

Designer shares holiday decorating tips



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The holidays can be stressful. Make decorating easier with my Top Ten Tips for major oomph and little effort.

Decorating for Christmas is easier when you follow a system. Don't try to completely redecorate your home. Rather, leave all your lamps, pictures frames, potted plants and other decorative accessories in place.

Using what is already there and adding little spots of decorative holiday items makes set up and break down quick and easy.

- I love to decorate with fresh magnolia at Christmas. The leathery leaves make lovely wreaths, garlands, and large-scale arrangements in big baskets or tall, sturdy vases. Even a few branches make a big statement.

- Use lots of fresh or faux red pear and pomegranates as decorative fillers around the house. Just adding these to your everyday décor creates instant holiday warmth without making the house feel overdone.

- Bring out the silver and china. Placing a special tea service or china teacups on trays around the house creates a festive atmosphere. Sometimes I put little pine cones in my teacups during the holidays. In the dining room, I love to display my holiday wine and champagne choices.

- Keep collections on hand such as collectible Santas and those beautiful miniature Swiss Christmas trees that look like bottle brush. It is so simple to add them to your existing tableaux, rather than removing all accessories and starting from scratch.

- I love having handmade primitive olive branch wreaths for the bathrooms and guest rooms. Although this tip is time consuming for some of us, it is something children can easily help with. Tie with red grosgrain ribbon.

- The blankets you purchase for covering the bottom of the Christmas tree are often expensive. Lap blankets or throws in red, green, or winter white stand in as perfect substitutes.

- I've been saving pine cones for years. I love putting them out in big bowls or baskets or using them as fillers in my holiday table settings.

- Hanging boughs and garlands is one of the most time consuming projects at Christmas. Two or three well-chosen spots will keep set up and clean up easier. Instead of doing garlands across the entire stairwell, try doing just a beautiful swag or



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Small Christmas decorations placed among everyday items (top) can add holiday warmth without overwhelming. Fresh greenery also can bring a simple touch of the holidays into the home (above and right).

wreath on the newel at the foot of the stairs.

- Buy a few rolls of bright red grosgrain ribbon and tie them on all



your topiary stems. Instant festivity! I loved mine so much one year, I left them there indefinitely.

- After the last water disaster on

our hardwood floor with a fresh cut tree, I purchased a faux tree. Die-hards will scoff, but there are good quality trees to be had if you're willing to pay the price. They run \$500 and up. Make sure you have a dry place to store it.

If you don't have a lot of Christmas decorations I've also included this shopping list below to help you get started. Don't worry for now where you'll put them. You'll find the right places once you get them home.

- Faux garlands (remember you'll supplement the faux greenery with the real stuff later)

- Faux and fresh red pears and pomegranates

- Collectible Santas in a variety of sizes (available in all price ranges)

- Collectible bottlebrush Christmas trees in a variety of sizes

- 1 to 2 rolls of 1 inch wide bright red grosgrain ribbon

- Red and silver beaded garlands

- Christmas themed books to add to your coffee table books

- A variety of fresh and faux wreaths

- And of course your fresh or faux tree and a couple boxes of ornaments

Also, supplement your Christmas décor each year by taking an hour of your day to go into your back yard or out in the woods with your clippers in search of natural materials. These will stay fresh for quite a while out of water but keep them in a bucket of water outside till you're ready to use them. Hammer the woody stems well so they're able to absorb the water. If you have pets, please don't place berries where they can get to them. My favorite fresh greenery for Christmas:

- Nandina bamboo
- Manzanita
- Magnolia
- Olive branches
- Moss covered tree branches
- Boxwood
- English bay
- Holly
- Pyracantha

Some years I go all out on the decorations, like last year when my home was on the AAUW Christmas tour. But other years I do minimal decorations. Either way, I make it festive and enjoyable for my family and myself.

Shiree Hanson Segerstrom studied and apprenticed in interior design for three years before launching her own firm in 1999. She is the author of the blog www.joyofnesting.blogspot.com and has been featured in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Wall Street Journal* online, *Sacramento Bee* and the stylish *California living* magazine, C. Contact her at www.shireesegerstrom.com or 532-2193.