such as fuchsia, chartreuse and turquoise. It can also be fun to create a theme, such as an "enchanted forest" with amber lights, pinecone garland, mini gold balls, owl ornaments and faux birds nestled in branches, says Nicole Sforza, senior editor for *Real Simple* magazine. Either way, always start tree-decorating with lights, followed by garland and then ornaments, Workman says. Keep real trees away from direct sunlight, air vents, heaters and fireplaces to prevent premature drying and accidental fires.

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An average-size tree requires a stand with a base of about 20 inches in diameter, Sforza says, and it should hold at least a gallon of water. Only plain tap water is needed; do not add bleach, aspirin or fertilizer, which can actually reduce moisture retention and increase needle loss. Before securing the tree in its stand, cut one-half inch off the base. A fresh cut reopens the pores that take up water, Workman says. Check the water level daily to ensure it stays above the tree's base. "If the tree looks dry, adding hot tap water to the stand can speed up intake," Sforza says.

Embellish the base of a tree (and catch wayward needles) by draping the floor with an array of silk scarves in different patterns. Try luxurious velvet, silver organza or gold lamé fabric, Sforza suggests. Don't forget that presents are the best Christmas tree accessory. "Wrap them in fun colors that coordinate with the tree and incorporate pretty satin ribbons and dangly bits to make them extra special," Workman says.

### Topper

Stars and angels are classic tree toppers. For something more unique, consider faux antlers or a thick satin ribbon tied in a bow, Sforza says. Think birds, too. Workman uses a colorful faux peacock to top off her tree.

### Lights

"When stringing lights, start at the bottom of the tree and work up," Sforza says. To make taking down the lights easier, she recommends dividing the tree into three vertical sections, and then running the lights through the interior and exterior of the branches to add depth to the design. Consider using LED lights, which burn up to 80-percent less energy and give off less heat.

### Garland

An average-sized tree (6 to 7 feet) will typically use 60 feet of garland, Sforza says. She suggests creating homemade garland out of beads, faux pearls, knotted twine or rope, colorful buttons and satin ribbon. Keep the garland approximately half an inch thick for an elegant look that won't overwhelm the tree, Workman advises.

### Ornaments

To give the tree depth, ornaments should be hung toward the inside of the tree and on the branch ends, Workman says. Place them where they won't touch the branch below. Keep from overcrowding by exercising restraint and occasionally stepping back to see the tree as a whole. Use ornaments that match the theme or color scheme, or personalize the tree with homemade decorations. Sforza likes to create ornaments using a glue gun and string to hang origami, family photos, baby shoes or old toys like Matchbox cars and wooden blocks.

### Stand

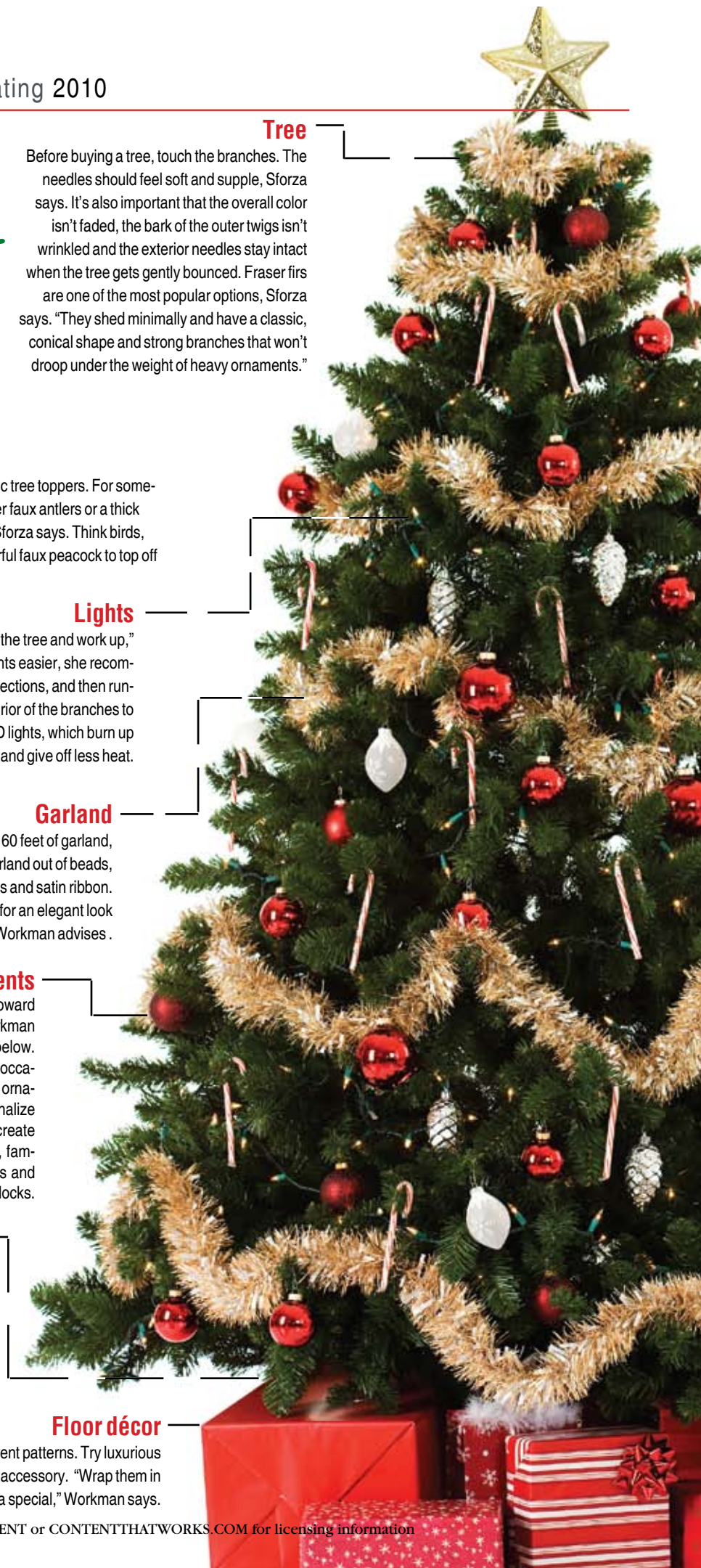
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### Floor décor

Embellish the base of a tree (and catch wayward needles) by draping the floor with an array of silk scarves in different patterns. Try luxurious velvet, silver organza or gold lamé fabric, Sforza suggests. Don't forget that presents are the best Christmas tree accessory. "Wrap them in fun colors that coordinate with the tree and incorporate pretty satin ribbons and dangly bits to make them extra special," Workman says.

### Tree

Before buying a tree, touch the branches. The needles should feel soft and supple, Sforza says. It's also important that the overall color isn't faded, the bark of the outer twigs isn't wrinkled and the exterior needles stay intact when the tree gets gently bounced. Fraser firs are one of the most popular options, Sforza says. "They shed minimally and have a classic, conical shape and strong branches that won't droop under the weight of heavy ornaments."



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Drama

Some stale holiday traditions – like color schemes – don't need to be tossed. They just need a modern twist

By JOANN GRECO  
*CTW Features*

“The objects and colors that we turn to over and over around the holidays are standard because they work,” says Alexa Hampton, the president and featured designer of New York City’s Mark Hampton, LLC.

“Sometimes, though,” she adds, “it’s a good idea to experiment.”

Think of holiday decorating traditions like the ubiquitous little black dress, says Hampton, author of “The Language of Interior Design” (Clarkson Potter, 2010). “The black dress is and always will be a classic. But it becomes ours – and gets noticed – when we accessorize with shoes,

handbags, jewelry, belts, scarves, whatever.” Here are a few ways to play with traditional holiday décor.

#### EMBRACE COLOR

Tricia Guild has made a living out of helping regular folks understand how to work color in their homes through her British design studio, Designers Guild. “Nothing adds glamour and drama more easily than adding a splash of bold color,” says Guild, author of “Tricia Guild: Colors, Patterns and Space” (Rizzoli, 2010). She suggests switching



**Urge to splurge: Go crazy, just this once. Indulge in this year’s must-have buy – a statement bowl to hold brightly colored fruit, ornaments or spools of ribbon.**

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out clear drinking glasses for jewel-toned ones as a quick way to bring pizzazz to the holiday table.

Hampton likes the idea of color, too, right down to the candles. "Even black ones look great with gold or silver candlesticks," she says. "They're elegant but still festive." Or borrow a page from the Hanukkah palette. Blue and silver is a modern but timeless color combination.

Designers caution that relying on too much red and green or on an abundance of shiny metals can jangle instead of jingle. "Tone it down," suggests architect and designer Suzanne Lovell, principal at her eponymous firm, which is based in Chicago and New York. "Instead use tones like burgundy and olive."

### TURN OVER A NEW LEAF

Another way to bring new drama to old holiday décor is to fiddle with foliage and flowers. Instead of pine garland, for example, consider magnolia leaves, Lovell says. "Its velvety, copper

underside mixes so well with the deep waxy green of its top," she says.

Winterberries, cranberries and brilliant white birch are also great natural choices. "I like taking a large urn and arranging a few tall winterberry branches with blue spruce and black pine," Lovell says. "It's a sophisticated take on the familiar." Guild says herbs such as rosemary and sage are beautiful in their own right, and add texture, greenery and a wonderful scent.

### SPREAD THE JOY

To update this year's holiday decorating, consider expanding your territory. Lovell says tiny white lights "are the most effective, easiest and varied way to celebrate the season." But don't stop at the tree. Drape strands over stair rails, around mirrors and even on a deck, balcony or terrace.

"The front of the house is for everyone else, but the back is yours," Lovell says. "It's magical to see all of this extra space lit up for the holidays. Some-

times I even put a small evergreen tree out there, decorated with just white lights."

Throughout the house, think of ways to use wrapped presents as decorative elements. "Play up whatever motif you've chosen by repeating one of the main colors in the bows tied around the gifts," Hampton suggests. Then, showcase the beguiling and bedecked gift boxes in surprising places: ascending the steps, stacked on a bur-nished wood library table, next to the fireplace, wherever the mood strikes.

### BOWL 'EM OVER

Of course, every family has its treasured ornaments and favored holiday knickknacks. No need to give them the Santa boot; just look at them with a more critical and curatorial eye. "Avoid the temptation to overload the tree and every tabletop," Hampton says.

So what to do with all those trinkets that clutter up homes and lives around this time of the year? Lovell has an

answer: "I put everything in beautiful bowls," she says. "One big wooden bowl might hold all of my holiday cards, another crystal bowl will overflow with antique toy ornaments and a few precious glass balls. Bowls filled with all kinds of goodies are a wonderful thing. When it looks like you've decorated with care and without resorting to pre-made, manufactured things, you have instant elegance," Lovell says.

### SPLURGE ON SOMETHING SPECIAL

Don't have the right statement bowl? Consider it as this season's one splurge. Or, think about a bold rug to mix new color and texture with wintertime décor, Guild says. For Lovell, lavish fabric ribbons and fine glossy wrapping paper are worth the extra dollars. And Hampton recommends indulging in luxe food and drinks and using them as decorating elements. Sparkling pink champagne and glittering ebony caviar, anyone?

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# Game Changers

Why less is more this Christmas, and why the more yellow in a room, the better

By CHUCK ROSS  
*CTW Features*

**H**oliday decorations can create great backdrops for seasonal parties, but daily life with all those Santas, snowmen and miniature Victorian villages can wear on the nerves of someone who just wants an unobstructed view of the TV.

So, instead of trying to find a spot for every last ornament, some home decorators are finding advantages in a simpler approach that still speaks to the season, but in a more understated tone of voice. Such plans might begin with choosing one or two favored colors. (Newsflash: They don't have to be the classic red and green.) Then, add a few choice candles or tabletop pieces to help emphasize the season. A hall



**Not so mellow yellow:** Get bold with this year's "it" color. Spice up a tabletop with yellow candles; pair pale yellow ornaments with gold ribbon; and use well-placed mirrors to reflect light throughout a room.

closet can hold special dishes or linens that can be brought out for last-minute entertaining and then easily put away. With this kind of simplified plan, seasonal decorations can still be comfortable, instead of cloying, even beyond New Year's Day.

Decorating maven Chris Madden is a proponent of such holiday schemes, which warm up winter spaces without requiring days of packing and unpacking (not to mention dusting). To her, the urge to simplify represents the solution to a very basic lifestyle equation.

"For me, stuff equals stress," she says. This philosophy also is the basis for her new book, "The Soul of a Home: Decorating with Warmth, Style and Comfort" (Rizzoli, 2010).

Instead of hauling out an attic's worth of decorations, Madden draws on the "serene," "adventurous" and "romantic" themes that have guided development of her various home-furnishings lines. Each room's plans are geared toward these ideas, drawing on some very down-to-earth resources for realizing her vision. Madden says anyone can achieve her





lived-in, layered look with silver-sprayed pinecones, stacks of holiday-themed, coffee-table books, throws of tartan plaids and sofa pillows wrapped in fabric remnants. “The layering consists of things you’ve purchased, things you’ve inherited and things you’ve gathered as curbside treasures,” she explains.

Angelo Surmellis grew up in a Greek Orthodox household in which seasonal decorating was anything but holiday-neutral, with a strong emphasis on nativity scenes and other religious imagery. The longtime HGTV designer, whose angelo:HOME line of home furnishings just hit QVC home shopping, has since opened his winter-décor plans to ideas that might be less off-putting to friends from other backgrounds.

“The best way to do that for me was to create a festive atmosphere,” he says, “rather than one that’s focused on religion.” Surmellis’ plans generally begin with a color theme,

which can vary from year to year and often draws on hues he sees in retailers’ color palettes. This year, for example, yellow has shown up in many stores’ schemes. So, what’s the best way to give yellow, the classic spring-time room brightener, a holiday appeal? Surmellis says, it’s all in what the sunny color is paired with.

“You can make any color feel more festive just by adding silver or gold to it,” he says, noting the added impact a little bit of luster can have on even today’s popular amber fall-like tones. “If you add a little gold to them, they feel really festive.”

Using this rule of thumb, Surmellis suggests adding silver or gold drapery panels to window coverings, or giving bare branches or pinecones a quick coat of metallic spray paint. That reflective sparkle also can come from crystal or mirrors. In fact, a mirror as a centerpiece can serve double duty, catching and reflecting surrounding candlelight and doubling

the colorful, visual impact of the holiday goodies being served up. Decking out the dining table is a breeze with Surmellis’ guidance. He prefers china in white, another favorite goes-with-anything hue, paired with silver or gold chargers. Add a swag of holiday greenery and, perhaps, an ornament or two from a table-topping chandelier to create an elegant setting worthy of any holiday feast. If even this pared-down approach is pushing holiday-themed design talents to the edge, he suggests falling back on the power of pleasant aromas to tease out festive feelings.

“If you’re ever in doubt, even if you can’t bake, get some slice-and-bake cookies and throw them in the oven,” he says. “Nothing says the holidays like walking into a home to the scent of freshly baked cookies.”

Party planner extraordinaire Preston Bailey doesn’t have much time to host his own gatherings once the season begins; he’s usually too busy

decking the halls of his high-end clients, including Oprah, Donald Trump and Catherine Zeta-Jones. Like Madden and Surmellis, he uses color as a starting point for party décor, regardless of the size of the gathering.

“I think this gives a cohesion, and every year it looks completely different,” he says. Use a color theme to help breathe new life and a longer display lifespan into an otherwise cliché holiday display, Bailey says. Simple twig wreaths can become something special when sprayed this year’s color – and could remain a fresh seasonal adornment until the springtime sun returns. The one caveat at this otherwise more-is-more designer offers is to give the decorations plenty of room to breathe.

“Whatever you design should have space around it, so people can appreciate it,” Bailey says. “That way the elements are much more effective.”

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# A Farm Chick in a Pear Tree

**Serena Thompson, founder of 'Farm Chic' décor, shows how to go out on a limb this season and craft a unique holiday home with items like umbrella stands, antique mailboxes and simple balls of yarn**

BY DAWN KLINGENSMITH  
*CTW Features*

“Be careful what you wish for, you just might get it.”

That's what Serena Thompson's mother told her whenever the home décor merchant wanted something when she was growing up. It wasn't a threat so much as it was her mother's way of saying, "If it's meant to be, it will happen."

Apparently, Thompson was destined to have style because one year she received the corduroy pants and matching vest she'd wished for, even though her hippie parents could not afford them. They arrived in a box of outgrown clothes an old family friend sent, just in time for Christmas.

Those hand-me-down cords with the fancy back pockets might have had a second life as a throw pillow or Christmas stocking had they survived Thompson's childhood. "I never felt like I wanted to re-create my childhood home or that

lifestyle because it was tough. We had no modern conveniences," including electricity and plumbing, she says. "But it made a real thrifty person out of me, a person who sees value in things and how to use things in different ways."

Using thrift and inventiveness, Thompson perfected the art of creating a cozy home. The signature style she developed, dubbed "Farm Chick" launched her career as a purveyor of "junky treasures," as she puts it, and then as an author and Internet sensation. Her style, a countrified version of shabby-chic with a dash of camp and a smidge of kitsch, is "comfortable, accessible and practical but also tasteful and pretty," says Thompson's publisher, Jacqueline Deval, vice president of Hearst Books.

"It's a style that values tradition and simplicity," Deval says. "It's about rooms that are lived in and loved rather than sleek, empty showcases. And it's particularly appealing during the Christmas season because so much of her homemaking philosophy rests on family traditions."

## **A COOKIE-CUTTER CHRISTMAS**

Thompson's new book, "The Farm Chicks Christmas: Merry Ideas for the Holidays" (Hearst Books, 2010), brings readers into her home and her friends' homes to show how to deck the halls, farm-chick style.

"I have a tendency to rearrange and redecorate my home on a regular basis," Thompson writes, "and Christmas provides the perfect opportunity to indulge this passion. I love the chance to unpack my favor-

Image courtesy of "The Farm Chicks Christmas: Merry Ideas for the Holidays" (Hearst Books, 2010) by Serena Thompson



**Welcome wagon: Thompson greets holiday visitors on the porch with warm signs of the season, like pinecone-adorned wreaths and rustic mailboxes filled with greenery.**



ite holiday collections and then decorate to my heart's content." Thompson's Christmas decorations consist mostly of vintage collectibles and homemade crafts. Her favorite collection is a charming assembly of chalkware choir boys, some of them chipped. The figurines were a thrift shop find. She also loves the look of Christmas cookie cutters, new and old, so when she's not cutting dough, she shows off her collection in a clear glass pantry jar.

None of her collections were passed down through her family. As much as she appreciates heirlooms, most of the ornaments she had growing up were of the construction-paper and strung-popcorn variety. There was a priceless set of glass tree ornaments that belonged to her grandmother, but they were lost in the fire that destroyed Thompson's childhood home when she was in high school.

### NORTH TO ALASKA

After college, Thompson moved to Alaska, where she held a variety of jobs and did her best to adjust to the flat, treeless tundra. "I remember feeling sad because I grew up with lots of trees around," she says.

And since her family had scouted and cut Christmas trees each year on their own woodsy property, holidays on the tundra might have felt especially bleak and barren had her parents not shipped her huge boxes of fragrant evergreen clippings for her apartment. Thompson did attempt to put up a live tree one year, but on the way home in sub-zero weather, the needles froze and fell off. As is her family's custom, Thompson made do with what she had on hand, adding ornaments to the pine and cedar boughs her parents had sent. "It was really special," she says.

Warmth and joy also came to the tundra when Thompson met her husband, Colin. The two eventually moved to his hometown of Spokane, Wash. Their first Christmas they had so little money that Colin gave her a gallon of distilled water to use for

ironing. Though they're now more financially comfortable, Thompson still enjoys simple, inexpensive gifts, such as old toy pickup trucks, which she fills with ornaments and puts on display at Christmastime.

"I like to make cute, Christmas-y scenes out of things like little toy barns," she says. "I make little settings or vignettes with toy cows with little wreaths around their necks, and sprinkle shredded coconut around for snow. That way, I don't feel terrible about buying something synthetic that will never decompose."

Though she has a knack for creating the perfect decorative touches, Thompson says tree-trimming at her home "is not a super thought-out form of decorating. It's fun, impromptu and family-based."

For example, she and her kids recently draped lengths of colored yarn on the Christmas tree in place of tinsel, creating an appealingly disheveled effect.

### STAR OF WONDER

Indirectly, Colin helped launch the Farm Chicks phenomenon, and his wife's stardom, through his involvement with the Spokane volunteer fire department. When one of Colin's fellow fire-fighters was diagnosed with cancer, Thompson solicited donations for a rummage sale to defray medical costs. "A guy drove up with a truckload of junky old stuff that I just loved," she says.

Held in a barn, the rummage sale was a success. Afterward, people continued to bring her simple, worn items that a snootier antique dealer might pass up. Along with her friend Teri Edwards, who has since retired, Thompson founded the Farm Chicks Antique Show to sell off treasures for which she lacked space.

Once the enterprise took off,



**All smiles:** Get the whole family involved in decorating the house for Christmas. Assign little ones tasks they can realistically manage (even with a bit of adult supervision) and can get excited about showing off to guests.



Image courtesy of "The Farm Chicks Christmas: Merry Ideas for the Holidays" (Hearst Books, 2010) by Serena Thompson



the editors of Country Living magazine took notice and invited Thompson and Edwards to write the first Farm Chicks book, “The Farm Chicks in the Kitchen: Live Well, Laugh Often, Cook Much” (Hearst Books, 2009).

Now a contributing editor for the magazine, Thompson owns The Farm Chicks store in Spokane and writes a blog at TheFarmChicks.com, where folks can read about her “darned cute store” and the fact that she considers herself “the luckiest girl in the world.”

Visitors can also monitor the progress of Thompson’s dream home, a farmhouse in the countryside near Spokane, that embodies the spirit of her childhood home yet has modern creature comforts like radiant floor heating.

“Wherever home is – a shack, an apartment, a mansion – you can make it feel homey,” she says. “It’s the little touches that make the difference.”

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## ‘Here a chick, there a chick’

“Make every corner bright” is the Farm Chick philosophy for holiday décor. Here are 6 kid-friendly ideas for spreading holiday cheer on a dime. Calling all elves!

- 1) Form wreaths out of balls of yarn.
- 2) Fill an umbrella stand or bucket with rolls of seasonal wrapping paper – it’s both pretty and practical.
- 3) Place a rustic or antique mailbox on the porch and fill the open box with greenery.
- 4) For old-timey charm, use a galvanized tub to disguise the tree stand.
- 5) Stuff gifts into burlap bags. The simple fabric looks like Santa’s own tote and keeps the focus on the tree until Christmas morning, when everyone’s brightly wrapped gifts are unveiled.
- 6) Put baking supplies and tasty snacks on display in glass jars. Let them mingle with holiday dishes in a corner cupboard for full effect.



Image courtesy of “The Farm Chicks Christmas: Merry Ideas for the Holidays” by Serena Thompson (Hearst Books, 2010)

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# Straight from the *handmade* heart

Grab the shredded coconut, old photos, sequins and a trusty glue gun and get ready for a Christmas to remember

BY MARY K. FONS  
*CTW Features*

**R**eluctant to dig out the same old, tried-and-true holiday decorations that helped usher in the aughts?

Indulge. It's time to switch up that worn-out Christmas routine. Head to the craft store instead,

where, for a little money and just a bit more time, anyone can create handmade holiday decorations that truly inspire the spirit of the season.

"A handmade object has been made with love," says Lynsey Searle, co-editor of the popular craft blog *Cuteable*. "It isn't rushed, and it can be made to exact specifications. Basically, handmade rocks."

This is true especially around the holidays, when many people load up on seasonal accessories, inside and out. Loading up on too many pre-fab decorations can make a home look like a drugstore's holiday aisle – impersonal and not very creative. Handmade Christmas decorations deliver the crafter's own brand of holiday cheer.

"I love making trees for the holidays," says Anne Holub, member of the Chicago DIY club *The Crafty Ladies*. "I don't know if it's just the country girl in me stuck in the city at the holidays, but I love a nice snowy forest to pretend I'm dashing through the snow." Make snow-capped forest scenes

from folded papers, Styrofoam cones wrapped in felt, tiny twigs or any combination of these and countless other options. Baby powder, artificial sweetener, or even coconut can serve as snow.

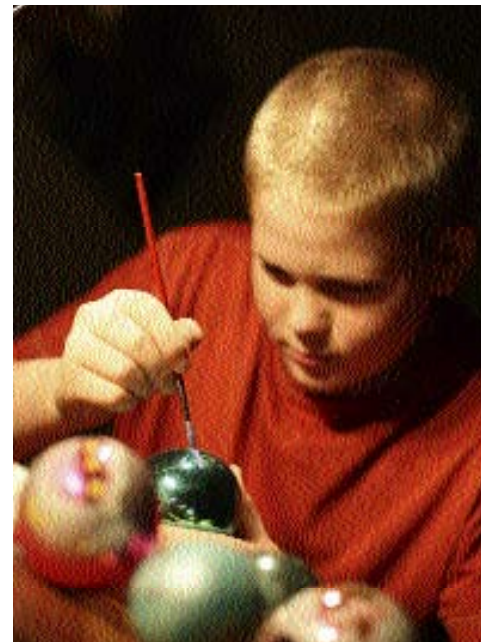
#### DIY: A FAMILY AFFAIR

"Craft projects are a fun way to bring together friends and family to spark creativity and spend time together getting messy and making something special for the home," says Julie Sch-

neider, head of "How-Tuesday," a handmade how-to blog at *Etsy.com*, the online craft retailer.

"I have fond memories of making holiday crafts with my mom as a kid," Schneider says. "Many of the ornaments and decorations we made together still get pulled out year after year at Christmastime and have become an integral part of our personal family holiday traditions."

Whether it's a classic construction paper ring garland or a popcorn



chain, kids love getting in on the DIY action.

"With kids old enough to handle pins, make ornaments with Styrofoam balls, straight pins and sequins," Schneider says. "Use the ball as the canvas and put one flat-head straight pin through a sequin, then stick it into the ball. Make geometric designs, snowflakes, spell a name or even pin green fir trees on a sea of white snow-colored sequins. Attach a loop of yarn to a pinhead and stick it to the top of the ball. Hang it from the tree and keep for next year."

#### CRAFTING 101

"In my book, some of the best craft projects can emerge from plain-old household materials or otherwise recycled or thrown-away tidbits that have been quietly waiting around the home for the right DIY project," Schneider says. And anything around the house is fair game when transforming a home into a holiday wonderland.

"Junk mail and out-of-date magazines and catalogs can be torn up and turned into recycled paper for cards and tags, or folded up into clever rolling ball ornaments or gift boxes," she adds.

"There are many alternate sources for craft supplies these days, given that there is a strong focus on recycling and repurposing," says Janice Rusnak, who runs *Papier Valise*, a com-





pany that specializes in sourcing provisions for DIY-ers in Canada.

“Vintage holiday décor is finding its way into modern day crafting,” Rusnak says. “Dig out those old family photos. Look for photos taken during specific seasons that can be copied



and enlarged for specific projects. Frame a family member’s artwork. I prefer to use vintage items in a new way. It’s all about creativity and thinking outside of the box.”

Homemade holiday craft decorations are like snowflakes: There are a zillion of them, and no two are exactly alike. Read on for a few fail-safe holiday crafting ideas that require minimal supplies and deliver major satisfaction – for both the crafter and those who will admire the handiwork.

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**1 HOLIDAY SCRAPBOOK CHAIN** Collect old holiday greeting cards, colored card stock and magazine images that embody the holiday spirit and cut into trapezoidal shapes. Paint stars or other holiday images on top, if desired. Hang from tree, on doorknobs or over mantles.

**2 A SIMPLE SNOWMAN** For a fun centerpiece that’s much cheaper than flowers or big candles, fashion a friendly snowman. Place a potato in the opening of a glass jar to form the snowman’s head. Cover entirely with felt or cotton quilt batting. Create a scarf, carrot nose, eyes and buttons from cardboard, paint and buttons. Voila!

**3 EMBELLISHED ORNAMENTS** Breathe new life into glass bulb ornaments that are looking a little tired by dressing them up with a painted design. Feathers, stars, berries and any number of holiday images can brighten a chipped or fading bulb. Find craft paints at a local craft store and apply with a thin-tipped brush.

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# LOST and Found



The living room may be the star of the holidays, but often-ignored rooms can find their decorative calling with these stylish tips

BY JEFF SCHNAUFER  
*CTW Features*

**M**uch like an awkward teenager at his first dance who just won't do anything for fear of drawing attention to himself, some rooms in the house just simply don't know what to do with themselves during the holidays. It's nice to be able to spread holiday cheer throughout the home, rather than dumping all the decorations in the predictable rooms. Here's how to decorate those awkward spots in the home that seem ruled by their function (bathroom, kitchen) and not too concerned with holiday fun. And no, setting out your great-grandmas knitted Santa Claus tissue box cover doesn't count.

#### **BEDROOM**

Consider brightening a bedroom with a specially themed tree, says Connie Lane Christy, president of the Christy Collection, an interior design firm in New Albany, Ohio.

Set up bedroom trees for every bedroom and create a different theme for each one, based on the personality of the occupant. "I have done many silver/pink/purple trees for young girls and many sports trees for males," says Christy. Think gilded trees in copper or bronze for the master bedroom. "Metallics are a little quieter and give the master bedroom and bath more of an intimate feeling," she says.

#### **MAIN HALLWAY**

Take a peek down the hallway. See any family pictures hanging up? "Why not replace the every day pictures with wonderful past holiday pictures?" says Susan Prestia of Interior Directions in Mission, Kan. Enlarge them yourself using a computer and home printer, or send them out to be blown up. "The family and friends will be talking about it," Prestia says. Seattle-based lifestyle and entertaining expert Kelley Moore suggests changing the runner in the hallway to a sisal trimmed in bright red. And if sconces line the wall

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of a hallway, consider using the ceiling for a festive touch. Moore suggests hanging clusters of round ornaments, all the same color, in a row down the center of the hallway as if they were pendant lamps. Use small hooks painted in the same color as the ornaments to hang the clusters.

**BATHROOM**

James Vallejo, president of the Vallejo Corp., a San Diego consulting group, says a little linen can go a long way to bring holiday comfort to the bathroom.

“Add some bath towels, maybe with a tassel,” Vallejo says. Go with deep red, green and gold accented towels for a traditional look, tan, brown and burgundy towels with white and silver accents for a modern look. Brighten the mood with a candle, Prestia says. She prefers flameless candles, to avoid potential fire hazards.

**KITCHEN**

“Most of my kitchens have a fruit, nut

and vegetable theme,” Christy says. “I use cinnamon, nuts and cranberries to give the smells of the seasons, the red pop and the timelessness that those embellishments create.” Set out dried fruit such as pomegranates, artichokes and figs. Christy hand paints hers so the colors are more vivid. “Lush garlands above cabinets pull the theme of the house into the busiest area. By doing the embellishments above the cabinets, nothing is in the way of large family feasts,” she says.

Lynn Jawitz, owner of Florisan, a New York-based floral shop, suggests flowering up the kitchen. “Bring in the outdoors with amaryllis, Christmas cactus, plants and foliage,” she says. “For a double-duty decoration and holiday gift, purchase a phalaenopsis orchid, wrap the pot in colored foil, add a bow and put it on display. At the end of the season, give it as a gift to a friend with a green thumb who can keep the plant thriving throughout the year.”

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**A Good First Impression:  
Holiday Fun In The Foyer**

During the holidays, Seattle lifestyle and entertaining expert Kelley Moore loves to place a conversation piece on display right where guests will see it as they enter the front door.

“I have framed a 4x8 piece of high grade plywood painted in chalkboard paint in a gold, over-the-top frame,” Moore says. “It’s a drawing of a life-size tree with room between the branches for friends and family to decorate, leave a message, sketch an ornament, or free form the holiday greeting of their choice.”

Moore secures it to the wall so that just after Thanksgiving dinner, the tree is up and ready to be decorated. The gold frame – or if you are more daring, red lacquer – gives it a high-end feel. Use the piece every holiday season or leave it out all year long, Moore says.

“It is a great way to capture memories throughout the [holiday] months and a way for people to feel connected to the space, allowing them a chance to add their personal flair,” Moore says.

Interior Directions’ Susan Prestia suggests using a mirror over the console to provide “double impact” – the decorative element and its reflection. Think large decorative item (an angel, small tree or reindeer) or accent lighting (tall candlestick lamp, candles, menorah.) The scene will welcome arriving guests and “send a farewell remembrance” when they leave, Prestia says.

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# THE HOLIDAY DECORATOR'S TOOLBOX



Here are the go-to décor items to have on hand before Santa comes

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BY DANIELLE CADET  
*CTW Features*

**D**on't get distracted by tinsel and glitter. Here are the real essential décor items to have on hand this year.

## FRONT-DOOR WREATH

Hanging a Christmas wreath on the front door is a classic way to welcome guests, but they also can be placed elsewhere in the home. "Fresh wreaths can add a sweet aroma and yuletide charm to any room," says , Kathleen Mathiesen, a Florida-based interior decorator and owner of Decorating by Kathleen. Adding berries,

pinecones or colored ribbon can help tie in a holiday theme.

## CLEAR LIGHTS

"For a more elegant look, go for clear light," says Kathy Woodard, home décor expert who runs TheBudgetDecorator.com. "For more of a fantasy look for the holidays, go for the multi-colored ones. Decorating for the holidays can be a great creative outlet; it is the one time of year we can really let go and decorate in a fantasy world."

## RIBBON

"If you buy only one decorating item, make it a giant roll of ribbon," Woo-

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Woodard says. Ribbon is a small item that can make a large impact, and it can be used to dress up ordinary items. Tie ribbon on plants, curtains, the backs of chairs and around throw pillows to look like presents, suggests Leslie Linsley, owner of the Leslie Linsley Nantucket home accessories shops in Boston and Nantucket, Mass.

#### **FRESH GREENS AND PLANTS**

Bring in the outdoors and place natural greenery and plants around the house like fir and pine. You can venture outside to collect pinecones, berries and branches or purchase potted plants. Mathiesen says to cluster poinsettias by the fireplace or a focal point in the living room. And who can forget mistletoe? "It's great fun, and it makes people laugh," she adds.

#### **ORNAMENT BOWL**

Fill a clear vase or bowl with extra ornaments or place it on a shelf or in a room that is often overlooked during

the holidays, like the bathroom.

#### **STAIRCASE GARLAND**

Garland adds a dramatic touch to a staircase. Just be sure it's placed correctly. "I never wrap it around the railing because people use the banister," says Mathiesen. Instead, she says to hang it over the side, or create a focal point by hanging it on the mantle.

#### **EXTRA WRAPPING PAPER**

If there is extra wrapping paper, use it around the house. "Pretty paper can be used to make cheap but elegant Christmas decorations," Woodard says.

#### **DELECTABLE DÉCOR**

Food also can function as decoration. Making gingerbread houses and cookie ornaments are fun activities that double as décor items. Linsley suggests covering dried fruits with sugar to give them a frosted look and placing them in bowls.

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tance. "In the past, the fault with the LED string was the two-piece construction that allowed moisture inside the bulb," says Paul Sessel, owner of Creative Displays, Overland Park, Kan. Underwriters Laboratories Inc., an independent product safety certification organization, recently changed its standards and now requires copper contact points for the bulbs, which should make them more reliable. Also, a number of manufacturers are now offering sealed husks to protect those contacts from the elements, Sessel says.

#### LIGHT SHOWS SHINE

Unlike the icicle lights of a decade ago or the inflatables that have popped up over the past few years, there isn't one, big breakout holiday décor item this year, but there is more movement, such as icicle lights that appear to drip and displays that change color. For the do-it-yourselfer, using software to coordinate light strands and even setting a light show to music is becoming more popular. Companies such as Light-O-Rama provide equipment and advice to create a Vegas-worthy display at home. Also, after years of elegant, all-white lights gaining market share, multi-colored strands are making a comeback, says Brad Finkle, owner of Omaha, Neb.-based Creative Decorating. "Everyone wants to be a little unique and different so their home stands out in the neighborhood," he says.

#### TRADITION TAKES A TRENDY TURN

This year, stores are adding to their inventory softer-hued light strands in fun, fashionable colors, including pink. Lawn décor also is expanding beyond traditional winter themes. Target spokeswoman Tara Schlosser says the pink flamingo was so popular last year that the company has decided to add more novelty items this season, including a hippo and a pig. "Another unique trend this year are lighted twig stakes," she says. "Add them to trees or greenery pots for a chic holiday update."

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BY DENISE DiFULCO  
*CTW Features*

One of the great pleasures of the holiday season is driving around the neighborhood taking in display upon display of festive lights. Decorating one's home is a pleasure all its own, an annual activity made all the brighter with a quick stroll through some local seasonal shop aisles.

#### LEDs ARE HOT

The market for LED lights has grown steadily in recent years, despite the fact that they generally are pricier than traditional incandescent bulbs. Not only do LEDs use less electricity and last longer than their incandescent counterparts, they also don't get as hot to the touch. But the big news in LEDs this year is the arrival of "warm white." "It's a white that doesn't have a bluish tint and looks more like an incandescent bulb," explains Gwyneth Lodge, an associate merchant for Home Depot. Retailers also are expecting solar-powered LEDs to gain interest.

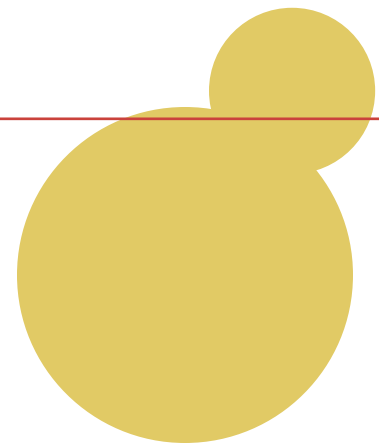
#### STRING LIGHTS SHED THEIR STIGMA

The inadequacies of string lights could launch 1,000 punch lines, but there are some improvements that consumers should look for this holiday season including "continuous-on" LED strands, where the energy flow is better regulated to avoid pesky flickering. Another is better weather resis-

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# Cause for Celebration

Seasonal décor basics like candles, white lights and silver bells are all any host needs to keep the house ready for an impromptu holiday gathering

BY DAWN KLINGENSMITH  
*CTW Features*

**H**oliday festivities don't begin and end with the traditional family feast. Folks don their gay apparel and gather to make merry all throughout the season, from Halloween to New Year's Day, especially since the recession forced a cultural shift in priorities.

"Entertaining has changed. People aren't throwing big, grandiose holiday parties that are planned way ahead," says Rosanna Bowles, founder of the Seattle tableware company Rosanna Inc., and author of "Coming Home: A Seasonal Guide to Creating Family Traditions" (Stewart, Tabori & Chang, 2010). "Gatherings are more spontaneous and casual."

Impromptu get-togethers don't allow for elaborate planning, but it is entirely possible to prepare your home so it is always "party-ready." With the seasonal basics in place, customizing a room for a specific gathering, such as a tree-trimming party or a cookie exchange, can be so effortless that it just might become a family or neighborhood tradition.

## LET THERE BE LIGHT

"During the wintertime, light is the most important thing," Bowles says. "It brightens things up and makes everything seem magical." Creating that

magic can be as simple as draping delicate white lights across the mantel or coiling them into a hurricane vase.

"Massive amounts of votive candles on a silver tray make an instant statement," Bowles says.

Don't worry if the silver isn't polished to perfection. A little tarnish is in keeping with what's trendy in holiday décor. "Everything is toned down," Bowles says. "We're not seeing those bright, brilliant greens and reds and metallics. Everything has more of a worn, faded, special look."

## EMBELLISH WITH SWEETS

A Christmas cookie exchange or a gingerbread house decorating party is a warm way to usher in the holidays. With the house already gussied up to receive guests, just a few added details make for suitably sweet surroundings. Start as far out as the curb by lining the walkway with plastic or foam candy canes. Using poster board, create a round red-and-white peppermint and place it on the door instead of a wreath. Inside, drape strung candies like Life Savers and gumdrops along the banister and mantel.

## BRING ON THE BELLS AND BIRDS

Whether guests gather around the piano or the festivities go door-to-door, a Christmas caroling party calls for traditional trimmings and a touch of whimsy. Greet guests with a wreath fashioned from sleigh bells. Or for a more elegant and ethereal feel, hang wreaths and garlands made of white feathers.

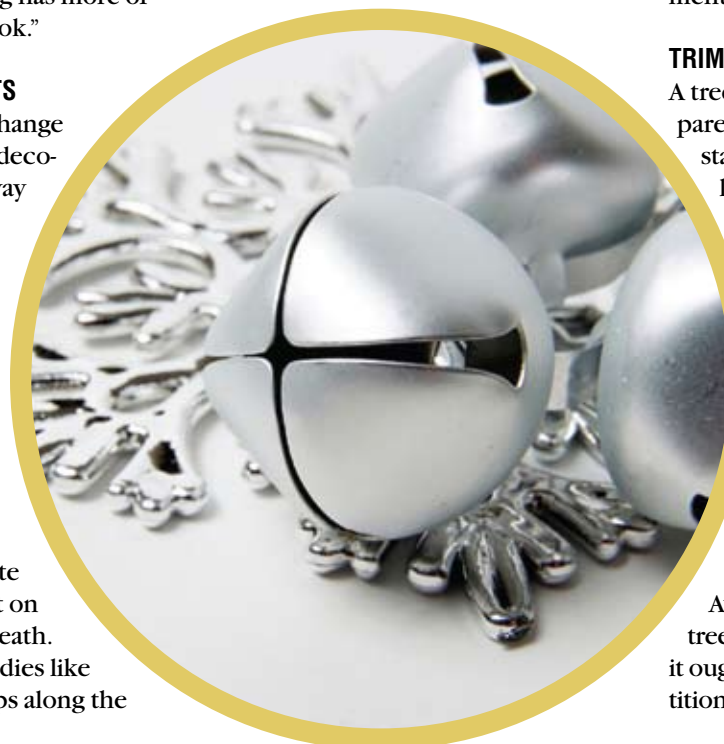
"Christmas and Christmas carols evoke birds," including the swans,

geese, calling birds, turtle doves and partridge of "The 12 Days of Christmas" fame, says Kathy Thomas. She belongs to the Park Avenue Ladies, a group of New York City hostesses who contributed to the book "Park Avenue Potluck Celebrations: Entertaining at Home with New York's Savviest Hostesses" (Rizzoli New York, 2009). Thomas suggests hanging instrument-shaped ornaments, such as harps and cellos, from chandeliers, or cutting ornaments from old sheet music.

## TRIM THE TREE-TRIMMING PARTY

A tree-trimming party ought to have a pared-down, back-to-basics feel to it, starting with traditional luminaries lining the walkway. These are lanterns made of white or brown lunch bags weighted down with sand, which anchors a votive candle or tea light.

Gild magnolia leaves with gold paint and tuck them among fresh garlands. "The way they're shaped and the fact that they're green on one side and brown on the other just feels right for the season," says Heather Leeds, another Park Avenue Lady. But, the Christmas tree takes center stage, she notes, so it ought not to have too much competition.



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DECORATING 911:

## HELP IS ON THE WAY

It's the most wonderful time of the year – until it's time to untangle that box of Christmas lights or clean the house from top to bottom before holiday guests arrive.

Don't let the annual holiday hassles, or a few unexpected ones, trip up your holiday decorating plans. Whatever the challenge, local experts are on standby to help get any home in the holiday spirit in no time flat.

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