

Decorating your perfect holiday tree



JANE LOCKHART DESIGN CONFIDENTIAL

That heading is a bit misleading. Every decorated tree is perfect, of course.

But for those of you who crave order and want to follow rules, I've put together a list of 'no-fail' tree decorating tips to get your season started.

When choosing your tree, whether it's real or artificial, find one that fits your space. If your ceiling height is eight or nine feet, choose a 7 1/2 foot tree.

You need at least six inches of clearance above the tree, especially if you're adding a tree topper.

Know in advance where you plan to put the tree and measure the diameter of the space. Artificial trees come in all shapes and sizes, tall and skinny, shorter and wider, etc.

They're specifically designed

to fit in tight corners and smaller rooms and still be full height. If you're looking for an artificial tree this season, look for one with a natural shape and make sure you can't see the center pole.

A 7-foot tree can have up to 2000 branches so plan your ornaments, lighting and garland accordingly. Most packaged lights are sold by the number so for every foot your tree is high, get 100 mini lights. If you have a 7-foot tree, you'll need at least 700 lights.

If you're using 5mm LED lights, add the lights first and make sure they go through to the core of the tree. Because it's the first thing you add, you have a chance to stand back and look to make sure the lighting is even

throughout the tree and readjust as necessary.

Pre-lit artificial trees are a great option for decorating; they take away half the battle, before and after the season!

Next comes garland. Many people wrap the outside of the tree with ribbon and garland after adding ornaments, I like to add it after lights and I start from the top and push it in gently toward the center as I wrap. My rule of thumb is to use 9-feet of garland per foot of tree.

Ornaments are the last things I add. Choose different sizes and shapes and mix them up throughout the tree. I like to add some glass and metallic ornaments to brighten the tree and reflect the lights.

The taller the tree, the bigger the ornaments you can use. Start with larger shapes and push them toward the center of the tree to fill it in. Add ornaments from the inside of the tree and work your way out.

How many is too many? I can't answer that for you but to begin, a 7-foot tree can handle 140 ornaments, an 8-foot tree, you can plan to use 160 ornaments.

If you have less ornaments add more lights, the more lighting the better.

Don't forget to add ornaments to the bottom of the tree too. But avoid using fragile or breakable ones here, especially if you have small children or pets.

Hang special ornaments with ribbon, it will look and feel more special. If you have one important ornament or decoration you want to stand out, put it just off centre, it will be more pleasing to the eye.

I have a favourite Elvis Presley ornament I like to add every year, it's not a subtle ornament but I like to blend it in with the rest so when your eye falls on it, it's a whimsical surprise.

Enjoy your decorated tree this season. Even if you don't follow any rules and just "make it your own," it will still be perfect.

— Award-winning designer, TV personality and spokesperson Jane Lockhart is one of Canada's leading experts in the world of design. For more information, visit www.janelockhart.com.



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Host the holidays in style



NATALIE DEANE DECOR AND MORE

It's the holiday season. Time to invite family and friends to enjoy some festive cheer. Where do you start? How do you decorate? What do you serve?

To get some tips for hosting with style I met with lifestyle expert Janette Ewen.

Janette's number one tip — start with a theme. A theme will shape the décor, cocktail menu, food, invites, gifts, music even the scent of your home.

For 2016, the top holiday themes all have a glamorous twist think gold, silver and plenty of sparkle.

"If you are short on time consider adding larger elements to your entertaining space. Home Depot has a great selection of holiday pillows that add an instant pop of festivity."

Tabletop

"Remember more is more when it comes to décor" says Janette. Turn to classic styles for inspiration — sugared fruit, oranges, magnolia leaves, silver bells, silk tassels, pomegranates — all have a luxe and ultra glamorous appeal.

Place cards are always a nice added touch, consider making your own. Write your guests' names using scrap booking stickers on an ornament.

They will all know where to sit and can take the ornament home with them as a gift. All you need is dollar store ornaments and Scotch Expression tape to create one of a kind pieces.

Food

Don't stress when it comes to

food, make a vintage inspired casserole ahead of time, have plenty of appetizers — dips are always a hit and can be made the morning of.

The KitchenAid Nesting Ceramic 4-Piece Set is perfect for busy holiday entertaining. Because these dishes can go straight from your freezer, to oven to your tabletop, they are the perfect for make-ahead holiday meals like lasagna or shepherd's pie. (\$149.99).

If you don't have time to cook, order in from your favourite restaurant and relax. Janette lets us in on a couple of her secrets to success.

"I love ordering from JUST EAT, they have thousands of food choices from some seriously delicious restaurants, sometimes I don't even tell my guests I had dinner delivered... shhhh."

For dessert, "fake don't bake. If you don't have time to bake goodies consider breaking out a favourite like Chips Ahoy thins (I'm obsessed with these)." The key to pre made or store bought is to present your goodies in an attractive fashion, like on a pretty cake stand, decorative trays or

unique antique plates.

Drink

When guests arrive have a signature cocktail but dress it up this year with fun retro inspired glasses, straws and toppers. Bubbles always get everyone in the festive spirit.

"I love Ruffino Prosecco," Ewen advises. "It adds the right sparkle to any party."

To serve with your big meal, you need something that compliments all the decadent and delicious holiday flavours.

For 2016, The Robert Mondavi Bourbon Barrel-Aged Cabernet Sauvignon is Janette's recommendation. "I recently visited this winery and love the care that goes into crafting the wine."

Entertainment

The best hosts know how to keep their guests amused and entertained.

Break out those old holiday records, Ewen suggests, picking up an old-school record player at a thrift store and invite guests to bring their favorite holiday album.

Some holiday classics include



Start with a theme. A theme will shape the decor, food menu, invites, gifts, music and even the scent of your home. Photo courtesy of Home Depot

The Vince Guaraldi Trio, "A Charlie Brown Christmas", Elvis Presley, "Elvis' Christmas Album", Christmas With The Rat Pack — Various Artists. If you don't have any of these, consider checking out e-bay for some great selections.

Sticking with a retro, classic Christmas theme, Janette suggests capturing the moments with retro cameras. "Digital cameras are great but instamatic cameras are always a crowd pleaser and allow guests to take some memories home to post on their fridge. Find a great selection of instant cameras on ebay.ca."

Stay stress free

Being the host can take a lot out of you. The holidays are

about enjoying time with your family and friends. Don't be afraid to ask for help.

"Your friends are amazing resources," Janette says. "Do you have a friend who can mix a mean cocktail? Perhaps someone knows some great magic tricks? Assign one small task to each person and you will free yourself up for your most important role — hosting."

Most importantly, remember the key to entertaining is to have a good time! Keep it carefree, fun and stylish ... always.

— Natalie Deane is a lifestyle connoisseur who shares tips for everyday living through decor, entertaining and household trends.