

GARAGE SALES

Christmas in the Summer

What's old is new again, especially when it comes to Christmas decorations.

Fortunately, clearing out old Christmas lights and other decor is a prime reason people have a sale and it may be priced to move in the blazing hot months of summer. Put a bow on your holiday celebrations with these tips for finding vintage Christmas bling and baubles.

MATERIALS

While nostalgia is a huge driver for people looking for vintage Christmas ornaments, there's also a case to be made for the quality craftsmanship and materials of a previous age. Look for ornaments and decorations with a patina and materials and components that are glass instead of plastic. Older ornaments aren't going to be perfectly shiny and blown glass may not be perfectly shaped. Also look for a pontil mark, usually on the bottom of a glass ornament, where the ornament was broken off the glass-blowing pipe.

You can also look at the cap. Most older ornament caps — the part that holds the loop or hook on — are simple, not like the filigreed, ornamented caps we have today.

The caps may also be stamped with the country of origin. It's fun to look for countries that don't exist anymore, like West Germany. Older metal caps may also show signs of oxidation or

rust. Some ornaments from WWII America may also have paper caps because of war-time metal shortages.

You can also find vintage wrapping paper and other paper goods. These make

great decorations when added to a festive frame. Look for magazines dated around the holidays in addition to postcards, greeting cards and newspapers. Bonus find: Christmas albums.

HANDMADE GOODS

Keep a sharp eye out for handmade treasures, especially stockings. Crocheted, knitted or hand sewn stockings can be a great addition to a vintage Christmas collection. Look for fun embroidery and vintage prints. Remember that some fabrics don't age as well as others. When not on display, store your vintage stockings in a cool, dry, dark place. If you need to wash them, do so on delicate and lay flat to dry.

Garlands are another popular vintage item that was often handmade. Look for glass garlands, sometimes with cellophane or silver tinsel. As it ages, silver tinsel can often take on a golden color.

MAKE A PILE, GET A DEAL

If a seller has a lot of Christmas items out and the majority are from the era you're looking for, you might get a great deal by offering to take the lot. Just wait to paw through it all until you get home. And remember, it never hurts to ask a seller if they have any Christmas decorations stored away. It may not have occurred to them to bring the Santas out in July, but they may definitely have some they'll give you a good price on set aside for donation or even the trash.



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BUYER'S TIP

Inspect the Wiring

Be wary of any decorations with wiring or lights. Yes, even the ceramic lighted trees you've seen so much of. Elderly wiring often leads to fresh fire, so if you snag some of these at a sale, it's probably best to display them without electricity. If you're concerned someone might plug them in without knowing, cut the plug off with a pair of sharp scissors.

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