



Holiday Home

SPECIAL ADVERTISING SECTION

Get organized for easy holiday decorating

METRO NEWS SERVICE

Celebrations go a long way toward making the holiday season a special time of year. Each holiday offers the opportunity to transform both the interior and exterior of a home into a holiday wonderland blending both store-bought and handcrafted decorations and ornaments.

As families grow, many amass various holiday trinkets and decorative items that become part of their holiday traditions. Some decorations hold special sentimental value, while others are standard decorations found in homes across the globe come the holiday season.

It's easy to get overwhelmed by holiday decorations, but organizing such items can make the process of giving your home a holiday facelift that much easier.

• COLOR-CODING

Storage bins are the unsung heroes of holiday decorating. Such bins keep treasures safe and out of the way in attics, basements and closets. Employing a color-coding system to organize holiday decorations will make it easier to identify items and their corresponding holidays. Christmas objects can be housed in red or green storage containers, while Halloween decorations can be placed in orange containers, and so on. Investing in durable, plastic bins with lids will keep items clean and orderly.

• DESIGNATE A STORAGE SPOT

Hunting and pecking around the house for holiday decor can make the process of decorating that much more time-consuming. Not knowing where the strings of lights or extra extension cords are stored can drag out the time it takes to decorate. Establish a designated storage area for ornaments, lights, wreaths, and other items used to decorate your home come the holidays. Out-of-the way spots like attics or seldom-used closets make good storage spots for holiday decorations, guaranteeing that such items won't get in the way throughout the rest of the year.

• SORT AND REPLACE AS YOU GO

Take the time to periodically go through decorative items, removing anything that is broken or worn beyond repair. It takes time to go items through piece by piece, but this will save time next year when decorations are taken out again. The longer you wait to sort items and do a little cleaning, the more time it ultimately takes to clean house.

• KEEP A RUNNING LIST

Although you may have a general idea of the items you have packed away, some things may be forgotten. Keep an informal inventory of decorations and supplies so you don't purchase any duplicates.



PHOTO COURTESY METRO NEWS SERVICE

Invest in some sturdy, durable storage containers in various colors to organize holiday decor.

Make it easy to get your house festive this year

METRO NEWS SERVICE

It is not the holiday season until homes, stores and town centers are decorated in lights and tinsel. When entire neighborhoods are enhanced by bows and animated figurines, the celebratory tone is set and decorations can trigger happy feelings associated with holiday gatherings.

Some people find holiday decorating enjoyable and eagerly anticipate taking out storage containers and sorting through all of their memory-laden trinkets, while others are less enthusiastic about readying their homes for the season. No matter which group you fall into, the following are some simple tips to make holiday decorating easier.

— **Plan to decorate on a day when you do not have any other responsibilities.** Choose to decorate on a day when you can devote your full attention to decorating, avoiding a day when you might be distracted by other things. If you prefer to decorate alone, ask a friend to watch the kids or have a spouse take them out of the house for a few hours. If decorating is a family event, find a day when everyone's schedules are clear.

— **Take out the decorations the day prior.** Hauling boxes and containers from the attic or basement can take a while. Take some time to move all of the decorating items to a main floor of the house the day or night before your decorating marathon. This way you won't get discouraged or tired by the task even before the real decorating has begun.

— **Put the tree up first.** The Christmas tree is the a focal point of

holiday decorations, so set up the tree and decorate it before you get started on decorating the rest of the house. If you do not get to all of your other decorating, at least the tree will be ready and your home will still have some holiday appeal. Once the lights are on, decorating the tree is a great activity for keeping the kids busy while you handle other jobs.

— **Divide and conquer.** Nothing makes holiday decorating go faster than delegating decorating tasks. Assign specific tasks to your helpers. Put one person in charge of decorating the living room while another handles the outside lights, wreaths and inflatable items.

— **Turn on the tunes.** Working to music frequently takes your mind off of the work and will help pass the time more quickly. Have your favorite holiday playlist at the ready and turn up the volume. Sing along to the carols or contemporary songs while you are elbow-deep in decorations.

— **Take some breaks.** Working hungry or tired may lead to sloppy work or frustration. There's little chance of untangling a knot in the lights with your patience in tact if you haven't eaten for hours. Plan some time for lunch while you sit and rest. Survey the work you've done and make a list of the next steps.

After the hard work of decorating, you'll likely have a sense of accomplishment.

Now it's time to enjoy the holiday scene and prepare for the excitement of the weeks ahead.



PHOTO COURTESY METRO NEWS SERVICE

Follow a few strategies to make easy work of holiday decorating.

FRUGAL GIFT WRAPPING IDEAS DON'T HAVE TO LOOK CHEAP

METRO NEWS SERVICE

Holiday shoppers spend billions of dollars each year on gifts for friends, family and coworkers. But holiday shoppers also spend substantial amounts of money dressing up those gifts with bows and wrapping paper. Shoppers may not want to spend much more on wrapping paper, bags and other ways to dress-up their gifts, and by employing a few tricks of the gift wrapping trade, they may not have to. The following are some frugal, yet flashy, ways to wrap presents this holiday season.

• CHILDREN'S ARTWORK

Over the course of a school year parents can accumulate dozens of original pieces of art from their children's time in the classroom. Instead of relegating those pictures to a memory box or temporary glory on the refrigerator, turn them into unique gift wrap. Pair these pieces of art with colored ribbon, and everyone who gets a unique masterpiece will

feel special.

• NEWSPAPER

Recycle newsprint and comics into wrapping paper. Encourage everyone to wrap in newspaper for a cohesive look come Christmas morning.

• CLOTH

Leftover cloth from Halloween or cloth purchased to create home-made curtains can be turned into giftwrap for awkward-shaped gifts. Use decorative ribbon to

seal the bundle shut.

• BROWN PAPER

Brown paper tied with twine or ribbon is inexpensive and can easily be recycled after use. Use a marker to put the names of gift recipients on each package to save on gift tags as well.

• GLASS JARS

Use mason jars when wrapping smaller gifts, including gift cards, to give them an arts-and-crafts feel.

• FABRIC GIFT BAGS

If you're handy with a needle and thread, sew sacks out of leftover fabric to make gift bags of various sizes.

• COOKIE TINS

Find unique cookie tins from yard sales or leftover tins from holidays past and use them as gift boxes.

• RECIPES

If you will be giving a cookbook or food-themed gifts, print recipes that can

be used as gift wrap and then later used to make certain dishes.

• BASKETS

Wicker baskets are available in various shapes and sizes. They can be used to make a gift collection and then reused over and over again.

There are many creative and inexpensive ways to wrap gifts this year instead of relying on preprinted and often expensive wrapping paper.