Holiday Homes to Love

American Farmhouse Style

All Is Cozy, *All Is Bright*

Meet our Christmas Tree Contest Winner!

4 Festive Home Tours

+ inspiring holiday vignettes and tree designs

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EDITOR'S LETTER

All is Cozy, All is Bright



The holidays just feel a little cozier in a farmhouse, don't they? Maybe it's the scent of cookies baking in the oven or the way a glowing tree makes the whole house feel extra warm and inviting. However you celebrate, this season has a way of wrapping us all in comfort and we are excited about it!

In this issue, we're sharing four festive home tours that are sure to spark ideas for your own holiday decorating. Each one has its own personality—from rustic, to playful, to timeless and traditional—all full of heart and coziness.

We're bidding a fond farewell to our wonderful 2025 Brand Ambassador, Lynn (page 12 and page 44). She's shared so much farmhouse inspiration with us this past year, and we're so thankful for her creativity, warmth and charm. We won't let her go too far though-watch for more contributions from her down the road both online and in print. And speaking of Brand Ambassadors, we share favorite Christmas trees from all four of our former Ambassadors in our tree round up, starting on page 80.

And of course, we couldn't let the season go by without one of our favorite traditions: the reveal of the Christmas Tree Contest winner. We're so excited to show you Jennifer's tree (page 8) and know you will be inspired by her creativity.

We're also giving you a little peek into Project House Tennessee, our new collaboration with the husband-and-wife team of Henry and Brooke Jones of Plank & Pillow. It's a forever home for their family with a gorgeous view of the countryside that we think you'll love watching go from a blank canvas to a work of art.

Thank you for joining us for the final issue of 2025! Here's to a holiday season filled with peace, joy, and plenty of farmhouse magic.

See you in 2026!

Kelly

Kelly McMaster

Kelly McMaster, *Editor*

American Farmhouse Style

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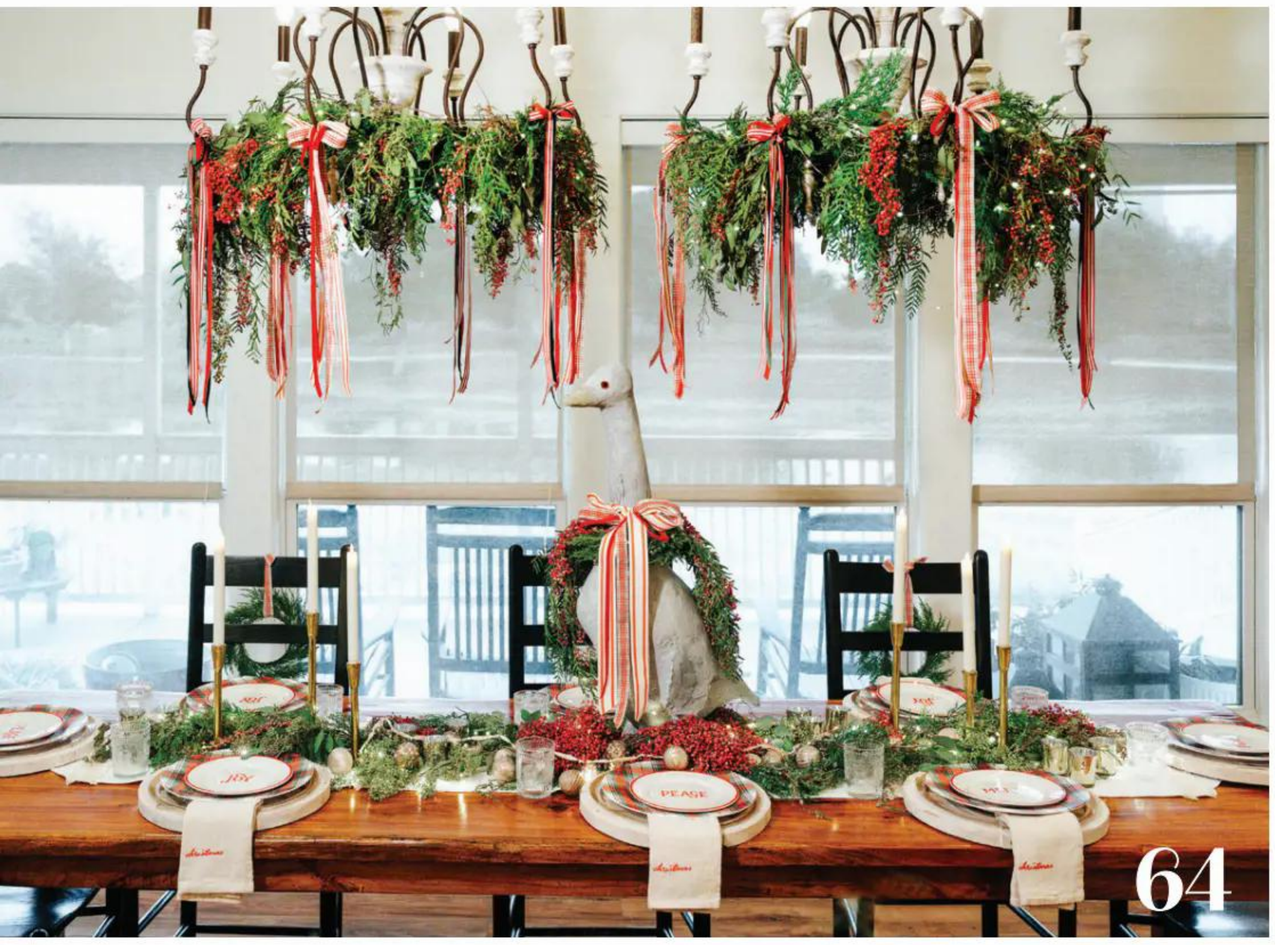
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Front and back cover design by Gabby Oh
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PHOTO CREDIT: BRET GUM

SIMPLY VINTAGE HOME AT CHRISTMASTIME

This new-build home in Southern California transforms into a vintage home at Christmastime thanks to antiques and vintage holiday finds.



PHOTO CREDIT: KAREN PALMER

A FRENCH FARMHOUSE CHRISTMAS ON THE FARM

A warm and authentic French and farmhouse aesthetic was Inspired by the timeless elegance of Provence, bringing a bit of France to rural country life.



PHOTO CREDIT: BECKY CUNNINGHAM

WHERE TO HANG STOCKINGS (BESIDES THE MANTEL)

Don't have a mantel in your home to hang your stockings with care? Try these other places to hang stockings so Santa can still fill them with goodies.



PHOTO CREDIT: JESSICA SIGMONE

A WARM & COZY HOLIDAY GUEST ROOM

Add festive charm to your holiday guest room with these helpful tips and ideas.



PHOTO CREDIT: KIMBERLY MCCOLE

HOW TO STAY SANE AT CHRISTMAS

It's easy to feel overwhelmed during this busy time. Let an experienced mother of five share her top tips for how to stay sane in all the holiday madness.

Follow us online on Instagram, Facebook and Pinterest for daily inspiration!

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A Tree with *Heart and Heritage*

Our annual Christmas Tree Contest winner revealed!

Produced by **Kelly McMaster** | Styled and photographed by **Jennifer Nutt**



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Decorating Tips from Jennifer

- **Brainstorm:** Start with a big picture and then work down to the details.
- **Endgame:** Decide on the feeling you want to achieve, then build the steps to get there.
- **Make it Personal:** Blend heirlooms, collected treasures, and new finds to tell your unique story.
- **Just Start:** Don't be afraid to move things around and go with the flow! Decorating is a journey! Enjoy the experience. Your creative juices will be flowing in no time!



For Jennifer Nutt,

the winner of our annual tree contest in 2024, Christmas has always been about more than twinkle lights and tinsel, but more about making memories, family, and creating a mood that tells a story. "My childhood was filled with so many amazing Christmas memories," Jennifer shares. "As I brainstormed how I wanted my living room to look, I kept thinking back to the nostalgia of Christmases past."

That nostalgia shaped her 2024 tree. Classic Christmas red and Santas set the foundation, but the rest came together when Jennifer stumbled across several ornaments from both of her grandmothers. "I knew I wanted them on my tree," she says. "With that setting the tone, I got started decorating!"

Jennifer layered in ornaments with vintage flair, sprigs of red berries, and collected treasures. The result was a cheerful, timeless look filled with personality. But the standout detail came when she saw a DIY project shared by her friend Stephanie Leleux, the former brand ambassador for American Farmhouse Style. Using plaid wrapping paper, Jennifer created pinwheel ornaments that tied in perfectly with the plaid she had already chosen for her gift wrap.

Once the whimsical plaid pinwheels were added, Jennifer crowned the tree with a vintage-inspired gold star. Around the base, cozy textures, a rocking horse, giant jingle bells, and a personalized Santa sack completed the story. "When I am decorating a space, especially during the holidays, I want to create a feeling and tell a story," Jennifer explains. "This corner of my home did just that—it was a story woven together of Christmases past, family, and the magical feeling that only the season can bring."

To see more of Jennifer's home visit **@birchlanebyjennifer** on Instagram.

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It's All in the Details

Jennifer's tree exudes charm with thoughtful elements.

- **Family Heirlooms:** Ornaments from both of Jennifer's grandmothers added sentimental value.
- **Vintage Charm:** New ornaments with nostalgic flair blended seamlessly with heirlooms.
- **DIY Pinwheels:** Handmade plaid ornaments crafted from wrapping paper echoed the gift wrap.
- **Finishing Touches:** A vintage-inspired gold star, cozy textures, and whimsical accents like a rocking horse, jingle bells, and Santa sack completed the look.

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A Sweet Taste of Christmas Past

Every family has that one recipe that signals the season. For some it's gingerbread, for others, peppermint bark. But in my childhood home, nothing said Christmas to me quite like oatmeal candy.

Written, styled and photographed by **Lynn Langford**

OLD FASHIONED GOODNESS

It wasn't a glossy cookbook dessert or something you'd find in a bakery window. Instead, it was simple, old-fashioned, and just a little imperfect. The kind of recipe where you watched the pot bubble and hoped it would "set up" just right. Some years it was fudgy, other years a little crumbly—but every year, it was equally delicious.

I can still picture my mother at the stove, wooden spoon in hand, the smell of cocoa and sugar filling the air. My siblings and I would eagerly wait for the moment she dropped spoonfuls of the warm mixture onto wax paper. It was agony to wait for them to cool—but that first bite was always worth it.

Now, as I carry the recipe into my own kitchen, I realize that oatmeal candy is more than just a treat. It's a memory made edible, a connection to the past, and a tradition I can pass along to my grandchildren.



Lynn and her husband, Scott became first-time grandparents with the birth of their granddaughter, Madilynn Grace Langford on 2/10/25. They are excited about celebrating her first Christmas and making more family memories.

THE RECIPE: OATMEAL CANDY

What You'll Need:

- 2 cups sugar
- ½ cup milk
- ½ stick butter
- 4 tsp cocoa powder
- 2 cups quick oats
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- ½ cup peanut butter

What You'll Do:

1. In a medium saucepan, combine cocoa, sugar, milk, and butter. Bring to a boil over medium heat.
2. Boil for 1 minute, stirring constantly.
3. Remove from heat and stir in oats, peanut butter, and vanilla. Stir fast.
4. Drop by spoonful onto wax paper and allow to cool until set.
5. Store in an airtight tin—or eat them all before they make it that far.

Holiday recipes like this remind us that traditions don't have to be complicated. Sometimes the simplest sweets carry the deepest meaning. Oatmeal candy may not sparkle like sugar cookies or shine like peppermint bark, but in our family, it holds something far greater: a taste of home.

Follow Lynn on Instagram **@athomeinthewildwood**.

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To see Lynn's holiday home, turn to page 44 in this issue!

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A Cozy, Classic Holiday Home *on the River*

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Timeless décor and family traditions along the waterfront.

Written by **Emma Dorsey**
Photographed by **Tori Sikkema**

The family's "forever home" shines brightest during the holidays.

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Designer Ginny Padula's holiday home in Oceanport, New Jersey, embodies her signature timeless style, filled with heartfelt touches of Christmas throughout every corner, from the festive tabletop to even the laundry room. With silver collected over decades, mismatched plaids and tartans, and family tableware passed down through generations, Ginny's home is a lively gathering place for both her immediate and extended family. It is a cozy, sophisticated, and always welcoming holiday retreat.

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A favorite spot to curl up with a blanket and a holiday candle, comfort and connection at the heart of the home.

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above | Silver bowls, brass candlesticks, and tartan accents create a mix of shine and softness.



For more than three decades, Ginny and her husband, Lou, have built a life full of family, friends, and traditions. Married for 35 years, they raised two sons, Vincent and Dominic, who are now beginning families of their own. “Vincent will actually be married this October in Hong Kong, and Dominic is getting married next October in New York City,” she shares proudly. Lou owns a custom home building business, while she runs an interior design studio and retail shop. Together, they have always made their home the gathering place. “We are very big on entertaining friends and family. Growing up, our boys always had a house full of friends. My family always seems to gather at our home for almost all the holidays.”

The property, perched along a river, is the realization of a dream Lou had long held dear. “A realtor friend approached Lou prior to the house going on the market. He declined looking at it a few times, then finally went to see it. I was not aware of any of this. We had moved so many times, and our last home was supposed to be our forever home.” The house itself was a tear-down, but the land had one irresistible feature: waterfront access. “The property was located on the river, something Lou had always wanted. So here we are three years later in a beautiful new home on the water.”

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Collected plaids, no two alike, make the décor feel personal and lived-in.

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Treasured silver and brass pieces connect generations, adding timeless elegance to holiday celebrations.

Inside, Ginny's love for design shines brightest during the holiday season. She decorates with a mix of classic and sentimental touches that make the home feel timeless and personal. "Each year, I like to use a combination of vintage pieces and greenery, both real and faux," she says. Silver bowls and serving pieces become vessels for fresh fruit and greenery. Faux garlands and wreaths are layered throughout the house, a practical choice for a family that spends the week after Christmas at their ski condominium. "Live greenery would be a big mess when we return," she adds with a laugh. To complete the cozy look, tartan and plaid blankets and pillows are draped around the home, collected through the years.

Special heirlooms add another layer of meaning. "I love using pieces from my aunts and grandmothers," Ginny says. "Brass candlesticks, silver bowls and assorted china pieces for the table settings." These treasures give her holiday décor an elegant, timeless feel while connecting her family to the past.



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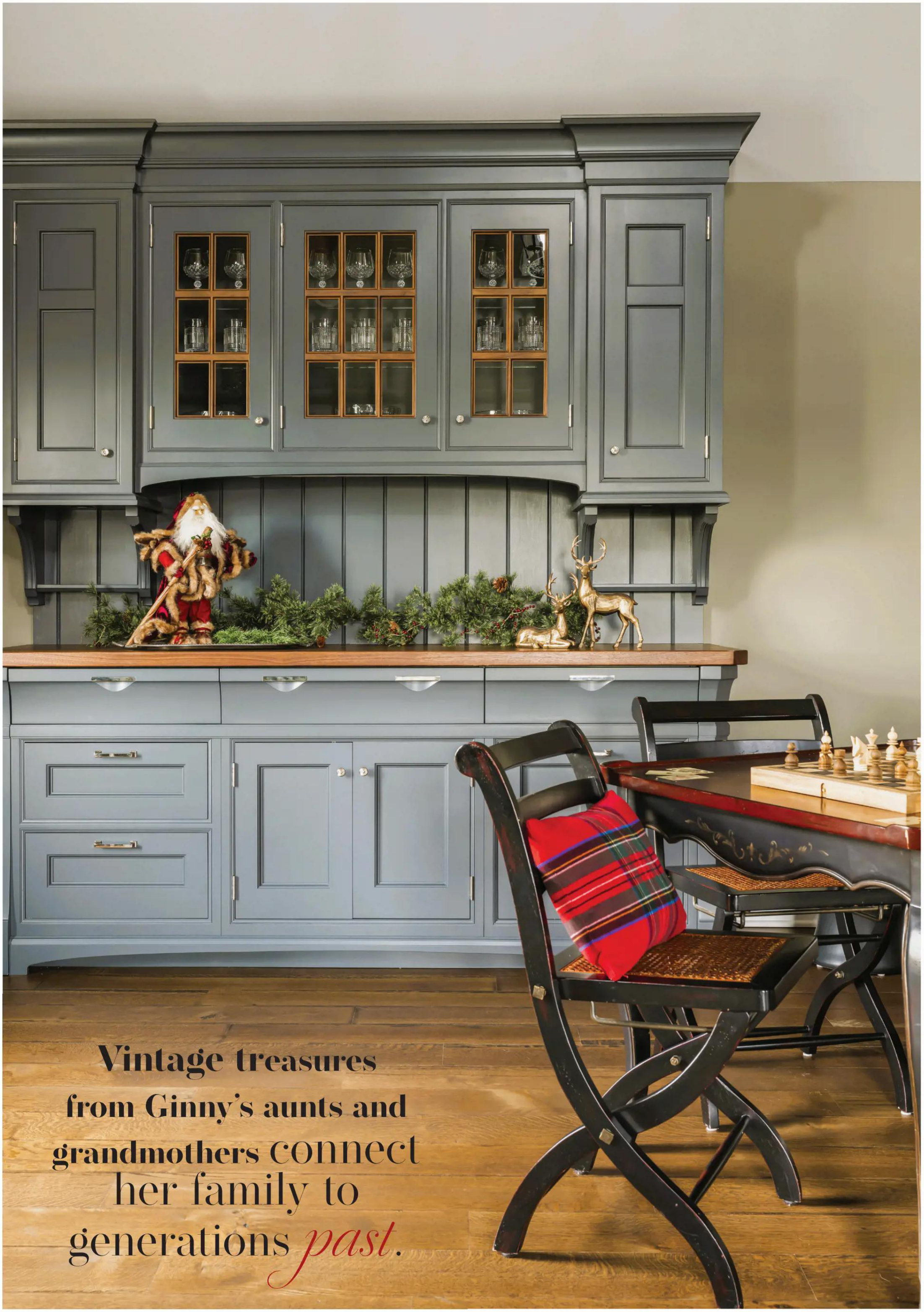
Subtle holiday touches in quiet corners keep the whole house feeling festive.



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left and above | Plaid pillows and blankets collected through the years make the family room instantly cozy.

When it comes to sourcing, vintage is Ginny's favorite route, but she also relies on a few modern classics. "Most of my decorations are vintage, but I do source new greenery from Afloral if needed," she notes. And there is one holiday staple she buys without fail: the Ralph Lauren Holiday Scented candle. "I purchase it year after year."

The holiday season officially begins the weekend after Thanksgiving, when Ginny starts pulling out boxes of greenery, heirlooms, and plaid accents. The decorations remain up until January 6, giving the family plenty of time to enjoy them after their annual ski trip. "We usually entertain the weekends leading up to Christmas, so it is nice to have the house full for greens and holiday scents. We love returning home from our ski week and being able to enjoy the decorations for a few more days."

For Ginny, decorating is about creating an atmosphere that encourages relaxation and connection. "My goal is to make my home warm, inviting and cozy for my family and all our friends that come to visit. The best compliment is when someone curls up with a blanket in front of the fire and falls asleep after dinner. Then I know I have made them really feel at home."



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Ginny's tips for readers are simple and classic: stick with timeless pieces, incorporate natural materials, and do not be afraid to reuse what you love year after year. She also recommends practical solutions for outdoor décor. "The front door wreath is hung on a metal door hanger. This wreath is real since it will last outside. We usually purchase it from the local Boy Scout group, and I add my own ribbon." Indoors, faux garlands make for easy cleanup and long-lasting beauty.

By layering tradition, vintage treasures, and natural greenery, Ginny creates a holiday home that is both elegant and welcoming. With every season, the home on the river becomes a backdrop for more family gatherings, cozy evenings, and cherished memories.

To learn more about Ginny, visit **townandcountrydesignstudio.com** and **@townandcountrydesignstudio** on Instagram.

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The Tree House

Christmas trees galore shine with the spirit of the season in this holiday home.

Written by
Meryl Schoenbaum
Styled and photographed by
Christina Cooney

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A view of the family room from the foyer with the dining room in the background. The Santa was made from an eBay seller's digital print file that Christina decoupaged onto a 6-foot foam insulation board and cut to shape. She DIY'ed the French doors to look aged.

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Christina has been adding to the living room's family tree with childhood memorabilia for more than 20 years. She added the children's arts and crafts projects and ornaments from travels to it every year since.

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The family room is home to Christina's display of Santas she found at Goodwill stores during thrifting trips through the years.

Christina Cooney knows trees—inside and out. That's because her house is surrounded by trees outdoors and it becomes a winter wonderland of trees indoors at Christmastime as well.

"We live in an older established neighborhood with lots of trees and foliage," Christina says. "Our home sits on an acre lot and is surrounded by tall pine trees. The front landscaping of our home is lined with limelight hydrangeas, cathedral bell roses and drifting popcorn rose bushes."

Christina's love of the outdoors, particularly trees, permeates her Christmas décor and is present in nearly every room. "I definitely have more than one tree—probably more than the average person should have," she reveals with a smile. "Our family tree in our main living room is a traditional faux green. I have two faux-flocked trees in our dining room and two faux-flocked trees in the family room. Each of my boys have 3-foot faux green trees that they decorate and put in their rooms."

Christina lives in her Chesapeake, Virginia, four-bedroom brick ranch style home, built in 1976, with her husband, Steven, and sons Collin, 13; Cohen, 9; and Grayson, 5; and dog, Hank. Their oldest son is in the Air Force, stationed in Germany.

NORTH POLE NOSTALGIA

The holiday memories that Christina holds dear include visiting a special place that every child would love to go to at Christmas: The North Pole. "When I was a little girl we lived in Fairbanks, Alaska, and every year at Christmastime we would go to North Pole, Alaska, to visit Santa Claus House," she recalls. "I still remember the feeling I would get walking in seeing all the decorations and old toys and smelling all the Christmas treats. That feeling and those memories are what I try to recreate every year at Christmas for my boys. I want it to look like the snowy scenery of Alaska and feel like you're walking into Santa Claus House, and I try to achieve that by adding flocked trees around my home, lots of touches of red and old nostalgic décor pieces."

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With those cherished memories in mind, it's no surprise that Christina puts her heart, soul and creative spirit into creating her home's Christmas ambience. "Christmastime is my favorite time to decorate," she says. "It is the one time of year that every room in our home is full of bright colors and nostalgic pieces. It just feels so joyful and cozy! I start decorating our family room and dining room the day after Halloween. I usually do this a little at a time, then gradually take it to the rest of the house. However, it has been tradition to pull our family tree out the day after Thanksgiving and put it all up as a family, so the main living room is off limits till then. We don't take Christmas down till after New Year's. I just love watching all the New Year's festivities on TV with the Christmas trees still up. I do tend to keep my bare flocked trees up in the family room and greenery for simple winter décor."

Along with the excitement of decorating for Christmas, Christina and her family find joy in their holiday traditions. "We have lots! My favorite is loading all the boys up in the van at night in their pjs with a big thermos of hot chocolate and driving around looking at Christmas lights while listening to classic Christmas music," she says.

FARMHOUSE FESTIVITY

Christina thinks a farmhouse-style Christmas is the perfect sensibility for the season with its emphasis on natural and classic décor. "A farmhouse-style Christmas to me means old rustic pieces, such as snow skis and sleighs, lots of snowy Christmas trees with lots of pops of red and nostalgic pieces everywhere. When I think of farmhouse, I think of antique pieces and vintage décor that you would find at your great-grandma's house. Finding and implementing those elements and décor pieces in my home at Christmas is what really makes this time of year special for me. My favorite farmhouse-style Christmas items in my home are my primitive snow skis and my vintage sleigh along with my collection of vintage Santas and ornaments."

Under the tree in the family room is a toy fire truck Christina's mother-in-law gave her that Christina's husband received when he was 1 year old. Christina paired vintage tinsel with her husband's grandmother's vintage Christmas ornaments. opposite | The black buffet in the family room is draped with a red bow garland and topped with a white crocheted coverlet given to Christina by her mother-in-law that originally belonged to her husband's great-grandmother.

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A vintage chicken nester in the dining room hangs on the wall above the buffet, stuffed with flocked floral picks and ironstone teapots. Above it is an antique European bread paddle. The tablecloth is a children's throw Christina added to match the rug shown on page 34.



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Dried-Beef Pickle Rollups

These rollups are an easy-to-make family favorite at Christina's home at Christmas. Here's her recipe:

What You'll Need:

- One can of dried beef
- One jar of dill-pickle spears
- A block of cream cheese

What You'll Do:

Take one slice of dried beef, smear a little cream cheese on it, add a pickle spear and roll up the beef slice, which is the outer layer of the rollup! It's so easy and so flavorful!

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The red tartan rug in the family room is from Ruggable. The tree skirt is a red knit throw blanket. Christina decorated the French doors with matching flocked wreaths.

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IN WITH THE OLD

In keeping with her preference for nostalgic pieces from the past, Christina leans into decorating her holiday home with family heirlooms and secondhand finds. "I have a collection of Christmas keepsakes that I display every year. If I do add any new pieces to my holiday décor it is usually something inexpensive that I thrifted or something special and unique that I've found at the antiques mall," she says. "I rarely purchase anything store-bought outside of small things, such as ribbons, bows, holiday linens or florals. I have a collection of vintage ornaments that my husband's grandmother passed down to us that I display on our tree every year and an old vintage fire truck that my husband got for Christmas when he was 1 year old, over 40 years ago. The vintage fire truck has sat at the base of our tree for many years and it's that one special piece that all my boys get excited to see and at some point each of them has played with it in the living room in front of the glowing lights watching Christmas movies."

SCENTS OF THE SEASON

While decorating for Christmas, Christina keeps in mind that the holiday spirit is best achieved through a multisensory experience. "Most childhood memories originate from your sensory experiences and certain smells create instant nostalgia for people," she says. "That's one thing I take into consideration this time of year: Not only do I want it to look like Christmas, I want it to smell like Christmas too and I do that by adding lots of candles to create all those nostalgic smells, not only for my boys but for our guests as well. To me, candles, along with textures such as throw pillows and blankets, instantly create an inviting and cozy space."



Salt Dough Ornaments

Christina says these salt dough ornaments are always a favorite with her kids.

What You'll Need:

- 1 cup salt
- 2 cups flour
- ¾ cup of water

What You'll Do:

1. In a large bowl, mix salt and flour together.
2. Gradually stir in water. Mix well until it forms a doughy consistency.
3. Knead dough with your hands until smooth and well-combined.
4. Make your ornaments and add a hole for string—our favorite is the Santa hand!
5. Place the salt dough ornaments in the oven at 350° F/180° C. The cook time varies between 1.5 and 3 hours depending on thickness. Flip occasionally.

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opposite | The chandelier in the dining room is a vintage-inspired find Christina purchased on Amazon.

above, left | The two matching flocked trees in the dining room feature vintage tinsel, thrifted red and white ornaments and red bows Christina made from red velvet ribbon.

above, right | The buffet in the dining room showcases part of Christina's collection of white ironstone, a milk glass cake stand and vintage Santa mugs.

A TREE FOR ALL

Some of the spaces in Christina's home where Christmas trees add holiday cheer include the living room, dining room, family room, primary bedroom and children's bedrooms.

The home's largest tree is in the living room. "I decorate the mantel above our fireplace with lots of cedar garland, hang our traditional red cross-stitch stockings, add lots of pillows and throws—and our 7.5-foot faux green tree with our hodgepodge of family ornaments as well as a classic light-up Santa and Mrs. Claus," Christina says.

The dining room has two trees and a notable ceiling design. "I add lots of red touches, two flocked trees on each side of my chicken nester, a simple tablescape and some Santa mugs to my buffet," Christina says. "The ceiling in the dining room is original to our home, which was built in the '70s. It's a seashell/scalloped design. When we first moved in, I wasn't crazy about it, but after a while it grew on me, and now I love it. I love that it creates the illusion that the chandelier is reflecting off it—it's definitely a unique feature that stands out."

The family room also sports two Christmas trees. "I add two trees in this room, wall décor, a Christmas Ruggable rug, throw pillows and blankets, and lots of vintage Santas," she says.

The tree in the primary bedroom was downsized from their previous home but is no less a welcome addition. "We used to put a 7.5-foot tree in our bedroom, but since moving into this home we're limited on space," Christina explains, "so I opted for a small decorative cedar tree that I added in an old vintage red plaid scotch cooler and red velvet bedding that I paired with pink euro pillows, a Christmas quilt, a throw pillow and wreath."

The bed's headboard is also a special element in the room. "The antique doors I use as our headboard was a free Facebook Marketplace find," Christina explains. "I had the vision that I wanted old chippy white doors as my headboard for years and one day I came across this listing—they were already white and chippy, which was perfect! I picked them up from an 1898 Queen Anne Victorian home in Portsmouth, Virginia's Olde Town Historic District (I had no idea about them before arriving). The home was being renovated and they were the original doors to the home, making it an awesome find. I love finding pieces with a story!"

The kids get to decorate the trees in their bedrooms. "We added Christmas bedding and 3-foot faux green trees with ornaments of their choice," Christina says. "Last year was colorful felt dinosaurs and other woodland creatures."

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One of the Christmas trees in the home has an unexpected ornament beneath it: an old megaphone. "Every year, I try to find one unique piece from an antiques store to add to my collection; it's something I've been doing this since my husband and I started his military career. To me, it's like duty-station memorabilia," Christina explains. "The megaphone I found our first year here in Virginia Beach at the Virginia Beach Antique Mall. It was my first time going to this antiques mall and it was a picker's dream! I found that megaphone in the back, buried under so much junk and instantly thought-Christmas! I loved that it was red and white, which went perfectly with my red and white vintage ornaments, and I loved the idea of sitting it under the tree to portray the look of a child's gift."

Her advice to anyone unsure of how to dive into decorating for Christmas is: "Add red—lots of red—and decorate every room! In my opinion, you can never decorate 'too much' for Christmas." This year, she subtly introduced a new color to her holiday palette. "I always stick with traditional Christmas colors, especially red, however this year I did add a tiny bit of pink: a few pink ornaments to the flocked trees in the dining room and two pink euro pillows in the master bedroom."

Christina's Christmas decorating style reflects her love for the most important tree of all: her family tree. "My approach to Christmas décor is decorating with things that make me happy and implementing pieces that have a significant meaning to me and my family," she says. "I remind myself that I don't always have to follow trends and buy all new décor to make my home a magical Christmas wonderland for my kids."

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opposite | The old megaphone next to the tree was found at an antiques shop. Christina thought it looked festive and like a child's Christmas gift.
top | The primary bedroom is decorated with antique doors, a vintage-inspired holiday quilt and red velvet comforter. Christina's has a grouping of vintage mirrors on the wall.
bottom, left | The headboard is three antique doors Christina found for free on Facebook Marketplace and stacked next to each other to look like a single headboard.
bottom, right | This corner of the bedroom features a tiny cedar tree in a scotch cooler. Christina liked the chippy light sconce on the wall because it matched the antique doors.

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A Natural *Noel*

Our brand ambassador for 2025, Lynn Langford, reveals her home's serene Christmas décor.

Written by **Meryl Schoenbaum**
Styled and photographed by **Lynn Langford**

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You won't find lots of kitschy collectibles and over-the-top decorations at Lynn Langford's home at Christmastime. What you will find is the sweet simplicity of classic farmhouse style that soothes the soul and reflects the reason for the season.

"It's all about creating a warm, cozy and nostalgic holiday atmosphere with simple, rustic touches," Lynn says. "Instead of glitz and glam, it leans into natural textures, vintage finds and a homespun charm that feels inviting and timeless."

Lynn and her husband, Scott, are empty nesters who live in a country-style home they built in Rochelle, Georgia, along with their 4-year-old Shorkie pup, Ellie, who brings joy and laughter to their lives. The three-bedroom home is surrounded by woodland views and is six miles out in the country with no neighbors in sight, Lynn says.

CREATING CHRISTMAS

As you'd expect, this year's *American Farmhouse Style* brand ambassador loves any opportunity to decorate, but doing so for this season is especially joyful for her. "While I love to decorate for all seasons, Christmas is definitely my favorite because it evokes so many childhood memories of time spent with family celebrating the birth of Jesus," Lynn says.

Lynn finds many of her farmhouse-style Christmas decorations on thrifting excursions. "I love to thrift for farmhouse-style Christmas decorations year-round. Some of my favorite finds are vintage elves, bottlebrush trees and Santa mugs," she says. "I also love vintage crates and crocks to use throughout my home."



opposite | Two nutcracker soldiers stand guard at the front door. Lynn purchased the nutcracker banners on Amazon.com.
this page | The foyer has a welcoming wooden church bench that Lynn found at a flea market.

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While Lynn didn't have a specific theme for her holiday décor this year, she did have a vision. "My vision overall was to create a nostalgic Christmas feeling in my home, one that evokes the magic of Christmas in the eyes of children," she says. "One thing I did this year was to create a mantel in the living room with the theme of 'Twas the Night Before Christmas. Holiday canvas art, chunky knit stockings, greenery and a vintage mouse stocking holder on the mantel brought this vision together."

The Christmas decorations and ornaments Lynn displays are a blend of old and new. "I tend to use my collections of keepsakes every year, but I will also pick up a few new pieces each year if I see something that inspires me," she says. "I wouldn't say I have a particular family heirloom or gift that I display, but I always use my son's 'Baby's First Christmas' ornaments and ornaments he made as a child. If they're not on the tree, they will sometimes be on display in a pretty bowl or basket."

Hand-Painted Santa Ornaments

Lynn's favorite whimsical DIY Christmas project.

What You'll Need:

- Bag of wood ovals (purchase enough for the number of ornaments you'll have)
- Red, white and black craft paint
- Small paintbrush
- White glitter (for Santa's beard)
- Pencil (eraser will be used to make Santa's eyes)
- Ribbon (for ornament hanger)
- Drill (to make the holes for the hangers)

What You'll Do:

1. Pre-drill holes in the top of the wood ovals (for the hanger)
2. Paint the top part of the oval for Santa's hat and the bottom part for his beard. It doesn't have to be perfect, just estimate and leave enough wood showing for the eyes and mouth.
3. While the white paint is still wet, sprinkle the glitter on the beard area so it will stick.
4. Squirt a little black paint on a small paper plate or bowl and dip the pencil eraser into the black paint. Transfer the paint onto the wooden area to make the two eyes. Repeat the process for the mouth but make the area larger.
5. Attach a narrow piece of ribbon for a hanger so you can hang the ornaments on the tree.

The living room features a newly built fireplace made with rocks for a rustic feel. Lynn's husband, Scott, built the fireplace mantel with a neighbor's leftover wood from a red oak tree. Lynn says the home's main Christmas tree always sits next to the mantel. On the mantel is a painted canvas of Santa holding the book *'Twas the Night Before Christmas*.



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opposite | Lynn's vintage Santa mug collection is displayed in a vintage hutch in the dining room.

This view from the dining room into the breakfast room shows Lynn's vintage Christmas centerpiece with elves on it.

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This is Lynn's favorite view in her home: entering the foyer and seeing the fireplace and Christmas tree in the living room.

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Large gingerbread snowflakes adorn the walls. The Santa picture was part of a Christmas wrapping paper design. Lynn and Scott created the board and batten wall behind the church bench.

Memorable Moments

Lynn discusses some of the highlights during her year as our brand ambassador.

Being chosen as the 2025 brand ambassador for *American Farmhouse Style* magazine has been such a joy and I am so grateful for the opportunity to share my home with all the readers. Special memories include doing an online Christmas Home Tour with the previous four brand ambassadors last Christmas. It was also so much fun to share pictures of the epic snowstorm we had here in South Georgia with our online followers and we enjoyed making snow cream to enjoy during those cold days.

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Lynn kept the dining room décor simple as it doubles as a place for her to work on puzzles. She bought the secondhand corner hutch as a functional farmhouse piece to house her china and glassware.

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clockwise from top left | The kitchen features a coffee bar. A breakfast room cabinet holds Lynn's gingerbread collection. The galvanized piece was Lynn's grandmother's chicken feeder; now Lynn keeps Christmas greenery and primitive gingerbread men in it. The wall hanging is a piece of wrapping paper that Lynn decoupaged onto wood.

To make her holiday home feel inviting, warm and cozy, Lynn makes sure there is a generous supply of comfy textiles, lighting, snacks and hot beverages to chase away the chill. "I use lots of soft lighting, like candles and twinkle lights. Pillows and throws are always handy for guests as well as coffee or cocoa and some sweet treats," she says.

In choosing her home's Christmas color palette, Lynn is drawn to the traditional holiday colors sprinkled with festive sparkle. "I tend to always use the traditional Christmas colors of red and green," she says. "I add just a touch of sparkle with silver and gold accents."



SEASONAL SPACE-LIFTS

Lynn wants her guests to feel the Christmas spirit as soon as they arrive at her home, so she added some outdoor decorations to set the mood. "The front door always has a Christmas wreath to welcome my guests," she says. "Garland is hung on the front porch rail as well as green wreaths with red bows on the windows. This year, I also added nutcracker banners, red poinsettias and a lighted snowman for a touch of holiday whimsy."

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The festive greeting continues into the foyer. "When guests enter the front foyer, I want the first thing they notice to be the large Christmas tree next to the fireplace in the living room up ahead," Lynn says. "The foyer is styled with a vintage church bench that holds Christmas pillows and a throw. The board-and-batten feature wall is a fun place to style with other décor pieces."

Perhaps the home's most commanding showplace for Christmas is the living room. "The 9-foot Christmas tree and mantel are the focal point of the room each year," Lynn says. "I always place greenery and stockings on the mantel, regardless of how it's styled in a particular year. Other staples for the room include red poinsettias in crocks, nutcrackers, a vintage sled and a wooden nativity."

The dining room reflects Lynn's back-to-basics holiday style. "I used to always set a formal Christmas table in the dining room for display, but this year I opted to keep it simple," she says. "A wooden crate with candles and small Christmas décor items was paired with Santa mugs and a Christmas plate to enjoy a cup of hot cocoa and a snack while working on a Christmas puzzle during the holidays. My ever-growing Santa mug collection is displayed on a beautiful vintage hutch for a big impact."

And, of course, the heart of the home also received a glow-up for Christmas. "My favorite way to style my kitchen for Christmas is by using my gingerbread collection," Lynn says. "I like to style many of the pieces on my open shelves and in a white chippy cabinet. Vintage elves are tucked into places like centerpieces and tiered trays."

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opposite | This corner of the kitchen features a red plaid runner Lynn found on Amazon.com.

this page | The kitchen's open shelving displays more of Lynn's gingerbread collection.

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opposite | The antique mantel in the primary bedroom is from Lynn's great-uncle's home. She just added a clear sealant to preserve it. The antique mirror was a yard-sale find. The lamp on the mantel belonged to Lynn's great-grandmother. Lynn converted it to an electrical lamp. She kept the room neutral with a pop of cranberry.
this page | The house on the hearth is where Lynn stores her sewing supplies.

"I always enjoy styling my coffee bar for the holidays with everything guests may need for their coffee or cocoa," Lynn says. "The Christmas tablescape in my breakfast room is made up of a simple red and white runner styled with a vintage centerpiece of faux cedar greenery, red-and-white striped ribbon and candy canes. Two vintage elves are nestled in the top of the arrangement for a fun whimsical touch. The simple place settings consist of red and green plaid chargers with thrifted Christmas salad plates on top of simple white dinner plates. Thrifted green napkins and wood napkin rings tie everything together."

There's one special keepsake that will always be featured prominently in Lynn's Christmas décor. "I purchased a new nativity set when we were building our home. I found it at a local Christian bookstore and have never seen another one since—even online," she says. "I always display it in the main area of our home to remind us of the true meaning of Christmas: celebrating the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ."

Lynn shares her Christmas-decorating philosophy that is sure to bring you comfort and joy. "When decorating your home for Christmas, choose things that you truly love and don't worry about the current trends," she says. "When you do that, you will establish sweet memories with your family through the years."

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Magnificent Mantles

From garden-fresh greenery to moody blooms with a modern twist, two talented designers share their secrets for creating magical moments.

Produced by **Kelly McMaster**

The fireplace has always been the heart of the holiday home, and the mantle is where the magic really happens. Whether you prefer layers of fresh greenery with berries and blooms, or a moodier mix of florals and metallics, a styled mantle instantly makes the whole room feel festive. These two holiday looks show just how versatile the mantle can be: elegant, inviting, and full of Christmas cheer.



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A Mantle Made Merry

Design: Shannon Cassell Interiors
Photographer: Tyler Cunningham Photography
Floral design: Elizabeth Zimmerman Florals

Why We Love It:

The holiday florals are woven gracefully into the home's existing design. On the mantel, a lush evergreen foundation sets the stage for the festive season. Gold hurricanes rise above the greenery, bringing height and texture. Rather than the expected candles, each vessel holds a vase of antique hydrangea, garden roses, spray roses, nandina berries, and eucalyptus pods that give the mantle a dramatic feel. A single red bow tops the arrangement, a simple and elegant pop of Christmas.

On the hearth, a variety of poinsettias are gathered in favorite containers and paired with baby gem magnolia branches, clipped straight from the yard. To the left, Shannon designed a happy hour station that is ready for holiday cheer. To the right, the client's beautiful silver cup collection becomes more than barware, it becomes décor when grouped together on a simple shelf. The result is a space that feels warm and livable, yet instantly ready to welcome guests. It's holiday design at its best: equal parts comfort, elegance, and celebration.

"Not all of the flowers need to be traditional holiday colors. The antique hydrangeas and pink garden roses draw from the softer tones in the painting and on the pillows in the room. Adding the red berries and bows gives the mantle a pop of color and a festive feel," says designer Shannon Cassell.

Deck the Mantle: Festive Tips & Tricks

1. **Go Green or Go Home.** Every great mantle starts with evergreens. Mix pine, cedar, and magnolia for a look that's tree-mendously full of life.
2. **Berry Merry Accents.** Pop in bright berries, ornaments, or flowers for color that jingles all the way. Stick to a simple palette so it doesn't look like Santa's workshop exploded.
3. **Height Makes It Bright.** Lanterns, candlesticks, or framed art add height and balance.
4. **Garland Goals.** Let your greenery drape dramatically, and dress up the hearth with poinsettias, pinecones, or faux presents for extra holiday style.
5. **Glow for It.** Add twinkle lights or ribbons that shimmer in the firelight to keep your display cozy, merry, and oh-so bright.

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A Modern Classic with Holiday Flair

Design: TKS Design Group
Photography: Sarah Merryweather Photography
Styling: Brandi Devers Russow

This deep green fireplace sets a dramatic stage for holiday decorating, and the garland draped across the mantle makes the most of it. Wispy evergreens are tucked with frosted pinecones, clusters of berries, and soft hydrangea blooms, creating a look that's equal parts festive and refined. The arrangement frames the elegant mirror above while spilling gracefully down the sides for a full, gathered feel.

In the room, the rich jewel tones of velvet chairs and brass accents echo the mantle's holiday palette, making the whole space feel warm, stylish, and ready for celebrating.

"We love bringing in natural greenery for the fireplace that is not specifically "holiday themed" and the asymmetry of the garland makes it feel a bit more artistic, informal, and inviting," says Susan Klimala of TKS Design Group.

Mantle Style Takeaways

1. **Match the Mood.** Play up your wall color with greenery that complements instead of competes. Here, frosted greens soften the bold, moody backdrop.
2. **Bloom Where You're Planted.** Mix in unexpected florals like hydrangeas for a fresh twist on traditional holiday garlands.
3. **Pinecone Power.** Natural accents-think pinecones and seed pods-add texture and keep the look grounded.
4. **Down the Line.** Let your garland trail gracefully down the sides of the mantle for a lush, finished feel. Or go asymmetrical as done here.
5. **Keep It Cohesive.** Tie the whole room together by echoing mantle colors in furniture, pillows, or accessories.

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No matter your style, the mantle is more than just a shelf above the fireplace, it's a space to share a little joy, spark conversation, and welcome the season with heart.

To see more of the designers shown here visit **shannoncassellinteriors.com** and **tksdesigngroup.com**.

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VINTAGE CHARM
for the Holidays

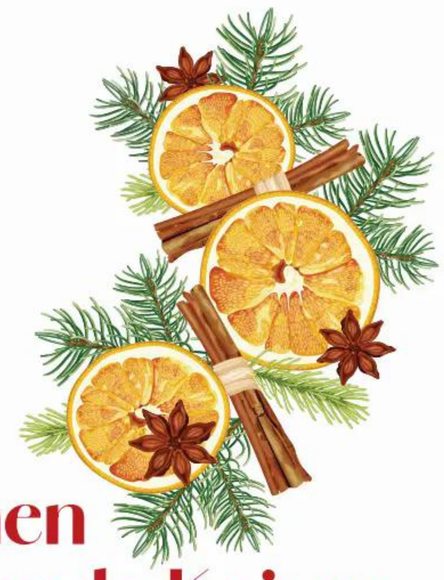
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With European antiques, cozy farmhouse touches, and a playful family tradition, this home proves Christmas magic is in the details.

Written by **Kelly McMaster** | Photographed by **Linn Images**

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When Rhonda Kaiser and her family

moved into their cozy Texas farmhouse nearly a decade ago, she knew she wanted to create a space that would evolve with them. "Our home may be just about 10 years old, but our property is always growing and changing," she says. Recently refreshed with layers of charm, the house is now brimming with vintage treasures sourced both from Europe and from favorite antique fairs closer to home.

For the holidays, Rhonda takes the same thoughtful approach. "My holiday décor is always from the heart," she shares. "I love blending my background in design with my passion for vintage treasures, creating spaces that feel warm and timeless. My hope is that sharing these little touches sparks inspiration and brings a bit of joy to everyone who visits my page."

She typically starts decorating about a month before Christmas, giving herself time to layer in just the right details. "It takes time to get everything just right," she admits. "That's why I leave it all up as long as I can, usually until just after the holiday."

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Among her most beloved seasonal finds this year is a vintage goose, discovered at a local antique shop. “This handmade treasure came all the way from Europe, and I just couldn’t resist bringing it home,” Rhonda says with a smile. “On a recent trip to New York City , I found some vintage ribbon that I used to dress up the goose and also the pair of chandeliers above our custom farmhouse table.” It’s the kind of whimsical touch that makes her spaces unforgettable.

Of course, Rhonda also embraces hands-on creativity. She crafted her own orange slice garlands by dehydrating fruit and stringing the slices together with jute twine. “It’s super simple, but it adds such warmth and fragrance,” she notes.

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The holidays in her home aren't just about décor, though—they're about traditions that bring the family together. One of the most beloved is a playful twist on winter fun: "Since we hardly ever see real snow this far south, one of our favorite traditions is a good old-fashioned indoor Texas snowball fight! We break out our holiday bag of soft, fluffy snowballs and let the fun begin."

Whether it's a handmade garland, a European treasure, or a snowball fight in the living room, Rhonda's holiday style captures the best of the season: joy, creativity, and a touch of vintage magic.



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“**My holiday décor is** always
from the *heart.*”







Cultivating Charm: A Garden Guide with Vintage Soul

In her book *The Vintage Farmhouse Garden*, Rhonda Kaiser blends practical tips with nostalgic beauty, showing readers how to turn any outdoor space into a welcoming haven.

In The Vintage Farmhouse Garden, Rhonda Kaiser, well-known for her popular Instagram @SouthernHomeandFarm, invites readers into a world where gardens are more than landscapes; they are stories told through flowers, heirlooms, and timeless design. With a warm, approachable voice, Rhonda offers both inspiration and guidance for creating outdoor spaces that feel lived-in, loved, and utterly personal. *The Vintage Farmhouse Garden* is the first garden design book to focus on the vintage-inspired farmhouse aesthetic and how to bring it to your outdoor space with no farm required.

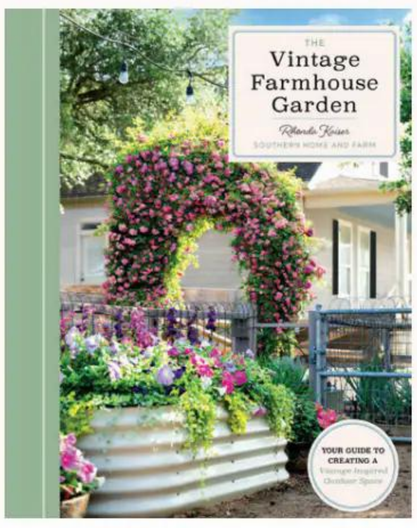
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Rather than prescribing rigid formulas, Rhonda encourages readers to embrace what they have and layer in vintage finds, whether that's a weathered gate, a salvaged tool, or a classic potting bench. Chapters explore everything from pollinator-friendly plants and seasonal blooms to porches, sheds, and greenhouses—all framed with her signature farmhouse style. Recipes sprinkled throughout the book bring the experience full circle, showing how garden-fresh harvests can become simple joys at the table.

What makes this book shine is Rhonda's ability to balance practicality with poetry. She gives readers the nuts and bolts; how to choose shrubs, design layouts, and think seasonally, while also championing the romance of slowing down and savoring life outdoors. As Rhonda writes, "Your garden should tell your story, one bloom, one treasure, one season at a time."



The Vintage Farmhouse Garden by Rhonda Kaiser, September 2025, Quarto Publishing Group, quarto.com.



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Farmhouse Fir-ever Favorites

From twinkling lights to treasured family keepsakes, these trees celebrate the heartwarming traditions that make the holiday season unforgettable.

Produced by **Kelly McMaster** | Photographs courtesy of **each content creator**

There's nothing quite like the glow of a Christmas tree to bring back memories of holidays past and spark new traditions. In this roundup, we're sharing some of our favorite farmhouse-style trees, each one lovingly decorated with festive flair and personal touches. Even better, you can continue the journey by following these talented decorators on social media, and with all four of our former brand ambassadors (Courtney, Astra, Jessica, and Stephanie) included, this collection feels like a holiday homecoming.



Stephanie Leleux: Stephanie took the crown of Brand Ambassador in 2024 and blew us away with her creativity, resourcefulness and abundance of ideas and projects! Stephanie's tree is a whimsical wonderland, sprinkled with gingerbread houses, striped ornaments, and playful black bows. With its frosted branches and touches of moonlit magic, it feels like a storybook scene brought to life. Follow Stephanie @returninggrace.

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Beth Cheshire: Beth's tree is full of hand-made ornaments and plenty of red, plaid and bows. "Our sweet goldendoodle Callie loves having her pet bed front and center enjoying the beauty of the season," says Beth. Follow Beth **@thelittlecottagethatcould**.

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Jennifer Choate: Jennifer's neutral, woodland-inspired tree feels like a walk through a snowy forest. Oversized pinecones, rustic owls, and ribbon-wrapped branches mingle with soft metallic ornaments and twinkling lights, creating a warm, woodsy glow that is both elegant and inviting. Follow Jennifer **@downshiloroad**.

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Astra Spanbauer: Astra captured our Brand Ambassador role in 2022, and her amazing DIY skills graced our pages; impressing and inspiring us in every issue! Astra's tree bursts with classic Christmas cheer, decked out in bold red ornaments, flocked branches, and a playful banner spelling out 'Merry Christmas.' With glittering bows and festive pops of sparkle, it sets a joyful tone right as you walk through the door. Follow Astra **@athomewithastra**.

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Brittany Hutchison: Something old, something new... And a little bit of DIY too! This tree is full of ribbons hung tinsel style, and the DIY salt dough ornaments Brittany made using pressed cookie molds. The tree topper is a pair of antique corbels she got from an architectural salvage store (Legacy Salvage in Wilmington, NC). And the tree skirt is one of her great grandmother's antique crocheted tablecloths. "It's my tree full of new and old heirlooms," says Brttany. Follow Brittany **@whiteandwoodgrain**.

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Sharon Pinto: Since Sharon has been collecting vintage Putz houses for years, she decided to fill her tree with them! The name comes from the German word Putzen, which means "to decorate" or "adorn," so how perfectly symbolic it is to decorate with them for Christmas. "I filled my tree with the houses, vintage Shiny Brite ornaments, handmade Santa crescent moons, repurposed vintage toy cars filled with bottlebrush trees, gold star garlands, and red bows," says Sharon. Follow Sharon **@corbelcottage**.

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LaChe Powell: LaChe's classic and nostalgic Christmas trees are beautifully decorated with silver tinsel, plaid ribbons and gold ornaments which make for a true vintage feeling and transforms her home into a cozy, holiday haven. Follow LaChe **@our_home_sweet_farmhouseof6.**





Karen West: Karen's cozy brick cottage just got a little bit cozier with her sweet vintage tree. "Shiny Brite ornaments bring back special memories for me as a child that grew up in the 60's. Silky red bows along with home-made dried oranges give a nostalgic feel to it, and the angel topper is a reminder of my wonderful parent's memory", she says. Follow Karen **@mycozybrickcottage**.

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Courtney Vettel: Courtney was the first ever Brand Ambassador for American Farmhouse Style in 2021 and has continued to support our brand with her warmth and creativity. Courtney's magnificent tree was inspired by her favorite movie "It's a Wonderful Life." Surrounded by piles of beautifully wrapped gifts, it's a radiant centerpiece that fills the whole room with magic and old-fashioned charm. Follow Courtney @**thevettelfarm**.

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Kari Soderstrom: It's buttons and bells for Kari's tree! "This year, I added a personal touch to my decor by stringing my own button garland and using ribbon to hang charming bell ornaments," explains Kari. Follow Kari **@songtosingblog**.

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Eileen Ausherman: Eileen's tree gives old world charm with its rich colors and placement in a simple basket. "This year, I decided on burgundy and chocolate ribbons along with dried oranges and pretty sparkly ornaments I picked up at my local antique market," says Eileen. Follow Eileen **@ourantiquedhome.**

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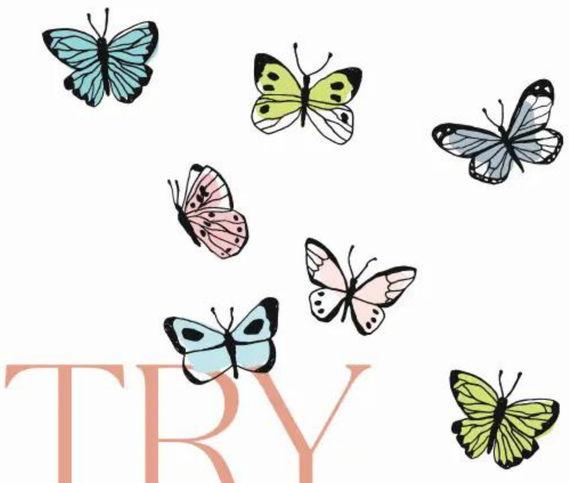






Jessica Sigmone: Jessica stole our hearts as our third Brand Ambassador in 2023, and her warm, cozy styling and approachable DIY projects kept us entertained all year. Jessica's trees feel timeless, dressed in glowing candles, vintage-style ornaments, and simple red ribbons. Tucked into a charming corner with checks, chippy wood, and soft textures, it's the perfect blend of old-fashioned charm and farmhouse flair. Follow Jessica **@itty_bitty_farmhouse**.

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THE COUNTRY COMMONPLACE BOOK

A new book celebrates the timeless tradition of the commonplace book, a personal collection of words, quotes, and ideas worth savoring.

Produced by **Kelly McMaster** | Images courtesy of **Rizzoli New York**

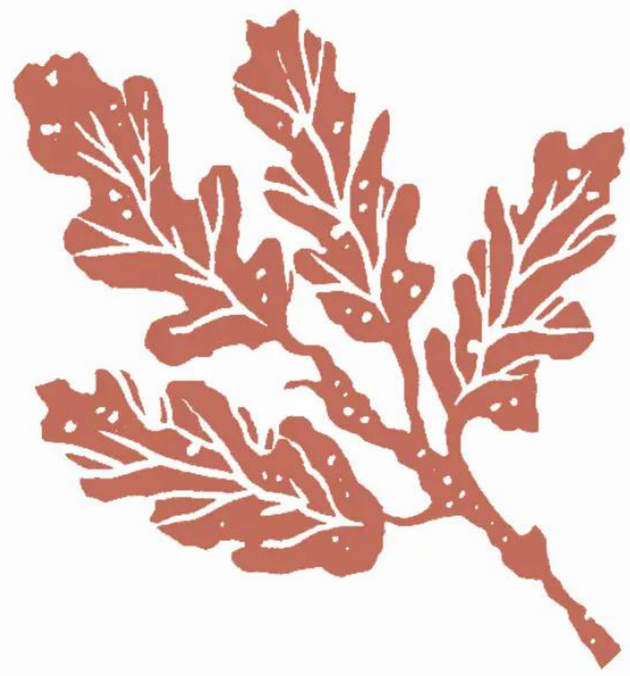
Sometimes the simplest practices bring the most joy. This charming book introduces (or reintroduces) us to the art of keeping a commonplace book, which is a centuries-old habit of collecting favorite quotes, poems, proverbs, recipes, and other nuggets of inspiration. Unlike a diary, which records your day-to-day life, a commonplace book is more like a personal treasury: a place to gather words and ideas that move you, whether it's a line from Virginia Woolf or a witty saying overheard at the coffee shop.

What makes this book delightful is the way it grounds the tradition in history while also reminding us how timeless it feels. We learn how Erasmus encouraged notetaking in the 1500s, how John Locke created a system for organizing entries, and how even printed blank commonplace books were once sold to eager collectors. Yet it's also relatable as you may already be keeping one without realizing it, in the form of a notebook full of quotes or even a folder of favorite clippings, or a journal with recipes, poems, lists and such.

The tone of this book is warm, inviting, and a little nostalgic, making you want to grab a pen and start your own book of treasures. For anyone who loves words, storytelling, or simply the beauty of recording inspiration, this guide is a gentle nudge to slow down and savor the thoughts worth keeping. Imagine what a lovely gift this would also be to leave to your children and grandchildren. As the new year approaches, it's the perfect time to make plans to start your own commonplace book.

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THE HISTORY OF THE COMMONPLACE BOOK



In the early 16th century, the Dutch priest, writer and educationalist, Erasmus (c. 1466–1536), popularized the practice of note-taking in Europe. He encouraged his students to read from a range of authors to broaden their knowledge and to select, organize and write down quotations, opinions, proverbs and excerpts in an effort to aid their own reasoning powers and debating skills.

Throughout early modern times, the habit of keeping a commonplace book became more widespread, especially as paper became cheaper and easier to obtain. The English philosopher John Locke (1632–1704) published a book that explained his system for organizing and categorizing a commonplace book. By this time, the habit of commonplacing had moved beyond scholars and students, who initially used commonplace books to aid their studies. People, for example, might use their commonplace books in church to write down memorable lines from sermons.

In the late 18th century, commercial commonplace books were published in response to their popularity. The bookseller and publisher John Bell (1745–1831) issued a printed commonplace book, 'form'd generally upon the principles recommended and practised by Mr. Locke', which left plenty of blank pages for people to fill in themselves. A few of these commonplace books, written in by their owners, are held at the British Library and offer a fascinating insight into the history of commonplacing. Although

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from THE SNOW STORM

Announced by all the trumpets of the sky,
Arrives the snow, and, driving o'er the fields,
Seems nowhere to alight: the whited air
Hides hills and woods, the river, and the heaven,
And veils the farm-house at the garden's end.
The sled and traveler stopped, the courier's feet
Delayed, all friends shut out, the housemates sit
Around the radiant fireplace, enclosed
In a tumultuous privacy of storm.

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882)





WINTER
from LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST, ACT V, SCENE II

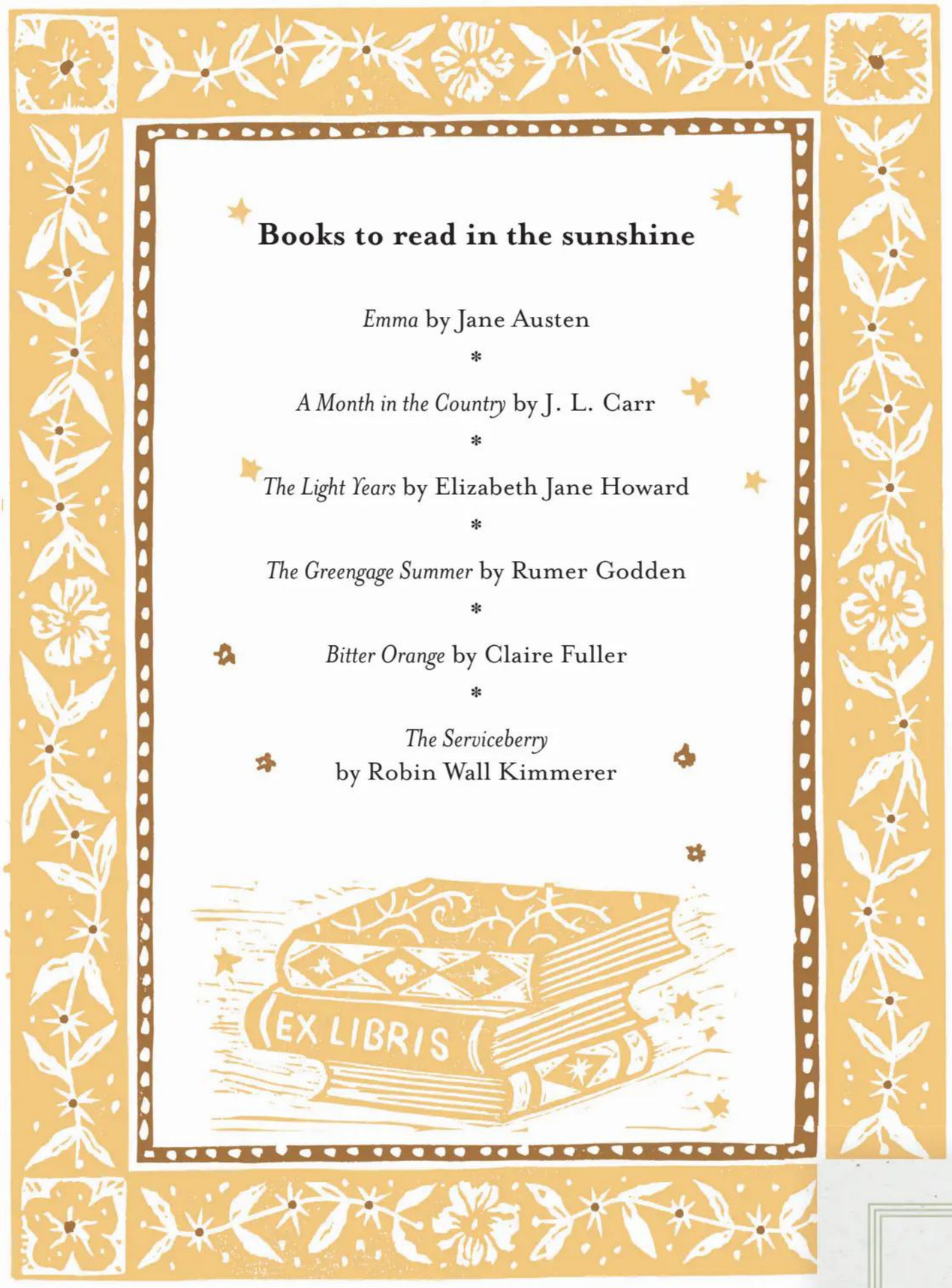
When icicles hang by the wall,
And Dick the shepherd blows his nail,
And Tom bears logs into the hall,
And milk comes frozen home in pail,
When blood is nipp'd and ways be foul,
Then nightly sings the staring owl,
Tu-whit!
Tu-who! — a merry note,
While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.

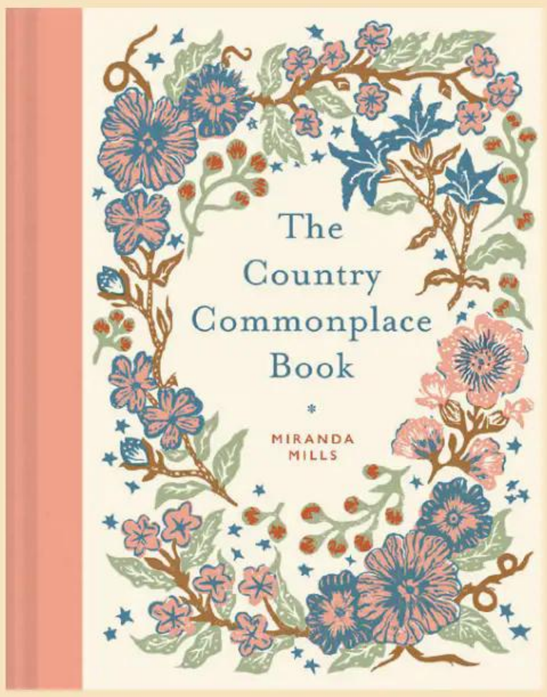
When all aloud the wind doth blow,
And coughing drowns the parson's saw,
And birds sit brooding in the snow,
And Marian's nose looks red and raw,
When roasted crabs hiss in the bowl,
Then nightly sings the staring owl,
Tu-whit!
Tu-who! — a merry note,
While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (1564—1616)

"Unlike a diary, a commonplace book is a personal treasury—*a place to gather words and ideas that move you.*"

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A Commonplace Country Book by Miranda Mills, Rizzoli New York, 2025, rizolliusa.com.

Start Your Own Commonplace Book

- **Pick a notebook you love:** plain, pretty, big, or small.
- **Save what sparks joy:** quotes, lyrics, recipes, even overheard gems.
- **Forget perfection:** let it be a jumble of inspiration.
- **Make it yours:** add notes, doodles, tape or glue things into your book. Try adding why an entry matters to you.
- **Keep adding:** let it grow into your personal treasure chest.
- **No pressure:** add entries as you feel the urge with no deadlines or daily requirements.



SUMMER SHOWER

A drop fell on the apple tree,
Another on the roof;
A half a dozen kissed the eaves,
And made the gables laugh.

A few went out to help the brook,
That went to help the sea.
Myself conjectured, were they pearls,
What necklaces could be!

The dust replaced in hoisted roads,
The birds jocoser sung;
The sunshine threw his hat away,
The orchards spangles hung.

The breezes brought dejected lutes,
And bathed them in the glee;
The East put out a single flag,
And signed the fete away.

Emily Dickinson (1830–1886)

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AUTUMN

Country Contentments

Blackberry-stained fingers and pockets
bulging with windfalls.

The vibrant purple of autumn cyclamen and crocus.

Squirrels burying nuts in the garden.

Mellow sunlight filtering through golden leaves.

Rose-hips shining like rubies in the hedgerows.

Pumpkins picked for Harvest Festival and Halloween.

The heady, cider scent of a ripe apple orchard.

Misty mornings and lengthening evenings.

The whiff of woodsmoke on the breeze.

Dew-spangled cobwebs glistening on the gate.

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Going on a 'colour walk' and noting all the
rich hues of autumn's cloak.

Bowls of quince in the house, scenting
rooms with their delicate fragrance.

The crackle of leaves and chestnut-husks underfoot.

Toffee-apples and bonfires.

The lordly strut of a cock pheasant crossing a field.

Choosing and planting bulbs in anticipation of spring.

Ghost stories read aloud by firelight.

The noisy honking of departing geese filling the air.

Brilliant moonlit evenings from the
Harvest and Hunter moons.

Arranging a bouquet of the last dahlias
before the first frost descends.

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A Festive Evergreen Holiday

Lush greens and natural, rustic accents add extra coziness to this home.

Written by **Kelly McMaster**
Styled and photographed by **Kassie Keck**



Nestled just outside the small town of Gray, Georgia, Kassie Keck's ranch-style home sits on four acres of peaceful countryside. It's the house she and her husband bought back in December of 2000, and over the past twenty-five years, they have transformed it into a cozy cottage brimming with character.

"This place has deep roots for me," Kassie shares. She grew up in the area where many of her family still live, including her parents. Her husband's journey was a little longer, from California to Washington before settling down in Georgia. Together, they've raised two children, now grown, who still often find their way home, along with Bentley and Rosey, the family's lively pair of Corgis who keep them on their toes.

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Renovation is a constant labor of love in the house, especially now that Kassie and her husband are tackling a full kitchen remodel themselves. But during the holidays, the focus shifts from hammers and sawdust to twinkling lights and timeless traditions.

NOSTALGIA IN EVERY BRANCH

For Kassie, decorating at Christmastime is all about capturing the warmth and nostalgia of childhood. She remembers cutting down trees with her family and hanging big, colorful bulbs. Today, her tree glitters with vintage ornaments she's collected over the years. The most treasured pieces, though, are those gifted by her mother-ornaments that once adorned Kassie's childhood Christmas trees. "They sparkle like they're dusted with sugar," she recalls, "and I'll always cherish them."

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How to Make Your Own Christmas Candle

Bring a touch of handmade magic to your holiday décor with Kassie's festive candle project.

What You'll Need:

- A vessel (she used a vintage silver-plated bowl)
- Candle wax (or old candles to repurpose)
- Wicks
- Essential oils in your favorite scent
- Dried orange slices
- Star anise
- Cypress clippings or greenery

What You'll Do:

1. Melt the wax. Repurpose old candles or use fresh wax, adding a few drops of essential oils once melted.
2. Secure the wicks. Dip and press them firmly into your vessel.
3. Pour the wax. Fill most of the vessel, saving some wax for later. Let it begin to set.
4. Add the décor. Arrange dried oranges, star anise, and greenery across the top. Pour remaining wax to partially embed the decorations.
5. Cure overnight. Trim the wicks, light, and enjoy the cozy fragrance.

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Alongside the heirlooms, natural elements play a starring role. Kassie clips branches from the Leyland cypress trees on her property, dries orange slices, and tucks in pinecones for an organic touch. The effect is equal parts fragrant and festive.

A LAUNDRY ROOM WITH SOUL

While many might overlook their laundry room, Kassie turned hers into one of her favorite spaces in the house-doing the work herself! Shiplap walls, aged brick floors, and a vintage wallpaper table transformed it into something straight out of a cottage dream. But the real showstopper is the vintage baker's cabinet she hunted down on Marketplace. After driving two hours to bring it home, Kassie hung it above her washer and dryer, where it now provides both storage and charm. "It feels like it was always meant to be there," she says with a smile. Now doing laundry is a much more enjoyable task in this cozy space full of character.

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SETTING THE HOLIDAY TABLE

Kassie's dining table embraces rustic simplicity. Two hurricane candleholders anchor the centerpiece, surrounded by greenery, pinecones, and twigs for an understated woodland look. Rustic wooden tree slices serve as chargers beneath thrifted Wedgwood ironstone plates, while delicate porcelain snowflakes stand in as napkin rings. Candles flicker throughout, casting a golden glow over the scene.

SANTA DIY

Above her wooden cabinet, a Santa portrait watches over the festivities. Surprisingly, it started life as a simple Etsy download. Kassie had it printed as a poster, mounted it on wood, and then brushed Mod Podge across the surface to mimic painterly brushstrokes. The clever DIY gave it a vintage look that's fooled more than a few guests. You could find one for yourself by typing the phrase Christmas Santa Portrait in the Search bar on Etsy.

TREASURES WITH A STORY

Everywhere you look in Kassie's home, there's a story-whether it's the treasured ornaments from her mother, the marketplace finds that bring old-world soul to her laundry room, or the handmade touches that make Christmas feel even more special.

For Kassie, holiday decorating isn't about perfection; it's about memory, warmth, and joy. And with every flicker of candlelight and sparkle of vintage glass, her farmhouse glows with the magic of the season.



To see more of Kassie's home
visit **@gagirl_vintagedecor** on Instagram.

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Vibrant

Create a colorful and retro wreath with this simple DIY.

WINTRY WREATH

Written by **Emily Irby** | Photography and project by **Beverly McCullough of Flamingo Toes**



Bright is right when it comes to this craft, and the pops of color will give your wreath a quirky edge.

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Wreaths are a festive favorite

when decorating your home for the holidays. Give the traditional symbol a spunky makeover with this how-to, courtesy of Beverly McCullough and her blog Flamingo Toes. Use bright pom-poms, sparkly ornaments and snow-speckled bottlebrush trees to set a retro scene.

What You'll Need:

- Foam wreath
- White fabric of your choice
- Thick white yarn
- Felt flowers and yarn pom-poms
- Decorations (ornaments, mini trees, bells, etc.)
- Baker's twine
- Ribbon
- Glue

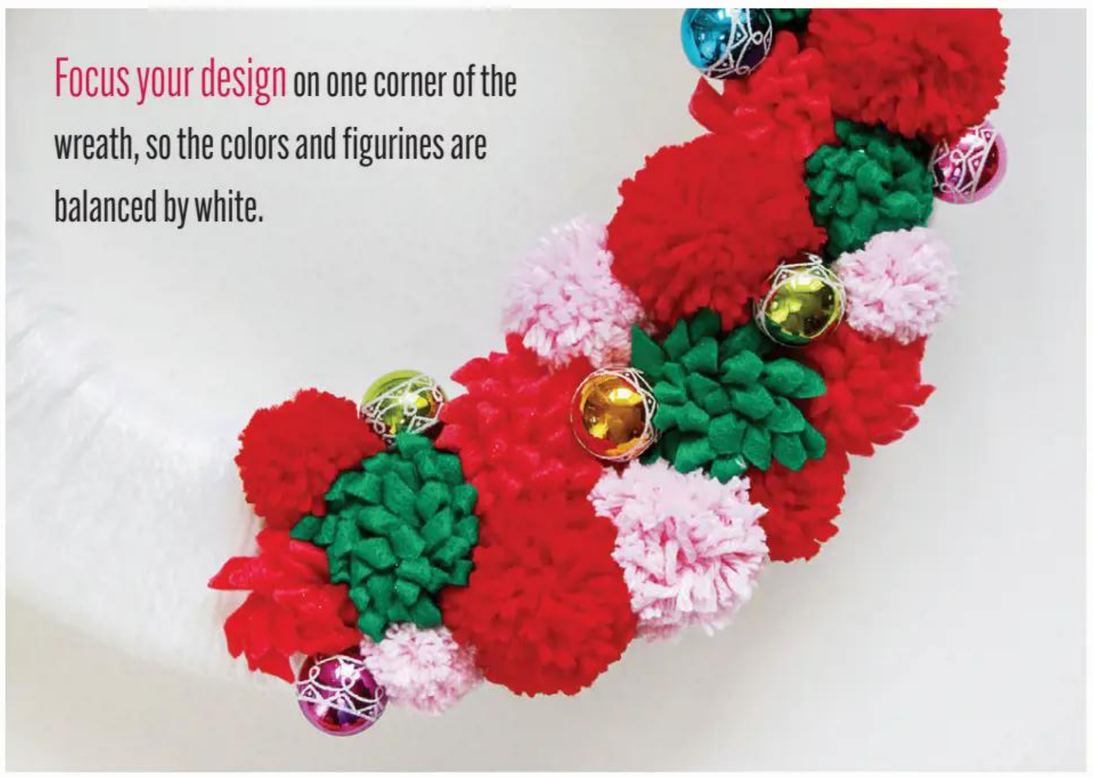
What You'll Do:

1. Start by wrapping your foam wreath with white fabric. The weave of the fabric isn't important, because the yarn will cover most of it. However, this step will save you the hassle of wrapping yarn around foam, which can snag.
2. Wrap the wreath with yarn, looping it around until it's completely covered. Once finished, you can glue down the ends, so it stays in place.
3. For your flowers and pom-poms, stick with classic red and green colors or add a twist by choosing pale pinks and teals. Map out the design you want and then glue each piece down, focusing the bulk of your creation on a bottom corner of your wreath.
4. Add a little shine to your project by gluing ornaments or bells amongst your flowers.
5. Glue bottlebrush trees behind the flowers, so they peek out.
6. String mini ornaments—even smaller than the ones you put at the bottom of the wreath—along baker's twine. Secure the strand by gluing each end to the back of your wreath above the trees.
7. Add a ribbon to the top, and your wreath is ready for hanging!

To learn more about Bev visit **@flamingotoes** on Instagram.







Focus your design on one corner of the wreath, so the colors and figurines are balanced by white.



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CHRISTMAS *Village*

Learn about the history and value of miniature Putz houses.

Written and photographed by **Victoria Van Vlear**
Houses made by **Dawn Newell**

So many holiday collectibles

are miniature, from tiny reindeer and light-up Santas to angel tree toppers and plushy snowmen. But the pinnacle of Christmas miniatures is the Putz house. You can opt for the vintage variety, buy them new or even make them yourself, as Dawn Newell of The Pink Tree has done. But whatever way you acquire them, you're tapping into a rich history of German and American traditions.



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DIY A PUTZ HOUSE

What You'll Need:

- Miniature house design
- Sturdy cardstock
- X-Acto knife
- Cellophane or clear plastic folder liners (office supply)
- Foam board
- Glue
- Craft paint
- Mod Podge or another adhesive material
- Glitter
- Tiny bottlebrush trees and wreaths
- Any other accents

What You'll Do:

1. Print out a house design from online or hand draw one yourself on white cardstock paper. Don't forget the roof, and make sure the design has tabs on the edges of the walls, so they'll glue together easily.
2. Using an X-Acto knife, cut out the window outlines. Be patient here. "It's very tedious," Dawn says.
3. Insert bits of cellophane or clear plastic folder liners into the openings for the windows by taping or gluing them to the inside of the wall.
4. Glue the cardstock together to form the four walls. You may want to use the foam board base for assistance by gluing two of the walls directly to the base before adding the other two. Add the roof at this point, too.
5. Once the whole house is together, paint the windows with panes, then paint the walls or roof as you desire. Let the paint dry.
6. Cover the whole house with 1–2 generous coats of Mod Podge. "This thickens and hardens the house," Dawn says. Add glitter to the wet Mod Podge if you want glitter.
7. Decorate the house by adding bottlebrush trees, a fence, wreaths and other small items. Finish the house off with another round of glitter.



HISTORY

Also known as glitter houses and Christmas villages, Putz houses have been around since at least the 1800s, and perhaps even as early as the 1700s. The name comes from the German word *putzen*, which means to clean or attire. The German-American idiom *putz* means to putter around. It was a German Christmas tradition to set up a tiny village around the Christmas tree or nativity scene, and members of the family would "putz" around, getting each piece exactly right.

The original German houses were made from wood or candy boxes. As their popularity grew in the US in the early 20th century, mass production moved to Japan. The houses became cardboard, and often had cellophane windows with a hole in the back to insert a Christmas light. Their popularity reached its peak during the 1920s through '50s, and glitter only became a staple during the midcentury.

CONTINUING THE LEGACY

Dawn has always admired Putz houses. "I love vintage things, and I always loved the Putz houses," she says. "I would see them in magazines and on Pinterest, and when you buy the nicer ones, they can be quite expensive." So, as a solution, she decided to make them herself. "I didn't know if it would work or if they were going to fall apart," she says. "But I was so happy with how they turned out." And not only do her tiny houses work for Christmas, but other times of the year as well. "I was just thinking the other day, I want to make a few for Halloween," she says. "I gave a lot as Christmas gifts last year, and people really liked them."

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Proudly Introducing

Project House Tennessee

Peek into our newest collaboration with Plank & Pillow with a fresh take on timeless design in a forever home.

Written by **Kelly McMaster** | Photography and renderings courtesy of **Plank & Pillow**

PLANK & PILLOW



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We are delighted to present Project House Tennessee, a collaboration with our sister brand, *Cottages & Bungalows*, and the design team of Henry and Brooke Jones of Plank & Pillow. This new build in the hills near Kingsport, TN, will be Henry and Brooke's "forever" home for their family and we are excited to join them in bringing their vision to life.



5 Tips for Choosing the Right Home Plan

Henry and Brooke Jones of Plank & Pillow offer guidance when choosing a floor plan for your new home.

1. KNOW YOUR NEEDS. Pick a layout that fits your lifestyle-consider work, family, and entertainment.

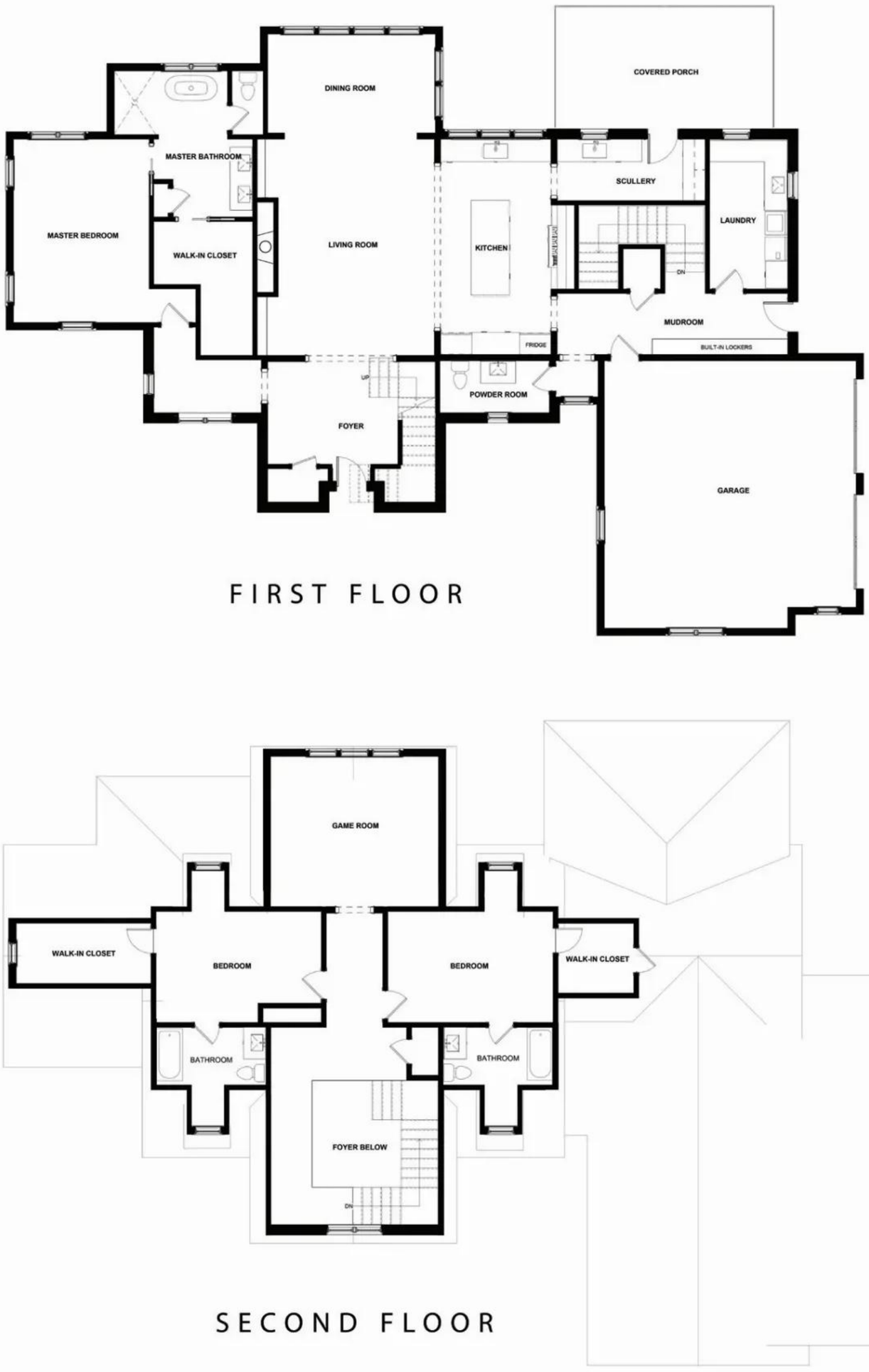
2. FIT THE LOT. Match the plan to your lot's shape, slope, and size for the best use of space.

3. CHECK ROOM SIZES. Do not just look at total square feet, make sure rooms are sized right for you.

4. PLAN FOR GROWTH. Look for flexible spaces you can adapt later, like bonus rooms or basements.

5. BUDGET SMART. Choose a design that fits your budget, including build and future upkeep.

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This home will be a 3-bedroom, 2,700 sq ft cottage-style design, nestled in the hills of Tennessee with a stunning view. It blends timeless character with fresh, clean lines and will feature many custom details.

THE PLANK & PILLOW STORY

Henry and Brooke Jones launched their design journey in 2018 with a simple goal: to share their love of creating beautiful, meaningful homes. What began as a blog, Plank & Pillow, quickly struck a chord with readers who were drawn to their approachable design tips, DIY tutorials, and knack for making a house feel like home. As their online community grew, so did their vision. Today, Henry and Brooke extend their expertise through thoughtfully crafted house plans with each one blending old-world charm with layouts designed for modern living.

Their new endeavor with us, Project House Tennessee, reflects that philosophy in every detail. "When we set out to design this home, we knew we wanted it to feel like it had always been there-timeless, welcoming, and perfectly settled into its surroundings," they explain. "We didn't want something overly trendy or stark. We wanted timeless character, rich materials, and thoughtful details that told a story."

The finished design will be just that: a layered, intentional home that gracefully balances historic inspiration with the functionality of today's lifestyle.

We are proud to introduce the preferred cabinetry partner, Brass + Ivory Cabinetry, and our preferred garage door partner as our Sponsors in the Spotlight.

At The Brass + Ivory Cabinetry, their team believes the kitchen is the true heart of every home. It is where family gathers, stories are shared, and memories are made. Their work goes beyond cabinetry-they craft bespoke spaces designed to bring people together and celebrate the moments that matter most. With a dedication to detail, quality craftsmanship, and timeless style, Brass + Ivory help turn houses into homes filled with warmth, beauty, and connection. Located in Moore County, NC, they serve the east coast and offer nationwide shipping. Learn more at **brassandivorycabinetry.com** and **@brassandivorycabinetry** on Instagram.

With a variety of styles and colors that make homes stand out, Clopay garage doors are designed to make a statement. Visit **clopaydoor.com**

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MOOD BOARD

LIVING ROOM

"Our goal for the living room is to create a space that feels both timeless and fresh. The stone fireplace and oak floors bring cozy cottage warmth, while the fluted built-ins with brass knobs add texture and detail. To balance it all, we plan on using a modern chandelier. We love mixing traditional charm with clean, modern design," explains Brooke.

Stay tuned to our social media channels and upcoming print issues throughout 2026 to watch the progress of this home, plus a surprise, bonus project, too!

Learn more about Plant & Pillow and see their unique home plans and design ideas at **plankandpillow.com** and **@plankandpillow** on Instagram.

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A HUTCH FULL OF *Holiday Cheer*



From frosted garlands to jolly Santa mugs, this cozy corner proves a vignette can tell a joyful story.

Produced by **Kelly McMaster**
Styled and photographed by **Kara Clang**

Assembling a cohesive and cheery holiday vignette can be elusive at times but Kara Clang has mastered her creative formula. Her display of vintage Santa mugs along with mini trees and a frosted garland adorning her charming hutch, are a perfect focal point in this room.

"Coming from a family of artists, living, and breathing creativity is just a part of everyday life for me. In my free time you can find me decorating our home, or planning our next party to host friends and family. I guess you could say creating beautiful spaces is my love language. I believe you should create a home that is your escape from the world, a place that gives you a warm cozy feeling and a place that is better than you could have ever imagined for yourself."

To see more of Kara's home, follow along **@whiterufflesandlace** on Instagram and White Ruffles and Lace Designs on Facebook.

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SOURCES

THE TREE HOUSE, PAGE 30

Follow Christina on Instagram @this_not_so_average_farmhouse.

Family room

Flocked tree (7.5-foot queen flocked): King of Christmas, kingofchristmas.com.
Large rustic Christmas tree sign: Antique Farm House, antiquefarmhouse.com.
Red tartan rug: Ruggable, ruggable.com.
Red bow garland: Michaels, michaels.com.
Douglas Fir Santa cutout: Vintagehol-76 on eBay, ebay.com.

Living room

Family tree: 7.5-foot Yorkshire Fir artificial Christmas tree, King of Christmas, kingofchristmas.com.
Stockings: Vintage needlepoint stocking collection, Personal Creations, personalcreations.com.

Dining room

Chandelier: Amazon, amazon.com.
Red tartan throw: Pottery Barn Kids, potterybarnkids.com.
Red bows: Target, target.com.
Twin flocked trees: 7.5-foot skinny flocked trees with lights by Fraser Hill Farm, fraserhillfarm.com.
Matching flocked wreaths: King of Christmas, kingofchristmas.com.

Bedroom

Red velvet comforter: Threshold by Target, target.com.
Red and white vintage-inspired quilt: Threshold by Target, target.com.
Cedar wreath on headboard: Antique Farm House, antiquefarmhouse.com.

A NATURAL NOEL, PAGE 48

Follow Lynn Langford on social media @athomeinthewildwood on Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, Pinterest and her lifestyle blog.

Living room

Mantel canvas art: Olive Branch Farmhouse, olivebranchfarmhouse.com.
Knitted Christmas stockings: Hobby Lobby, hobbylobby.com.

Front porch

Nutcracker soldier banners: Amazon, amazon.com.

Front foyer

Gingerbread snowflake wall décor: My Mind's Eye, Inc., mymindseye.com.

Kitchen

Red plaid rug: Amazon, amazon.com.

Primary bedroom

"Sleep in Heavenly Peace" artwork: Amazon, amazon.com.

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A Carriage House with Character

Once built for buggies, this gem now serves as a workshop, seasonal garage, and vintage sale spot, all while keeping its historic charm alive.





Written by **Kelly McMaster**
Photographed by **Linda Strand**

AT FIRST GLANCE, this charming structure in Oakdale, MN looks like a barn, but it's actually a carriage house. "When we bought the property, we loved that the carriage house was still here," says homeowner Linda Strand. "It feels like we're carrying on a little piece of local history." It is one of the few remaining links to a once-thriving dairy farm on the outskirts of the Twin Cities of Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN.

Today, the space is as versatile as ever. In winter, it houses the family's vehicles. In summer, Linda transforms it into her workshop, and a couple of times a year it becomes the setting for her popular Carriage House Sale. "I love repurposing old finds," she says. "Lately I've been painting toolboxes and even tucking vintage ornaments inside for a surprise."

The second floor serves as storage that is perfect for patio furniture and Christmas décor, though Linda admits, "I don't stay up there long. We definitely have bats in our belfry."

Pennsylvania Dutch hex symbols painted by a former owner in 1977 still brighten the façade, believed to bring good luck, while a handmade sign Linda created from an antique headboard adds another layer of charm.

More than a century later, this carriage house continues to evolve, proof that even the most practical spaces can hold history, creativity, and a touch of whimsy.

To learn more about Linda, her vintage sales and see how she made the sign on the front of the carriage house, visit **qisforquandie.com**.

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"At Christmas play and make good cheer, for Christmas comes but *once a year*"

–Thomas Tusser, 1573.

American Farmhouse *Style*

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