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Stylish Solutions

By Ann McDonald



Wreaths are still one of my favorite ways to handle the holiday cards. Why? Because you can change the ribbon and wreath style easily, and add ribbon to handle more cards as the season progresses. Photos courtesy Couture Chateau, Ilc

deep, set the pile of letters down and carefully, with style, use the letter opener. Besides, this way you will never be gluing together an envelope, trying to see the return address so you can send the forgotten card.

2. Sort immediately by follow up needed. Then contain. Do you need to send a card to that person? Did you forget and their card has just arrived? We all have those moments. Once you have a handle on reciprocating the seasonal greeting, it is time to immediately contain.

One simple display trick is to attach close pins on twine draped on a pin board, tack onto ribbon tails from a hanging wreath, or display on mirrored trays and cookie trays to work piles of cards into your existing decor.

Once the holidays are over, set aside a day or section of hours to really go through things like addresses, names of children and relationship status updates. By taking the time in January to follow up on those things, next year won't seem so daunting. If you are the address label type, update and date your file so you know which is the latest version.

3. Curate the years. One of my favorite things to do is maintain copies of the cards that mean a great deal to us, and still recycle the materials. You can scan, photocopy and photograph cards and notes. Scanning is the best, in my opinion, but it can take some time. Lining up the cards and

Since the holiday season is in full swing this month, I wanted to address the issue of cards: what to do with them, where to put them, how to display them, and most importantly, how to preserve and recycle them at the same time. Each season, I think the holiday card tradition will lose steam. And then the mailbox starts to fill.

The truth? I love the art of writing and receiving hand-written, or at the very least, hand-signed cards. A quick conversation with my 20-something progeny revealed he had no understanding of the value of holiday cards, even as we failed at our attempt at a nice family picture. I tried to explain "in the olden days" we didn't have pictures of all our friends near and far 24/7 in various "feeds." Rather, we eagerly awaited the holiday season to see braces on or braces off, hair long or hair short, growth spurts and more. It was a real delight to see the friends, relatives and pets in all of their holiday garb.

The truth is, we probably do not need the card, but we like the card and its tradition of sorts. I still read the letters, and take time to sort and display cards for those quieter moments in between the hustle of business that can take over during this time of year.

My Top Holiday Card Quick Tips:

1. Get a beautiful letter opener. Yes, you can use a knife - or your fingers, or you can even rip the cards open - but the truth is, part of dressing the home for the holidays includes the subtle systems we allow ourselves to enjoy. Breathe in

snapping quick photos is much more efficient, but not as polished in the end.

You can then import into a file for rotating picture frames, which are particularly nice for relatives and elderly friends living in nursing homes or adult care facilities. They love to see the family and friends over the years. I have found, while I love the photo books, the frames are much easier to edit. You can even overlay the names of people on photos before uploading.

The photo book is nice, and I have several friends who do this every year.

4. Recycle. These holiday cards generate a lot of potential waste. What do we do? We shred. And we use the shredding all year for shipping. Envelopes with foil are the best. With Couture Chateau, there are times we ship out products to clients and you will find our artfully shredded cards in the box. It breaks my heart to simply throw them away, and this is a great, easy way to repurpose the materials.

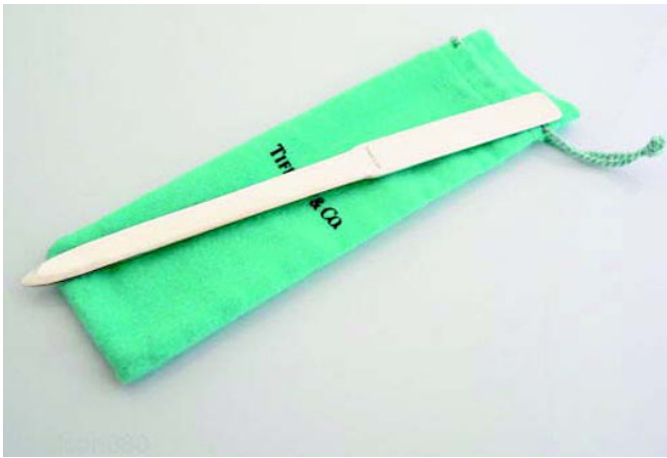
For more ways to reuse the cards be sure to download the Holiday Card Helps. As always, my hope, stylish suburbanite, is that you find peace and joy this season, and that the new year brings you much happiness.



We use micro strips and cross cut shredding to protect privacy and mix several batches to get colors fun. This is extremely easy and can be used for party décor (see the Dec. 17, 2014 Lamorinda Weekly article "Last Minute Holiday Décor Ideas" in the on- line archives).



This is a simple display trick for cards in tight quarters. Buy a pack of clothes pins and twine, attach with thumb tacks and voila - display!



Look for interesting letter openers all year round at antique fairs and home stores. I tend to collect them because they make great hostess gifts when wine isn't appropriate and I love displaying them on trays in the front hall or on my desk. Here is the classic Tiffany, which can be engraved.



I source baskets at stores like Home Goods, Cost Plus and even OSH. Simply change out bows for the season. I like this shape because it holds the large cards easily and doesn't take up too much counter space like a large flat basket does.

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