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**SIX LOCAL DESIGNERS  
REVEAL THEIR FOOLPROOF  
HOLIDAY DECORATING TIPS**

If you're looking for some seasonal home decor inspiration, you've come to the right place. We've teamed with **THE NEWCOMERS CLUB** of New Canaan Holiday House Tour to gather advice from the locally based interior designers behind this year's tour. They're working overtime to deck the halls of the six New Canaan homes on the biennial tour that opens on December 6 and raises money for various charities and service organizations. In the meantime, we spoke with the talented designers behind the tour for their tips on how you can get your place holiday ready.

**ALL THAT GLITTERS**

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**KATE FERGUSON**  
Palomino Bazaar

As a designer I'm known for incorporating vintage and antique elements in my work, and this is true for holiday décor as well," explains **KATE FERGUSON**, founder of **PALOMINO BAZAAR**, who is decorating a home this year with Palomino Bazaar principal Joanne O'Neil.

**1** "Load up on vintage and antique Christmas ornaments throughout the year from Ebay, Etsy and Chairish.com, as prices go up around the holidays," she says. Ferguson likes to pile a bunch of the Shiny Brite collection glass ornaments in a vintage silver punch bowl to make a pretty focal point in a room.

**2** Get the right garland. "Use a mix of juniper, cedar and Douglas fir and braid them together." Weave in a pretty holiday ribbon, and you'll end up with a thick lush garland that looks natural. She also tucks in giant sugar pine cones, magnolia leaves and dried artichokes that are spray painted gold. Attach the garland with floral wire (available at a florist or craft store) to your mantel, banisters and outdoor light posts.

**3** Buy a piece of your favorite fabric from the fabric store (plaid or sparkly print), take it to the dry cleaners and have them make it into a custom tree skirt. This little trick will elevate your Christmas tree and is an inexpensive and custom way to decorate your home, she says.

**4** Fill a large mixing bowl halfway with water, then put a smaller bowl inside of it, weigh it down and put the stacked bowls in the freezer overnight. The next morning, turn it over and you'll have a pretty ice dome that can be placed over a candle and antique silver platter to make a pretty centerpiece. Or, for a cocktail party make several of these ice globe luminaries to light up your walkway.



**SAMANTHA KING**  
SBK Staging + Styling

When asked about her holiday style, **SAMANTHA KING**, owner of **SBK STAGING + STYLING**, says she likes to keep her decor pretty traditional. "We hang the ornaments we've collected over the years on a giant tree, and I use the same creche I've had since the kids were born," she says. King, along with interior designer Debbie Jackson and DesignDot founder and CEO Megan Wunderlich, will be collectively decking the halls of one of the homes this year.

### **1. BRING THE OUTSIDE IN**

Start at the front door. "Every year on the top right and left corners above the door frame I experiment by adding different accents of branches, berries, eucalyptus, holly, magnolia, or even ribbon to the garland," she says. Once inside her home, you'll see her favorite hand-crafted garland made of sheet music formed into paper sunbursts. In the middle, there are scabble letters that spell NOEL. "Other than the tree, this is always the focal point of our home," she explains.

### **2. GET THE KIDS INVOLVED**

Make pomander balls. If you're on a budget, try studding some oranges with cloves. "They last for several weeks, smell great and can be a fun activity with your kids," she says. Children have a great time making their own designs or spelling out words with the cloves, and when done you can display them on a pretty tiered tray or stand.

### **3. CHANGE UP THE MANTEL**

"I always use cypress for my mantel, but this year I'm going to accent the garland, not with the usual peacock feathers, but with white plumes," she says. The stark white peeking out of the greenery is a welcome contrast and will also look great if you are decorating a modern home," she adds.



**CAREY KARLAN**  
Last Detail Interior Design

My philosophy around Christmas decor is 'more is more,'" explains **CAREY KARLAN**, a self-proclaimed maximalist during the holidays.

### **1. THROW A THEME DINNER**

Some of Karlan's past parties include Christmas at Sea, Parisian Christmas, a Woodland Christmas, Alpine Christmas, and Really Red Christmas. Her guests dress up for this annual fete, and everyone participates in a

small skit. Karlan outfits her home each year based on the annual theme, starting with a base of white twinkly lights in every room.

## 2. USE WHAT YOU HAVE

"Use favorite objects you have and decorate them for Christmas." For example, Karlan customizes a special antique tea caddy every year to match her theme. For Christmas at Sea she transformed the caddy into a treasure chest overflowing with glittery shells and garland made to look like jewelry. For her front door wreath, she attached a small Nantucket basket inside the wreath and filled it with shells and greenery. Her bronze boxer dog statues that greet guests at her threshold always wear festive Santa hats.

## 3. DON'T OVER SPEND

Visit a store like Trader Joe's to find reasonably priced orchids, then source some inexpensive mirrored or wood containers, place the orchid inside and surround it with greenery or moss. "You can even tuck some small ornaments into the moss or a pretty faux spray, available at stores like Michaels. "Mixing faux with real makes the arrangement last longer," she says.

## 4. PERSONALIZE IT

Karlan personalizes her home during Christmas by gathering photographs of family and friends who attend her dinner party each year. She mounts the photos on colorful postcards, glues on a border of glitter, and punches a hole in the top tied with a ribbon. "I like to hang these ornaments on my banister and mantel garlands, and I put ones from dinner parties past in my dining room so guests see them each year."



**LORA GRAY**  
Gray Interiors

I live in Vermont in an old farmhouse, so I like to keep my holiday decorating very simple," explains **LORA GRAY**, owner of **GRAY INTERIORS**. She uses tons of fresh greens, white lights and silver to stay in keeping with the style and neutral color palette of her home. "You can't go wrong with garland and a lot of white lights, which sets a peaceful and soothing mood during the busy holidays," she says.

### 1. GO FAUX

Get a white (or colorful) faux throw and wrap it around the base of your tree. "It makes the room feel luxurious and like a winter wonderland, and it won't break the bank," she says. Add faux fur throw pillows, wreaths and ornaments.

### 2. WORK WITH COLOR

Don't fight your existing color scheme. Gray suggests planning holiday decor that goes along with your existing palette. "If your home is mostly blue and white, add in a color like silver by polishing your silver candlesticks or buying some inexpensive silver candles, accessories and ornaments." For your dining room table, she likes filling two glass hurricanes with silver and blue ornaments, or with tiny battery-operated LED fairy lights.

### 3. BRING ON THE GOOD STUFF

Break out the best. "The holidays are the time of year to get out your nicest china, silver and crystal," notes Gray. She suggests setting a beautiful table around December 1st so you can enjoy it for the entire month. "If you need to freshen things up each year, make small adjustments like switching out napkins or adding a new set of placemats," she says.



**MICHAEL CANORO**  
Eastman-Interiors

My number one recommendation is to plan your holiday decor in the fall so you're organized and decorating doesn't become a chore," says **MICHAEL CANORO**, Principal at **EASTMAN-INTERIORS** based in New Canaan. He loves a traditional aesthetic—think Ralph Lauren—and suggests implementing lots of reds and greens, wreaths on every window and multiple-themed trees throughout the house. Here's how he gets it all done.

### 1. PLAN IT OUT

"In the fall, head over to Terrain or your favorite nursery and look at their ideas to get in the mood," he says. Put

your plan down on paper. Shop Michael's, Walmart, Home Goods and Target to find fun theme-related accessories. "Mix in a few new items with special ones you have on hand."

## 2. START WITH TREES

If you're willing to have more than one, try a traditional tree in the living room and a casual one in the family room. "Buy one strand of lights for every foot of tree, and get LED ones as they last longer," he says.

## 3. CREATE MEMORIES

Pick a tree-install date (Canoro opts for post-Thanksgiving weekend) and turn decorating into a fun family activity by making ornaments together or baking gingerbread cookies with the kids and use them as a display. For a traditional tree, mix in sprays of winterberries, then add some crystal spikes and lots of glass icicles. For a woody tree, use burlap intertwined with grapevine (find spools of it at your local nursery) to make a garland-like ribbon that can be threaded throughout the tree. For a snow tree, use lots of white elements. You can buy pre-made evergreen branches flocked with snow and flocked pine cones to fill in your tree. "Artificial winter birds are another favorite," he says. "I buy them at stores or on Etsy in red, gray or white and they add an unexpected touch."

## 4. GO GREEN

When trees are decked, choose garlands for the bannisters and fireplace surrounds. Canoro likes using grapevine mixed with cedar sprigs, magnolia branches, or another evergreen such as a traditional Frasier Fir. "You can also find great artificial garland that lasts a long time and doesn't make a mess, so no need to go real," he says.

## 5. STICK TO A THEME

Once the trees are done, focus on the rest of the house. "Keep your decor in line with the aesthetic of each room," he says. If you have a snow tree, add some other items of interest that blend, such as large white branches or flocked white sticks in a big vase. Or, create a snow village by placing glass trees and houses on top of cotton batting on a sideboard or coffee table.



**CINDY LEVI AND TERRANCE RHODES**

Lillian August

According to **CINDY LEVI** and **TERRANCE RHODES**, both Design Consultants at **LILLIAN AUGUST**, a worldwide trendsetting brand as well as a retailer of home furnishings, accessories and textiles, holiday decorating should always be classy and fabulous.

1 "For the holidays, we favor a classic traditional feel, and for added 'pop' a little twist of color is always fun," explains Levi. She also offers the following go-to tips to instantly make a home feel more festive: Play holiday music to get into the spirit. String some white lights for a magical and soothing feel and light a scented candle to add a bit of nostalgia.

2 When asked how to prevent getting in a decor rut, Rhodes suggests creating new decorations that the whole family can make together, as well as using memorabilia from holidays past. "This way you can tell friends and family about the decorations being used year to year," he says.

3 Often, the most significant decor trick is something very simple. "This year, we'll be incorporating a popular cut greenery into the decor. The use of fresh eucalyptus with its soft silver blue hues throughout the interiors brings a clean and aromatic scent into the house," he says. Rhodes also likes to turn to nature for inspiration and one-of-a-kind finds. "Your very own yard can be a tremendous resource for holiday decor. I love evergreens, but my favorite elements are bare winter branches as they are so versatile, natural and organic," he says. Going for more glam look? Suggests Rhodes, "Add a touch of spray paint and glitter to heighten the holiday mood."

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