

Holiday Decorating



Get Hygge with It

We've heard a lot about hygge in the past few years. It's a Danish and Norwegian word that means a cozy, content mood that springs from comfort and friendship.

It's thought to originate from a Danish word that means valiant, comfort and joy, or maybe from hug, meaning to embrace or to comfort. Either way, hygge is right at home with the holiday season.

HOW TO HYGGE

Hygge can be anywhere, but it starts at home, where many of us are most comfortable and happy. Think about the things in your space that make you happy and calm. Soothing, Nordic colors like calming blues and grays, cozy textiles in the form of rugs and blankets, scented candles that soothe your mind through smell, and provide a touch of warmth with their flame.

Use your hygge time to tick off slow-burning tasks, like handwriting thank you letters or working in the garden. Anything that refills your cup. Laying in bed is also a viable option, as is reading those books you've meant to get to, watching a TV series that's been on your list or just lazing on the couch.



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INVITE OTHERS IN

Hygge doesn't mean becoming a hermit. It encompasses spending time with family and friends, and if that isn't the holiday season, we don't know what is. Choose filling, nutritious meals that leave you feeling contented, then gather your loved ones around for a

favorite board game or a movie. Light a fire in the fireplace, share a blanket and a bowl of popcorn, anything that gives you the warm fuzzies can be hygge.

UNPLUG

Consider putting the phones up, even if it's just for the

duration of a board game or a family movie time. Disconnect from email, including work, and focus on letting go of the feeling that you might be missing out. Remember, if the grass looks greener somewhere else, make sure you're giving yours enough water and sunlight to grow.

Make it a family event by taking up phones, tablets and other devices for a while. Set aside some time to reflect on what you all mean to each other. Get out old photo albums or make time to sit around and decorate the tree, reminiscing about each ornament that comes out of the box.

Make the Most of Your Mantel

Fireplaces are often the heart of the holiday season, hosting not only the pleasant, crackling blaze that keeps our toes warm, but also stockings and all sorts of holiday mementos and decor that make the season bright.

SWITCH OUT YOUR EVERYDAY DECOR

Clear the mantle by packing up your everyday decor — yes, even the big piece above the mantle — and swapping it out with holiday cheer. Look for a large-scale painting to go on the chimney or wall above, then decorate with some of your favorite holiday pieces below. Or string twine and hang holiday cards for a warm and personal touch.

BRING THE FOREST INDOORS

Set up a whole forest of holiday trees on the mantle by making cardboard Christmas trees in varying sizes and colors. Make cones out of cardboard (make sure it's not too thick so you can easily shape and cut it). Then cut scale-like shapes out of cardboard and, working your way around the cone from bottom to top, glue them on side by side. Give each tree a quick spray of white, then top it with whatever color you want. You can even brush them with glue and glitter for a special sparkly touch.

GO BIG WITH GARLAND

Starting with a garland in the right length for your mantle, keeping in mind if you want it to swag or not and how far you want it to extend down the sides, affix battery-operated LED fairy lights and giant, oversized plastic ornaments for a bold statement of holiday cheer. You can coordinate the colors to your tree's theme or just pick whatever you like. Remember, Christmas decorating is about making you happy. Finish off the garland with a bow in the middle to bring the eye back to the center of the fireplace.

SHOWCASE A COLLECTION

If you've got a winter village or candlesticks gathering dust, set them out with some simple greenery along your mantle. Use varying heights and odd numbers for an understated, aesthetically pleasing effect. If it needs a little more cheer, run a string of battery-operated LED lights in and out of the pieces.



Wrapping for Maximum Wow

The tree is the star of the holiday show, especially what's underneath. Make that pile of presents part of your decor with these fashionable ideas.

ADD FLORA

Instead of oversized bows, go understated with dried flowers or even fruits for a touch of nature. Keep these out of reach of curious small kids and pets, though, or opt for real-looking faux versions.

USE GIFT WRAP AS TAGS

Assign each person a color of wrapping paper and use that to wrap their gifts. Set a big reveal on Christmas Eve to keep everyone guessing which presents belong to whom.

PAINT YOUR OWN PAPER

Start with plain white or brown paper and then decorate it yourself with paints. Make it a family tradition and get everyone to help out.

MATCH YOUR PAPER

Let your home's decor be reflected in your holiday wrapping paper. Choose patterns, papers and bows that complement your walls, trim, curtains and other colors. And match the theme. If you've got a coastal decor, for instance, use seashells or pieces of shells as gift tags.

PULL OUT THE PLAID

Deck your presents with classic plaids. Coordinate with kraft paper wrapping and plaid bows or other coordinating solid colors. Select stockings, blankets, pillows and other accessories to match.

TIS THE SEASON?

It might be the holiday

season, but your wrapping paper doesn't have to have Santas and snowflakes. In fact, you can save a bundle by buying all-purpose papers that you like and using those year-round.

GO WITH PATTERNED BOXES AND BAGS

Make it easy on yourself this holiday season by choosing

coordinated bags and ready-made boxes for quick and easy wrapping. All you'll need to do is fill each box with tissue and put a ribbon around it and you're done.

MERRY MONOCHROME

Go all one color under the tree with a variety of wraps in the same color. Pair them with

solid white, black or other neutral tones in the ribbons and accents.

ADD TEXTURE

Bring on the velvet ribbons and roll out the burlap for wrap. These textured fabrics can add warmth under your tree and a generally cozy vibe to your holiday celebrations.





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Why Do We Send Christmas Cards?

The first Christmas card was received in 1611 by James I of England and his son, Henry Frederick, Prince of Wales. The handmade card was discovered in 1979 by Adam McLean in the Scottish Record Office.

Since then, people around the world have sent billions of holiday cards to friends and family.

Cards range from expressing joy at the holiday season to sending full updates on family, complete with per-

sonalized pictures or a holiday letter.

A HISTORY

Throughout the 20th century, mass-produced, commercial Christmas cards became the norm, with spikes in patriotic themes during both world wars, and humor, even the risqué kind, rising and falling with the times. However, during the late 20th and early 21st century, the number of cards sent each year started to drop. Email, cell phones, texts and social media mean more contact with our friends and family members, so a handwritten holiday card is often seen as just one more onerous holiday task.

COLLECTOR'S ITEMS

Sure, we all let that year's holiday

cards stack up, but some are worth a pretty penny. Museums even have collections; Queen Mary's cards are now housed in the British Museum and the University College London's Slade School of Fine Art houses handmade cards that are displayed during the holiday season. A card produced in 1843 by J.C. Horsely and commissioned by British civil servant Sir Henry Cole was sold in 2001 in the U.K. for more than \$22,000.

TODAY'S CARDS

Still, more than a billion Christmas cards are sent in the U.S. each year, Hallmark and the Greeting Card Association says. With advances in technology and printing, families can now send season's greetings with personalized,

print-on-demand cards that feature pictures and a message tailor-made for their Christmas list. You can even order pre-addressed envelopes to save your writing hand.

GOING GREEN

One concern with sending Christmas cards is the use of paper. Look for cards that are made from recycled paper, and recycle or reuse the cards you get. Choose the prettiest of the bunch and transform them into holiday decorations, paper ornaments for the tree or even frame them for holiday decor. You can drop the cards off at the nearest paper recycling center or donate unused cards to nonprofit organizations that turn them into new cards.

The Latest Trends in Lights

Christmas lights have come a long way from the glowing glass orbs that festooned trees of yore.

Now, with advances in LED technology and batteries, strings of lights are longer, cooler and more colorful than ever. Here are some trends to look for in Christmas lighting.

WARM WHITE

Always a classic, warm white lights give your home a cozy glow. Indoors, pick a set that can twinkle or pulse. Outdoors, choose larger bulbs with facets for a luxe look, or go for sets that can run or twinkle for a merry display.

GO BIG ON YOUR HOME

Look for massive single lights this year to liven up a porch, deck, patio or other outdoor space. You can use these lights as pathway markers or hang them for a gloriously outsized display of holiday cheer.

COLOR CHANGING LIGHTS

Energy-sipping LEDs allow light makers to go crazy with the color palette, offering strings that change between several colors and can even be programmed using your phone into patterns or to move to music.

PROJECTION

Another growing trend is projectors that shoot merry and bright scenes onto the walls of your home.

These are best placed where they can beam their images over a garage door or open wall space; avoid parts of your home that have a lot of plants or windows.

SOLAR LIGHTS

Tired of stringing extension cords?



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Look for solar-powered pathway and LED lights that can show off your holiday spirit without plugging into your electricity.

TWINKLES, ICICLES AND STARS, OH MY

More strings of lights are coming in

complex shapes, such as icicles, stars, snowflakes and more. Some are even programmable to change color in a pattern or with music in your display.

FINDING A PROFESSIONAL

During the holiday season, many lawn and landscaping businesses use

the slowdown caused by the cooler weather to switch to putting out holiday decor for their clients.

If getting up on the roof is out of the question (or should be), think about asking local landscapers to help spread the cheer at your house this year.

Sustainable Holidays

More than just recycling wrapping paper and cards, a sustainable holiday is a great gift to give the planet this year. Here are some ways you can go green this holiday season.

ELECTRICITY USE

Opt for solar-powered Christmas displays or use all LED lights, which don't use as much electricity as traditional incandescent bulbs. Set timers to turn your displays and tree lights off and on at dusk and before bed at night.

GIVE GREEN GIFTS

Instead of buying things, consider giving your loved ones experiences. Museum or zoo memberships are great ideas, as are prepaying for movie tickets, plays, restaurant reservations or other experiences. You can also give to a charity in someone's name or adopt an animal from a zoo or wildlife nonprofit.

CUT DOWN ON FOOD WASTE

While the holiday season is a time when we want to lay out a table of plenty for our friends and family, try to be realistic about the food you need. Have a use for any leftovers, and give your guests to-go boxes so your holiday celebrations waste as little as possible. Eat seasonally when you can, choosing locally produced goods when possible.

SHOP LOCALLY

Try to cut down on your holiday travel by sticking close to home when shopping. Choose to support small and independent businesses. Or get creative and make your own holiday gifts. Just make sure you plan enough time to have everything finished.

Another idea is to shop secondhand stores for thrifted gifts and Christmas decor. Sometimes, these are the most meaningful gifts you can give.

O, CHRISTMAS TREE

Pick a sustainable Christmas tree. That is, one that comes from a sustainably grown forest, and make sure you recycle it afterward. If you want an artificial tannenbaum, pick one you're sure you'll use for at least 10 years. Another option for a smaller tree is to look for one still in the pot so it can be planted after the season's over.

You can decorate your existing houseplants or go for another type of tree than the traditional evergreen. That way, it can stay inside and brighten up your space all year long.



Types of Christmas Trees

Each holiday season, Americans snap up between 25-30 million real Christmas trees.

These trees, the National Christmas Tree Association says, are grown in all 50 states and Canada and are a renewable resource that are often recycled in one of more than 4,000 tree recycling programs. Here are some popular types of Christmas trees you may find near you this year.

BALSAM FIR

This classic Christmas tree is a dense, dark green tree that's similar to another classic, the Fraser fir. It has a pyramid shape with a spired tip. Needles are somewhat flat and may be blunt on the end. They're usually dark green on the top and lighter on the bottom.

CONCOLOR FIR

Also called the white fir, this tree is native to the western U.S. and can reach 350 years of age. These trees have a straight trunk with a spire-like crown and small, narrow needles. Young needles are bluish green and turn dull green with age. It makes for a fine ornamental tree that provides a contrast to darker evergreens.

SCOTCH PINE

This tree sports a bright green needle that doesn't drop, even when dry. It's the most common Christmas tree in the



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U.S. and is easy to replant, being hardy to a variety of soils and climates. It's native to Europe and Asia and came to America with European settlers. It takes 6-8 years to grow a 7-8 foot Scotch pine Christmas tree.

COLORADO BLUE SPRUCE

As the name suggests, these

trees are found from western Wyoming and eastern Idaho, south to Colorado and central Utah.

These trees grow at elevations of 6,000-11,000 feet and are gaining popularity as a Christmas tree. They have blueish foliage with excellent needle retention and natural shape.

ARIZONA CYPRESS

These steeple-shaped trees are a pale green color with tiny leaves and a pleasing aroma. Native to west Texas, northwest Mexico and southern California and Arizona, it's also been successfully grown across the southern U.S. Its wood is durable and has been used for fencing and in mine shafts.

EASTERN RED CEDAR

These dark, shiny trees are compact with a classic pyramid shape, but it's not a true cedar. Instead, it's a member of the juniper family, closely related to the Rocky Mountain juniper. As a planted tree, it's good for erosion control and it provides cedarwood oil for fragrances.