

DECKING THE HALLS for the Holidays

by Victoria Flores

Our ancestors have been “decking the halls” for centuries, clippings from evergreen trees and shrubs were brought inside to promote good cheer and hope. The bright colors of the foliage and berries of holly mistletoe, laurel, boxwood and evergreens reminded them that winter would end and spring and new life would soon return.

There are no rules that mandate how much hope and good cheer one must hang or spread about their home in order to promote family traditions and welcome guests. These guidelines seem to be self imposed by the “hall decker” and the amount of family and personal fulfillment one enjoys from this tradition.

If personal fulfillment doesn't exactly describe the way you feel at the thought of holiday decorating, try these tips and shortcuts to get into the holiday spirit.

For those of us who, for a number of reasons, don't

forage in the woods to bring in our own boughs of holly, the faux foliage people have been hard at work designing very realistic bendable, non-shedding greens. The garlands that represent a mix of different evergreens are wonderful for draping on stair rails, mantels and door ways. There are pieces designed specifically for table centerpieces, door swags, light fixtures and anything else that the decker wants to embellish.

Go through your Christmas treasures and ornaments. Some are truly treasures while others are worn, or never had much sentimental appeal. Pull out only the things you care about. More isn't necessarily good, especially when it is time to put everything away. This might be the time to change the way you display your keepsakes or add new splashes of color.

Not every surface needs to wear the look of the season. Start with your focal point areas and make big statements. Whether you are using traditional red and green, rich metallic or icy shades of silver and crystal, there are floral picks that can easily be tucked into the faux foliage you have positioned and draped. Think about displaying some of your prized ornaments — yes, even the clothespin angels — among these greens.

Use your favorite containers in unexpected ways. A display of snowy garland surrounding crystal candlestick will enhance, glass or crystal vases filled with either fresh or faux greenery and floral. Fill a copper bowl with greens and embellish it with pinecones, feathers and other natural elements for a family room table, or use a colorful water pitcher as a container for fresh greens and picks of faux fruit for your kitchen island.

It's not necessary to remove all your everyday accessories to decorate for the holidays. Simply tuck sprigs of greens among your pieces and add an ornament or two for color and sparkle. Your collection of Santas or snowmen can also find a home among your year-round treasures.

Mirrors are a fabulous focal display. Drape garland across the top and down

the sides, add lights, sparkling picks and ornaments and watch the effect.

Whether you choose to use fresh or faux foliage or old or new embellishments to adorn your home this holiday season, take time to enjoy the process and the results. Light the candles, turn on the Christmas music and take a few minutes to reflect. ■

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