

Season's *Greetings*

Special Section of **The Decatur Daily** | December 24, 2025





Embrace *the Reason for the Season*

As we celebrate the miracle of Christ's birth, may the power of His love touch your heart, deepen your faith and strengthen your connection to everyone around you.

In the spirit of unity and goodwill, we wish all of our neighbors, customers and friends a blessed and Merry Christmas. Thank you for your continued trust in us!

Peace be with you!

The Shumake Family



shumakefurniture.net  

Furnishing Homes for Over 88 Years!

2119 6th Ave SE, Decatur, AL | 256-355-0632

Holiday Hours:

We will be closed Dec. 24th, 25th, and 26th for Christmas

We will be closed Dec. 31st and Jan. 1st for New Year



The MAGIC of CHRISTMAS

Make holiday crafting a family affair



Families gather frequently during the holiday season as everyone enjoys the feasts and festivities that are synonymous with this time of year. Families often bake and decorate together, as these activities are inclusive of people of all ages.

This time of year also is one for dabbling in creative pursuits. Now is a prime opportunity to bond with children over a table full of paint, glue, beads, and other crafty supplies. The crafts made during the holidays often become cherished mementos that will be

regarded fondly for years to come. Here are some ideas to inspire holiday creativity.

SNOWMAN FAMILY

Handprint crafts are popular among children. Adults and children can dip their hands into washable white paint and make a handprint stamp on a small canvas, wooden palette or even a terracotta flowerpot. Decorate the white fingerprints with black dots to look like the faces of the snowmen and paint on top hats and scarves. In the years to come, artists can marvel at how small their hand prints once were.

WINE CORK REINDEER

Repurpose wine corks by crafting adorable little reindeer. Two corks make up the head and the body, and four vertically will comprise the feet. Stick on googly eyes, and add a small red or black bead for the nose. Pipe cleaners can be bent to form the reindeer's antlers.

FAMILY GARLANDS

This craft also makes use of handprints. Ask all family members to trace their handprints on different colors of construction paper or card stock. Cut out all of the paper hands,

punch holes in the tops and then string a ribbon through. Decorate the Christmas tree or a mantle with this garland.

MINIATURE CHRISTMAS TREES

Paint the tips of gathered pine cones with green paint and allow to dry. Add white glitter or paint as "snow." Glue the pine cones to wine corks that will serve as the tree trunks, and attach a small wooden star to the top of the trees for the finishing touch.

DECOUPAGE ORNAMENTS

Purchase wooden or plastic ball ornaments. Cover with small scraps of cut fabric or paper dipped in craft glue or Mod Podge®, and attach to the ornament in an overlapping fashion. Remember to add a string from which the ornament can be hung on the tree. Allow to dry completely before use.

PAPER CHAIN ADVENT CALENDAR

Cut strips of paper to make a link for every day of Advent. Advent begins on Sunday, December 1, 2024, and lasts until Christmas. The top link can be any design artists prefer, but those who need a little inspiration can consider a religious symbol, the face of a reindeer, a snowman, or a Christmas tree. Hang the chain and then children can take turns ripping off a link from the bottom each day as they count down to the holiday.

POPSICLE STICK SNOWFLAKES

Paint four popsicle sticks per snowflake in desired colors. Decorate with glue, pom-poms, beads, or other trinkets. Add small looped strings to hang the ornaments. Parents, grandparents and children can have fun crafting holiday decorations this December.

Snap a great Christmas card photo



Greeting cards are among the first signs that the holiday season has arrived. Mailboxes are filled with cards and email inboxes have new messages popping up each day wishing others well. Many of these greetings feature family photos.

A Shutterfly poll conducted by Ipsos in 2021 discovered that, while traditional holiday messages are by far the most popular missives at 63 percent, younger age groups show more interest in other types of cards, such as photo cards (between 34 and 38 percent depending on age group). Forty-one percent of people polled prefer to receive photo cards. That means holiday well-wishers may want to brush up on their photography skills.

• Keep cards in the back of your mind. While the Norman Rockwell-esque family tableau or a wintry Christmas scene is a go-to holiday card, any photo-worthy moment throughout the year can suffice. Keep a lookout for ideas while vacationing or enjoying time together as a family.

• Avoid busy prints. Stick to solid colors when posing for holiday photos; otherwise, recipients' eyes may not know where to look when viewing the photo. Photo subjects should coordinate, but wardrobes that completely match can seem contrived.

• Plan around nap times. If photos involve young children, schedule the photo shoot to occur when children are well-rested and fed. Now may be the time to offer kids treats they don't normally get in an effort to reward patience and happy smiles.

• Avoid red eye. Proper lighting can help avoid the occurrence of "red eye" in photographs,

which happens when the flash bounces off a wide pupil. Asking subjects to look into bright light before the photo, or utilizing a camera that snaps a small burst of flash before the actual flash, can help alleviate this problem.

• Embrace candid shots or mixups. Some of the funniest and most memorable photos are when things didn't go according to plan. A crying infant or a parent looking away from the lens may not be magazine worthy, but don't be so quick to discard those less-than-perfect snaps.

• Zoom in tight and cropped. Card recipients want to look at you and not the surroundings. Avoid landscape shots on holiday cards, and be sure to focus on the subjects' faces as much as possible.

• Angle correctly for flattering photos. Adjust your body posture to look your best. Turn the lower half of your body to the side and then adjust the upper half to move slightly toward the camera to appear more svelte. Position the camera lens at eye level or above to avoid double chins in photos.

• Show off your sense of humor. You can show friends and family you like to laugh by posing in funny ways or by mimicking pop culture references in your photo cards. Recreate childhood photos of yore, or imitate photos from album covers or movie posters.

Relax and have fun with holiday greeting cards. Plan outfits, watch lighting and catch kids at the right time to create memorable cards.

Baby's First Christmas

 <p>Xzhalix McFadden PARENTS: Bryleigh Moore & Demontre McFadden GRANDPARENTS: Amanda Peterson, Robbie McCollum, India McFadden & Letha McFadden</p>	 <p>William Locke Burkett PARENTS: Seth Burkett & Catherine Godbey GRANDPARENTS: John Godbey & Sandra Locke-Godbey, Bill & Marcia Burkett</p>	 <p>N'Alani Sledge PARENT: Peatra Sledge GRANDPARENTS: Clara Scott, Janeicka Allen & Alisa Douglas</p>
 <p>Major Hampton PARENTS: Marcus & Nylisha Hampton GRANDPARENTS: Kesha Sheppard, Frederick Allen and Marcus L & Cassandra Hampton</p>	 <p>Lennox Ruth Boyte PARENTS: Ethan & Elizabeth Boyte GRANDPARENTS: Tony & Shawna Smith, The late William & The late Tonia Boyte Your 1st Christmas 2025! Love, Great Grandma & Great Grandpa Linda & Steve Sivley</p>	
 <p>Emmaline Garrett Robertson PARENTS: Jesse & Beth Robertson GRANDPARENTS: Donna Garrett & The late Tom Garrett, Wendy & Michael Robertson Merry 1st Christmas to sweet baby sister! You are the perfect little caboose. We love you so much!</p>	 <p>Xylen Carter Johnson PARENTS: Courtney Johnson & Jaxon Hunter GRANDPARENTS: Edward & Beverly Johnson</p>	



HAPPY HOLIDAYS

from your Local Businesses

*Merry Christmas
& Happy New Year*
**CATHEDRAL
CAVERNS STATE PARK**
"Alabama's Coolest Underground Adventure - 60 Degrees All Year Long"
OPEN YEAR ROUND
Call 256-888-0230 for tour times
or visit www.alapark.com
637 Cave Road, Woodville, AL 35776

*Happy
Holidays from the*
**CALHOUN
COMMUNITY COLLEGE**
family!
www.calhoun.edu

**Weaver
REALTY**
Wendye, Sandra, Lonnie,
Trai, and Dawn
256-355-3410
www.weaverrealty.net

*Wishing you
All the Best this
Holiday Season!*
Since 1957
**Holaway's
Market**
1652 Beltline Rd. SW, Decatur
256-351-4264



HAPPY HOLIDAYS

Since 1978
Cathcart Service, Inc.
Heating & Cooling - Sales, Service & Installation
2113 Veterans Drive SE, Decatur
Office: 256-355-9062
Cell 256-214-2064
Cert# AL-09197

67 Auto Salvage
"Buckle Up"
**Happy
Holidays**
Somerville • 355-9092

*Merry Christmas
from*
**PECK FUNERAL
HOME**
Hartselle


COLLISION & RESTORATION
Used Motor Vehicle Dealer
3953 Highway 67, Somerville, AL 35670
256-778-0705
automotive-innovations.net

*Merry Christmas
& Happy New Year!*

**Est. 1925
BIG BOB
GIBSON**
Bar-B-Q
*Family owned
since 1925*

1715 6th Ave (256) 350-6969
2520 Danville Rd (256) 350-0404
BIGBOBGIBSON.COM

*Professionalism,
Responsiveness and Quality*
Talley, Mauldin & Peete, P. C.
ACCOUNTING AND BUSINESS CONSULTING
906 Wilson St NE, Decatur
256-353-1421

MERRY CHRISTMAS



THE PILL BOX

PHARMACY

We *strive* to meet YOUR needs
with personal service that
is unmatched!

2422 Danville Rd. SW, Decatur
256-353-1121
474 Hwy. 67 South, Priceville
256-353-0100

Merry
Christmas!

Dixie

AUTO PARTS

525 Hwy 72 West, Athens
256-232-8811
www.dixieautoparts.com

Merry Christmas
and Happy New Year!

ELITE FLOORING

KITCHEN & BATH

1326 4th Ave SE, Decatur
256-353-0300
elitefkb.com

Merry Christmas

STATELINE GARAGE DOOR LLC

Garage Doors
Garage Door Openers
Garage Door Repairs

256-497-6747

statelinegaragedoorllc.com

Priceville FOODLAND

Super Market

Fresh, handcut, quality meats
at the best value since 1993

470 AL Hwy. 67, Decatur
256-355-5412
pricevillefoodland.com

DECATUR DIAGNOSTIC IMAGING

1201 13th Ave SE,
Decatur, AL 35601
256-350-7779

Decatur Brown Service Funeral Home

711 Memorial Drive SW
Decatur, AL 35601
(256) 863-3777

www.decaturbrownservicefuneralhome.com

Now Open!

Peace, Joy,
and
Harmony



Shelton
Funeral Home

Our family is with yours EVERY STEP of the way.
2105 Beltline Road SW, Decatur • 256.353.1620

ARMOR'S
UTILITY
CONTRACTORS

(256) 355-2686

Merry
Christmas





The MAGIC of CHRISTMAS

Real or artificial? The Christmas tree debate continues

People are passionate about the things they love. Through the years there have been many debates over a wide range of topics, from which cola brand to back to which book/movie character was more deserving of a lead character's heart.

The holiday season features a classic example of taking sides. The debate surrounding artificial Christmas trees and their natural alternatives will pick back up this holiday season. As with any debate, there are two sides to every story. Those on the fence as to whether to go real or fake this year can consider these pros and cons of each.

REAL TREE

Pros: One of the biggest advantages of a real tree is its pleasing aroma. The fresh pine smell of a natural tree can trigger memories of Christmases gone by and make a home feel cozy and holiday-ready. It takes many years for a Christmas tree to grow large enough to be harvested, and as it grows it provides a habitat for animals and benefits the planet by absorbing carbon and providing oxygen, according to Megan Quinn, coordinator of conservation biology at the Nature Conservancy of Canada. When trees are cut down, two or three may be planted in their place. Buying a real tree from a business nearby also supports the local economy.

Cons: Real trees can be messy and require upkeep like daily watering. Cutting down a tree oneself and bringing it home can help guarantee freshness, but there is really no way to know when trees at Christmas tree lots were cut down. This means that needles can begin falling the moment the tree is placed in the living room. Another thing to note is that live trees can't be placed just anywhere. They shouldn't be next to fireplaces or heat sources, where they can dry out prematurely and pose a fire risk. A real tree also might have unwelcome bugs or animals

hiding within its branches. According to Penn State Extension, anything from spotted lanternflies to spiders to aphids to bark beetles or lice may be on a real tree.

ARTIFICIAL TREE

Pros: Artificial trees can be convenient because they are easy to assemble, disassemble and store. Plus, you don't have to venture out each year to get one. Unlike real trees, artificial trees do not require watering or vacuuming to manage fallen needles. Since artificial trees can be reused for numerous seasons, they may be more cost-effective than real trees. Artificial trees can last anywhere from six to 10 years, but that life span depends on the quality of the tree and how well it is maintained. Artificial trees also guarantee a uniform, pleasing look year after year.

Cons: Artificial trees are made from polyvinyl chloride and other plastics, and environmentalists attest that those ingredients make them bad for the environment. According to an assessment study of artificial versus natural trees published in 2009 by Ellipsos, a Montreal-based sustainable development consulting firm, an artificial tree emits 8.1 kilograms of carbon dioxide per year, compared to 3.1 kilograms of carbon dioxide emitted by a real tree in a given year. In addition, the chemicals used in manufacture may have adverse effects on human health and often are non-recyclable. Artificial trees also take up room in homes year-round since they need to be stored. Plus, they don't emit a pleasing aroma.

The debate over a real or artificial Christmas tree is sure to rage on year after year, so it's up to holiday celebrants to make their pick.



Did you know?

Christmas trees are a key component of many people's holiday season. It's a family tradition to choose (or take out) the tree each year and then adorn it with ornaments, tinsel, family mementos, and a beautiful tree topper. In regard to tree toppers, most people fasten the top bough with an angel or a star. The first tree toppers were the infant Jesus, but toppers are now available in other options symbolic of the Nativity of Jesus. The star refers to the Star of Bethlehem, which guided the Magi to the birthplace of Jesus. The angel represents the messengers of God as well as the Angel Gabriel, who visited Mary to share the news that she would be giving birth to the Son of God. People can choose whichever topper they prefer, but many refer to the religious significance of Christmas.



FRONT ROW L-R: Wendy Smith, Jimmy Ray Smith, Terrell Tanksley
SECOND ROW L-R: Haley Callahan, Candi Ivy, Ann Pitt, Robby Smith, Tommy Ray
THIRD ROW L-R: Stephanie Thornton, Sandy Armor, Phyllis Bradford, and Cathy Gibson
NOT PICTURED: Alice Evans and Margaret Page

Merry Christmas
from our family
to yours!

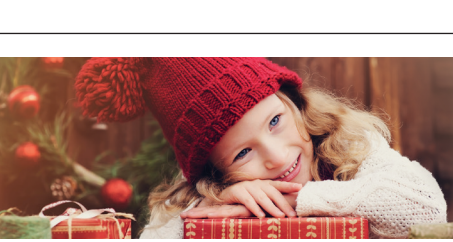


JIMMY SMITH
JEWELERS

Since 1973

2306 Sixth Ave SE • 256-353-2512
Tues-Fri 10-5; SAT 10-1
jsmithjewelers.com





The MAGIC of CHRISTMAS

Pet-friendly holiday decorating

Decorating is one of the great joys of the holiday season. Stores adorn their front-facing windows with amazing displays and homeowners often deck out residences from top to bottom with all measures of holiday wonderment.

Approximately 94 million households in the United States feature a pet, according to the American Pet Products Association. Many of those households will be decorating for the holidays and must figure out ways to keep homes safe for all residents — including those covered in fur. These tips can ensure a pet-friendly season with lots of holiday decor.

- Choose shatterproof decorations. Select shatterproof ornaments and other decorative items that are durable and non-toxic. Items made from felt, fabric or wood tend to be safer than items that can break.
- Pick pet-friendly plants. Poinsettias and mistletoe may be traditional, but they can be toxic to pets. Additional options like Christmas cactus can be safer. Artificial plants are another alternative to consider.
- Opt out of open flames. It is best to avoid traditional candles when pets are around. Instead, there are plenty of those powered by LED lights that even mimic the flicker of real candles.
- Avoid tinsel and ribbons. Digestive issues or blockages can affect pets who ingest tinsel or ribbons. Select pet-safe ribbons or garlands, and skip the tinsel entirely.
- Avoid edible decor. Candy canes on trees or popcorn garlands are festive, but they may prove too tempting for pets to resist. Animals can get sick and may knock over the Christmas tree or other items to access the food.

• Secure decorative items. Position the Christmas tree in an area that is not easily accessible. Avoid putting it near furniture that can be used as a jumping-off point. Make sure the tree stand is sturdy enough to prevent tipping, and consider using wire or string to tie the tree to a ceiling or wall anchor for further stability.

• Mind the scents. Some fragrances can be overwhelming or irritating for pets, so use scented diffusers or plug-ins sparingly. A simmering pot of cloves, cinnamon sticks and orange rinds can create a welcoming, all-natural aroma.

Create a sanctuary. Try not to move too many of the pet's creature comforts, such as favorite toys or bedding. If you must move these items out of the way, gradually introduce the pet to his or her new area, which can be set away from the hustle of the main entertaining area.

A pet-friendly holiday season involves being mindful of pets' safety while decorating.



In Loving Memory at Christmas

Remembering loved ones that we've lost.



Averlee Machelle Haggard

May 9, 2023 - October 5, 2023

We miss our little Angel!
Gigi, Papaw, Nonnie
& Pocky



Gerald Bradford

Feb. 17, 1947 - Jan. 17, 2023

We love you and think
of you every day!
Love, Ruby, kids
& grandkids



Andy Boaz

Jan. 19, 1980-Aug. 4, 2025

You Traded Earthly
Lights for Heavenly
Stars. Your friendship
will be missed brother.

Bryant Brothers
Automotive &
Performance



Jimmy England

July 24, 1937 - Jan. 8, 2017

Merry Christmas,
Daddy. I miss you.
Love Jane



Christopher Waters

Aug. 16, 1971-Nov. 7, 2024

Family is Forever-Even
when Christmas brings
tears with the smiles.
We love and miss you.

Mom, JR, Sharon, Brandon,
Toot & Clay



June Ward Wallace

Mother, you shall live
on forever through us
and our children.

We miss you dearly.
Love,
Geannie and Jerry



Celebrating the Reason for the Season

Glory to God in the highest,
and Merry Christmas to you!

Thank you for being a part of our family
and community, and best wishes for
a joyful and peaceful year.

**Midway
Memorial Gardens**

3740 County Road 434 Moulton

256-974-9449

10 minutes west of Decatur



The MAGIC of CHRISTMAS

Tips to keep holiday guests entertained



and savor all of that cozy flavor. Time a trip to a tree lighting or another holiday-related special event, or drive around at night and look at neighborhood lighting displays.

MAKE AN EDIBLE CRAFT

Spend some time in the kitchen making gingerbread cookies or another relatively easy holiday treat. Guests can customize their desserts with colored sprinkles or other embellishments.

SET UP CHRISTMAS KARAOKE

Get everyone in the holiday spirit by streaming instrumental tracks of favorite holiday carols and songs. Everyone takes turns singing a tune, whether they're great singers or not. The fun is in giving it a shot and laughing along the way.

GO ON A CRAWL

Whether it's to visit area pubs, diners, dessert shops, or coffee spots, pick a few different places to stop in so everyone can get some fresh air and have a little fun. Entertaining guests for the holidays requires some creative thinking and a willingness to have a little fun.

Gone are the days when extended families live in close proximity to one another. Ours is now a global society, and it is not unheard of for people to live on the opposite side of the country or even the globe from their parents and siblings. But come the holiday season, families often congregate at one place so they can spend time together. That means that out-of-town guests may be spending a few days with holiday hosts to maximize their visits.

than three days can be challenging for hosts, particularly if guests are not being helpful. Hosting houseguests for a few days requires hosts to keep guests engaged. Although the actual holiday itself provides ample opportunity for entertainment, hosts may need additional ideas to quell boredom if visits stretch for more than one day. Here are some ideas for making spirits bright without having to stress too much.

CREATE A GUEST BASKET

Offer some in-house entertainment for guests. This can include best-selling novels, a book of word games, an adult coloring book, or some small craft kits picked up at the

store. This option enables guests to self-soothe if boredom strikes.

HOST A MOVIE MARATHON

When guests visit, hosts can whip up some microwave popcorn and additional snacks and cue up a few different films. They can be holiday classics or movies that will bring back fond memories.

TAKE A TRIP

This time of year there are plenty of activities going on. Plan a drive over to a Christmas tree farm that may be offering rides through the fields or has a hot cocoa station. Walk down the main street of a quaint local town





Hey Santa, Here's My Wish List!



**Let us make
your wishes
come true!**

Merry Christmas! from your Elite Flooring Family

ELITE FLOORING
KITCHEN & BATH


Carpet | LVP | Hardwood | Tile & Stone | Laminate | Custom Showers

1326 4th Ave SE, Decatur, AL
256-353-0300

1-156-0929

Hallelujah!

May the light of Christmas guide you through the coming year with faith, goodwill and wisdom.



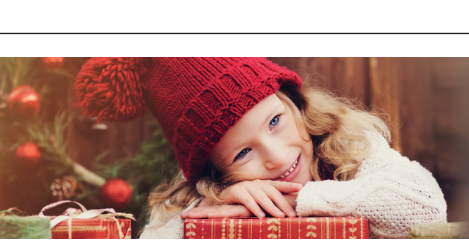
Merry Christmas

Shelton Funeral Home
2105 Beltline Rd SW, Decatur
(256) 353-1620
sheltonfuneralhome.net



Decatur Brown Service Funeral Home
711 Memorial Dr SW, Decatur
(256) 863-3777
decaturbrownservicefuneralhome.com

1-156-0929



The MAGIC of CHRISTMAS

Kid-friendly holiday traditions

Tradition is a big part of the holiday season. Families lean into tradition each December, and perhaps no people participate in holiday customs with more enthusiasm than children. Whether it's decorating the family Christmas tree or baking cookies for Santa on Christmas Eve, children look forward to various holiday season traditions once the calendar turns from November to December. Parents of young children can make this unique time of year even more special by engaging in various kid-friendly traditions that are sure to produce lots of fun and even more lasting memories.

- **Advent calendars:** The precise origins of Advent calendars are unknown, but historians believe the tradition was started by German Lutherans in the nineteenth century. More than a century later, roughly 50 million Advent calendars are sold across the globe each year, according to Marketplace.org. Advent is a nearly monthlong period of preparation for the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ on December 25. Each day during Advent, children open a flap, window or door and find a small gift, poem, candy, or another item that adds to the excitement of the season.
- **Matching pajamas:** Though the tradition of wearing matching holiday pajamas may not have the same lengthy history as Advent calendars, it's nonetheless a very fun custom for families. Parents can decide how frequently their families dress up in matching pajamas at bedtime during the holiday season, but doing so on Christmas Eve is a popular way to make a fun day even more special. Another idea is to host weekly holiday movie nights during the season, which presents a perfect opportunity to don matching PJs.
- **Holiday lights tour:** Holiday lighting displays have come a long way in recent



decades. Whereas it might once have been popular to string a few strands of lights around the exterior of a house, many holiday celebrants now beckon their inner Clark Griswold and turn their properties into areas with enough illumination to land a small plane. Holiday inflatables for the yard add to the awe of such displays. Kids tend to be especially fond of these types of dis-

plays, so parents can make a point to pick a night each holiday season to go on a tour of their neighborhoods and towns to see this year's offerings.

- **Christmas dance party:** Sweets are another staple of the holiday season, and what better way for kids to burn off some of that extra sugar than to dance it away to a holiday

music playlist curated by Mom and Dad? Cue up some holiday classics but let kids dance to a few of their own favorites as well.

Holiday traditions help to make the season a special time of year. Families can embrace various kid-friendly traditions to ensure children have even more fun this December.



Merry Christmas!
**Wishing You
Comfort and Joy**

This Christmas may the company of loves ones present and the fond memories of those who have passed surround you with happiness.

Thank you for placing your trust in us.



Peck
FUNERAL HOME

Funerals • SINCE 1929 • Cremations

Family Owned & Operated since 1929

Hwy. 31 South, Hartselle | 256-773-2541

peckfuneralhome.com

A brief history of Christmas trees



Towering evergreen trees adorned in lights and other trinkets are a focal point of the holiday season. Christmas trees are placed in prominent locations in homes, typically in front of a large picture window or in the corners of large entryways. These awe-inspiring trees beckon people to inspect all of the ornaments and often are the first thing people envision when thinking of holiday decor. The tradition of the Christmas tree is believed to have begun in Germany in the sixteenth century. However, the National Christmas Tree Association says there may be earlier references to Christmas trees in other parts of the world as well. The first written record of a decorated Christmas tree comes from Riga, Latvia, in 1510. Men of a local merchant's guild decorated the tree with roses and then set fire to it. The rose was considered a symbol of the Virgin Mary. In the sixteenth century in Alsace, France, trees were sold in the marketplace and brought home and set up undecorated. Laws limited the size to "eight shoe lengths" or slightly more than four feet. Early German Christmas trees were adorned with

apples, a holdover from earlier traditions when evergreen boughs hung with apples were used as props in miracle plays. These plays took place in churches on December 24, which was Adam & Eve's Day in the early Christian calendar. Evergreens have long been symbolic of life during the cold months of winter, calling to mind the promise of spring to come. Various cultures, including early Christians, featured trees during winter solstice celebrations. Some historians believe Martin Luther, a Protestant reformer who might have been inspired by stars in the night, was responsible for adding lighted candles to the Christmas tree. The Christmas tree was introduced to the United States by German settlers in the 1800s. Soon after those settlers' arrival, trees began to be sold commercially. President Franklin Pierce is credited with having the first Christmas tree at the White House. Today, Christmas trees are wildly popular, with the American Christmas Tree Association reporting that 94 percent of U.S. consumers plan to display one.



The MAGIC of CHRISTMAS

7 ways to **organize** and store holiday decorations

Decorating a home for holidays is quite popular. A survey from the National Retail Federation found that 53 percent of respondents said they were planning to decorate their home or yard for Halloween in 2023. Lombardo Homes polled 1,000 Americans in 2021 and 94 percent said they celebrate Christmas in at least some way, and 84 percent said they decorate. According to Time2Play, which surveyed 1,000 Canadians about their holiday decorating habits, Manitoba puts up Christmas decor earlier than any other province, with these residents taking out decorations 4.3 weeks ahead of Christmas Day on average.

With so many avid holiday decorators, individuals will need to find ways to organize and store their seasonal items. Holiday decor comes in many different sizes — from the smallest tree ornaments to illuminated statues for the yard or inflatable items. Figuring out a storage plan can take a little effort. These seven tips can help.

1. Purchase clear, similarly sized storage bins and shelving racks, hanging them where you plan to keep the decorations. Most people prefer an out-of-the-way spot, such as in the garage, attic or basement. Label each bin by holiday and put the bins in chronological order to make finding items more convenient. Uniform bin sizes make it easier to stack and store.
2. Store smaller items inside larger decor items. Decorative baskets or wrapped boxes brought out for Christmas or Chanukah are ideal places to keep smaller tchotchkes like ceramics, dreidels, candlestick holders, or mantel hooks. Delicate items can be tucked into Christmas stockings or wrapped and stored in a fluffy tree skirt. Egg cartons can be used to keep small items safe as well.
3. Label everything so you will not need to



4. Use overhead or wall storage for holiday decor. Overhead spaces in the garage or basement walls can be good spaces to keep holiday decorations. Always keep bins and boxes off the floor so they are not vulnerable to damage related to leaks or floods.
5. Garment bags can protect larger decorations, such as wreaths, artificial trees or

- signs. If you have a large number of mechanical, illuminated or inflatable lawn ornaments, consider investing in a small shed where these items can be safely kept. Wrap the extension cords and any bracing stakes or strings used with the decorations so it's easy to find.
6. Utilize pieces of cardboard as well as toilet paper or paper towel tubes to keep lights and wires tidy. Tuck cords into the toilet paper tubes, and wrap lights around the cardboard to avoid tangles.

7. Each year, take inventory of your decoration collection and toss out anything that is damaged or has seen better days. Storing holiday decorations will take some time, but once you establish a system, things will be simple year after year.

Christmas **stocking** decorating tips and tricks

Hanging Christmas stockings is just one of the many traditions that fill the days leading up to Christmas. One theory regarding the origins of stockings says the tradition began when a poor widower who had three daughters worried over having enough money for their wedding dowries to help secure the daughters' futures. The women, who had hung their stockings by the fireplace to dry, woke up to find solid gold spheres inside. This legend suggests kindly St. Nicholas visited the home in the night and left the presents, helping ensure the daughters could marry well, after all.

Christmas stockings were the first places where gifts were stowed, before under the boughs of Christmas trees became the primary spot for placing gifts. Then stockings were secondary vessels reserved for small trinkets. Today stockings are largely Christmas decorations rather than places to place gifts. Still, they're a key component of holiday magic.

When including stockings in holiday festivities, follow these tips for whimsy and more.

- Utilize stocking holders. Stocking holders are either metal or wooden devices that are placed on mantels. Hooks on the holders suspend the stockings. Just be sure the holders are sturdy enough to handle the weight of a stuffed stocking if you plan on filling it with goodies.
- Determine your style. There are Christmas stockings that coordinate to just about any interior design style. From farmhouse to modern to traditional, choose one that fits with your aesthetic. That isn't to say you can't mix and match stockings if you prefer a more eclectic, homespun feel.
- Enhance your stocking look. If stockings are strictly decorative, enhance



- their look with a few tricks. First, use tissue paper or balled up shopping bags to stuff the stockings and give them shape. Fill a small baggie with sand or florist glass and place in the heel of the stocking to balance it out and prevent the stocking from blowing around in the breeze.
- No fireplace; no problem. Stockings are traditionally hung from the fireplace mantel, but if you don't have a fireplace

- there is no need to fret. Simply use ribbons to hang them from the bannister of a staircase, or hang stockings right on walls with removable hooks, or from sturdy shelves. You also can think creatively and hang larger stockings on a door like you might a wreath.
- Whether they're decorative or functional, stockings can be an integral component of holiday decor in a home.





The MAGIC of CHRISTMAS

Classic holiday films the whole family can enjoy

Celebrants owe the joy of the holiday season to various components. Decor and gift-giving go a long way toward making December a joyous time of year. Holiday films also do their part to make the season so special. Many people have their own favorite holiday films, and the following are some that can engage viewers who are young or simply young at heart.

“A CHRISTMAS STORY”

Released in 1983, this warmly nostalgic, humorous film is a perennial favorite among families. It follows the story of Ralphie, who has his heart set on a very specific Christmas present: a Red Rider BB gun. Amidst wintry exploits and family drama, the true spirit of Christmas manages to shine through in this beloved film. Some of the subject matter can be off-color, and there are some bullying scenes. So this is a movie best watched with children who are mature enough to make it through without being scared.

“LITTLE WOMEN”

Based on the Louisa May Alcott novel of the same name, the 1994 telling of this classic follows the March sisters, who confront financial difficulties, romance and family tragedies in mid-nineteenth century Massachusetts. While it’s not a traditional Christmas movie, the importance of spending time with family around Christmastime is a core theme in this coming-of-age tale.

“KLAUS”

Perhaps not as well-known as other animated holiday flicks, “Klaus,” released in 2019, has a personality all its own. Postman Jesper, who is not making the grade at the postal academy, is sent to work in a frozen town in the North, where he discovers a reclusive toy maker named Klaus. The unlikely duo ultimately team up to make and deliver toys and bring smiles to children’s faces.



“MEET ME IN ST. LOUIS”

Starring the irreplaceable Judy Garland, this movie musical focuses on four sisters who are awaiting the 1904 World’s Fair in their hometown, but learn that their father has accepted a new job and the family must move to New York beforehand. A Christmas miracle occurs and all is right in the end. Garland sings a memorable version of “Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas” in the film, solidifying this as a holiday classic.

“THE SANTA CLAUSE”

This Disney film came out in 1994 and remains a family favorite. When divorced dad Scott (Tim Allen) accidentally kills a man in a Santa suit, he magically becomes the next Santa. He must learn to cope with the ways the transformation to the man in red interrupts his normal life, eventually giving over to the magic of Christmas.

“EMMET OTTER’S JUG-BAND CHRISTMAS”

Though this 1977 Jim Henson production

is a television special and not a full-length feature film, Generation X likely remembers the heartfelt tale of a poor otter family who sacrifice prized possessions to have what’s needed to enter a talent contest. The goal is to win the prize money to buy special Christmas presents. Audiences get to enjoy narration by Kermit the Frog.

Films are a popular component that help to make the holiday season so special.

Cake pops to light up kids’ eyes this holiday season



There’s no denying Christmas Eve is a little more special in homes where kids are excited about an overnight visit from Santa Claus. Indeed, kids’ joy and enthusiasm helps to make the holiday season such a special time of year.

Since kids add so much to the holidays, it makes sense to prepare something special for youngsters. Of course, treats such as these “Christmas Tree Cake Pops” from Lines+Angles also may appeal to festive adults.

CHRISTMAS TREE CAKE POPS

Makes 24 cake pops

- 1 box vanilla cake mix
- 3/4 cup canola oil
- 1/2 cup unsalted butter, softened
- 1 cup confectioners’ sugar

- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon milk
- 3 1/2 cups green candy melts
- 24 cake pop sticks
- Icing dots
- Icing stars

1. Prepare cake according to package instructions, adding 3/4 cup canola oil to the cake mix before baking.
2. Once cake is cool to the touch, transfer to a large mixing bowl and break up into crumbs. Allow to cool completely.
3. In a medium bowl, add the butter, sugar, vanilla, and milk. Use an electric mixer and beat on medium speed for about 4 minutes until light and fluffy.

4. Add 3/4 of the frosting to the cake crumbs and mix until mixture can hold together well. Refrigerate for at least an hour.
5. Using your hands, shape the cake pop mixture into 24 conical shapes.
6. Melt the green candy melts. Dip one end of each of the cake pop sticks into the melted chocolate before inserting into the bottom of the cake pops. Dip each cake pop into the melted chocolate, making sure to cover completely, allowing excess to drip back into bowl.
7. Use a toothpick to create the textured look of the tree and decorate with the icing dots and stars before standing upright to dry completely.



Merry
Christmas

AND HAPPY NEW YEAR



Decatur Morgan
Hospital

WISHES YOU A
HEALTHY & HAPPY
HOLIDAY
SEASON

Excellent Care. Close to Home. Close to You.

decaturmorganhospital.net