

## COMMENTARY

# How can I make my home cozy?

BY ANGIE HICKS, ASK ANGI  
The Tribune Content Agency

There's no place like home for the holidays. If you're staying at home this holiday season, you're in luck. Here are my top tips for making our homes feel more cozy and inviting this holiday season.

If you're looking for an easy way to make a big impact, consider hanging curtains. Curtains can make any space instantly feel more cozy and put together. Just make sure you get the right length for the room. You can also add other fabrics like pillows, blankets and rugs to make your home more cozy and inviting.

Many basic design principles can improve your overall aesthetic. For instance, you can make small rooms feel more inviting by keeping them simple and establishing a single focal point, like a piece of wall art. A well-placed mirror can make a small space feel larger, but it might make a large space feel cavernous. Consider your personal style while thinking through your options; a space that reflects your personality will feel warmer and more inviting.

Consider a specific color palette for your home, depending on your intent. Use warm paint tones when possible. Even if you prefer neutral paint colors, opt for warm-toned whites for a cozier look. Earth tones such as brown, gray, beige and green are ideal for creating a rustic or rural farmhouse look for that cottagecore aesthetic. Designers often follow the 60-30-10 rule: Paint 60% of your space a neutral dominant color, 30% a secondary color, and 10% a bold accent color. Light colors tend to make a room feel more open, whereas darker colors can help ground a larger space.

Flooring makes a big difference in how your home feels. If you have tile or laminate flooring, consider swapping it out with hardwood. Not only does wood provide visual warmth, but it's also less cold on your feet than tile flooring, giving it a cozier look and feel. And of course, a well-placed rug brightens up any room and gives you a soft and warm surface under your feet.

Pay attention to the small details. Doorways, light switches, electrical outlets and hardware are just a few of the minor elements that can make a big difference in how your home feels.

If you have a fireplace, consider using it as a focal point of the room. Nothing sells coziness quite like a roaring fireplace in winter's chill! Use the fireplace for both utility and aesthetic; bookshelves make a nice addition to the space right next to a fireplace. Hanging a mirror over a fireplace both makes good use of some awkward space and helps warm firelight bounce around the room.

A last tip is to use lighting to make your home feel more cozy. Small, warm sources of light throughout the home will provide a more cozy atmosphere than overhead lighting.

*Tweet your home care questions with #AskingAngi and we'll try to answer them in a future column.*



RANDALL BENTON Sacramento Bee/TNS

Christmas decorations on a fireplace mantel at the home of Neal and Heidi Cordeiro in Sacramento on Nov. 14, 2014.

## The art of decorating holiday mantels

BY TIM MCKEOUGH  
NYT News Service/Syndicate Stories

The holiday season is an opportunity to let loose with festive decorations, bringing cheer to a home in a way that might seem too extravagant the rest of the year. And in a home with a fireplace, whether functional or not, the mantel should be a focal point.

A mantel decorated with greenery and ornaments "makes any room look like Christmas," said Bunny Williams, an interior designer who relishes decorating the five fireplace mantels in the house she shares with her husband, antiques dealer John Rosselli, in Falls Village, Connecticut, every December.

When the temperature drops, Williams, 80, clears her mantels of collected antiques to create celebratory compositions. "Over the years, I've collected boxes and boxes of things, so it's fun to bring them out," she said. "I have all my old, favorite objects."

She recently invited us into her home to demonstrate how she gets ready for the holidays, while decorating her living room mantel.

### COLLECT THE GREENS

Greenery is key to building a lavish looking mantel, so the first step is collecting raw material. Don't overthink it at this point, Williams said. Try to gather a few different options, depending on what's available, even if you don't yet know how you'll use it.

Williams clips branches from her gardens, neighbors' yards (with their permission) and the wilderness surrounding her house. "Because I live in the country, I've planted some evergreens just for Christmas decorations," she said. "But if you don't have that, it's fun to drive around and cut some white pine, flat cedar and berries. If you live in town, you can go to the Korean market and find greens."

Regardless of where she finds them, "I love a collection of different leaf textures," she said, rather than using a singular type of evergreen.

### CREATE A BASE

In the living room, with her finds in buckets and pruning shears in hand, Williams created a base of greenery, starting with flat branches of cedar and juniper rather than bushier options. "You want them upside down,"

she said, so they curve downward "and begin to drape over the mantel."

Her secret weapon for holding those branches in place? Painter's tape. Williams taped the ends of the branches to the top of the mantel, where they also crisscrossed to create a framework for holding other branches on top. "You don't see the tape when it's done," she said.

### ADD TEXTURE

With the base in place, Williams added other types of plant material. "You want texture," she said, as she stuffed eucalyptus and small clusters of magnolia leaves into the arrangement.

"Eucalyptus is wonderful, because it's not stiff," she said. "And the shiny, big leaves of magnolia look so pretty with the floppy evergreens."

Don't worry if it takes some time to make it look good. Trial and error is part of the process, even for an experienced pro. "I wish I knew where every branch was going to go," she said, "but frankly, you've got to play with it."

### PLACE ORNAMENTS

Williams stores her holiday decorations in plastic boxes in the attic and gets them all out

when it's time to decorate. Rather than trying to cram everything into a single composition, she chooses ornaments for each room based on a concept. "I'll have a bit of a theme depending on the room," she said.

In the kitchen, she might use rural and rustic decorations, while in the library, she might choose decorative apples to accent the red curtains. "I think a little about the color of the room and go from there," she said.

For her living room, which is washed in yellows and browns, she chose gold, glittery objects, including a sparkling paper-mâché reindeer placed at the center. Then she added frosted-looking grapes, silvery trees with glass tips and golden dragonflies on either side to create a loose sense of symmetry.

### ADD EVEN MORE

Stepping back to study her work, Williams decided the living room mantel wasn't quite complete. "I need to come back with more," she whispered to herself.

She added delicate sprigs of reddish-green leaves cut from her garden that climbed higher out of the composition. And she placed a single length of sparkly gold eucalyptus at the center, which draped down toward the fire. "It needed just a bit more gold," she said.

That turned out to be the finishing touch. "Now, there's a mantel for Christmas," she said.

## COMMENTARY

## Searching through the Christmas lost and found

BY LORI BORGMAN  
Tribune News Service / The Tribune Content Agency

The kitchen becomes my primary place of residence the week before Thanksgiving and continues straight on through New Year's Day. I should probably file a change-of-address card with the post office.

The kitchen counter is littered with crumpled dish towels, soiled hot pads and towering stacks of dirty cookie sheets and mixing bowls. Pots bubbling on the stove have all been seasoned with two shakes of harried and a dash of exhaustion. Cold dirty dishwasher in the sink formed a film an hour ago.

I'm looking for something but I'm having difficulty finding it.

It's not in the kitchen, that's for sure.

A top-to-bottom search of the family room turns up empty as well. It isn't dangling from any of the Christmas tree branches. It isn't wedged between Christmas sheet music in the piano bench or buried beneath the sofa cushions — although I do find a sock, some caramel popcorn and two candy cane wrappers.

I shake a few gifts under the tree and hold them to my ear when nobody is looking. Pretty, but not what I'm looking for.

As the hunt continues, I'm feeling frustrated and flushed. I can't be the only one who thinks it's hot in here. I throw open a window and a blast of cold rushes in. The night sky is plastered with diamonds. The constella-



SILE TNS

The wonder of Christmas is not in fabulous meals, piles of gifts, or dazzling decorations. It's not in parties and festivities or even in the serenade of Dickens carolers.

tions are singing and surely the earth is trembling. The magnificence of such beauty is overwhelming. This is what I have been searching for — wonder.

It is the jaw-dropping wonder of a night long ago. The wonder of a peasant couple taking refuge in a manger. The wonder of a young girl giving birth to the King of Kings on a stable floor strewn with straw and air filled with the stench of animal waste. It is the wonder of God stooping low, taking on humble human

form, swaddled and lying in a manger.

The wonder of Christmas is not in fabulous meals, piles of gifts or dazzling decorations. It's not in parties and festivities or even in the serenade of Dickens carolers.

The wonder of Christmas is found in the sacred moments of a still and quiet heart.

May you, too, find wonder this season.

Merry Christmas.

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