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Stylish Solutions

By Ann McDonald



Gilded and jeweled deer are a big hit this season. Placed on the floor next to a signature tree, or in entry halls and dining rooms, not much else is needed. Photos courtesy Couture Chateau IIc

cider in your fully decorated living room.

How to decide? Take stock of what you want your home to handle this season. Empty nest? It could be as simple as a mantle with some decorations for a photo backdrop. Young children? There may be trees and decorations in each space. When my boys were little, I placed small simple childproof decorated trees in their rooms with white lights. It was magical.

Party central this season? It's all out, all over.

Second, consider the furniture placement. Are you going to move furniture? We often counsel clients who need to move furniture out of a space to use "the season" as a refinish, refurbish and re-

If your mailbox is anything like mine, the holiday catalogs are starting to pile up. All sorts of non-essentials and beautiful gadgets, luxuries and luminaires - colorful trees and goodies. I love it. There is a wee bit of decorating stress, however, that comes with all those options. What is a stylish suburbanite to do?

This month, I wanted to share practical tips to help you navigate the holiday decorating season and all those options arriving in your mailbox and email. Don't give up entirely. Sometimes when it is just too much, we throw in the towel. Or, because we can't quite get a handle on a "look" we are trying to create, we mumble something about having a natural family holiday and blame it on the kids - "My children decorated" - meanwhile, your kids are 20 and 22, away at college.

Even if your look this year is simple, there are ways to make the process fun and not overwhelming. Sometimes simple is hardest as every detail matters and is seen. Even my team and I can have moments of "oh, my goodness." When that happens, take a deep breath and step away. What do the experts say? Do 90 minutes of work and take a 15-minute break - then come back to it.

Here are my quick tips this month:

First, it may sound simple, but you must decide which rooms you are going to decorate. Now. It's often the basics we overlook because they are so simple, but I can't tell you how many well-meaning stylish folks haven't really decided how many trees or rooms they are going to tackle until they start. Big mistake. Make the call on which rooms today. Write them down. Don't apologize if it is your whole house and your BFF is only doing her entry hall - variety is what makes life fun.

When you need a break you can go to her home and zen out. When she needs a break, she will be playing with your nutcrackers and sipping

upholstery time for pieces that can leave home to make room while the holidays are on.

It is also nice in January or February (some re-upholstery or refinish work can take 6-12 weeks on fine pieces with local trades) to have fresh clean pieces come back home.

Third, create a story with your décor. Stories have openings, middles, "ta-da moments" and ends. You don't have to use everything you have, especially if you own several collections. Consider how to vary the amount and type of décor throughout your home. Your story may be as simple as fresh flowers, a festive wreath on your door or some new coffee table books. Don't try to tell too much.

Some questions to ask yourself and your family:

Do I have a personal need for this season? Am I introverted and need to carve out personal space? What will make me feel as if I have celebrated? Often times, having a simple party, even if it is for six to eight close friends, can change our perspective on a holiday. By creating a small event, you feel as if there is a reason to steward your homefront. A few extra decorations and a few special touches in the powder room or unexpected spaces like a patio, can go a long way to giving us a soulful experience. We create vignettes and places to visit, to read a book or have a cookie with tea.

My hope this holiday season is that your home holds you, your family, your friends and your season well. Take time to plan your spaces. For the perfect holiday home, join in on our Stress Free Holiday Workshop series. You can access it 24/7, 365 days a year and it includes the option of a printed workbook. I even include my infamous cookie bribery recipe, which works to keep family decorating help happy while hanging garland. For information, visit <http://couturechateau.com/holiday/>. The workshop gives a fresh perspective we don't always get from magazine photographs. Take dominion over your spaces and places this season and fall in love with the holidays all over again.



Chandelier décor is very on trend this season, especially for people who may not be putting up trees or for those who want to go all out in the entire home.



We are using a lot of dropping greenery, pinecones and large balls for the base of topiary this season.



There is always the family look and this season we are using whimsical ribbon for those types of decor.



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