

Dreaming of a white Christmas

Christmas is a time to really make the most of your home, writes **Noelle O'Donoghue**



If you're like me and love Christmas, you will want to make the most of your home at this time of the year. Because we have a busy curtain workshop in the basement of the house, it's the only time of the year where we can be at home and there is no work or calls to interrupt our free time. At Christmas, I want my house to feel like a place of rest where I can relax and enjoy an afternoon movie – a very rare treat.

We may not always get snow outside but we can create the look indoors. Christmas does not have to be the traditional red and green; try something new with silver and white.

If you have a neutral scheme in your house, this gives you the option to pick different Christmas colour arrangements or keep it very unassuming and stick to white and silver decorations. Use a deep shade to enhance the appearance – like purple, red or bronze colours.

Decorating for Christmas should be fun. Keep it simple and let the children join in. A family walk can find all sorts of treasures to decorate your home. Look out for pine cones, horse chestnuts, twisted hazel and ivy. You can also use trimmings from the Christmas tree. Add some candles and you are halfway there.

Lighting is so important to create the correct atmosphere and mood. Soft low-watt bulbs and candles are the way to go. The soft glow from a candle is warming and relaxing, especially if used with reflective candle holders; or use a glass or mirrored tray, silver candle holder or any item with plenty of reflection for the flame to bounce and enhance the effect.

A silver platter need not just be

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for the leftover turkey sandwiches. Try filling a silver tray or plate charger with cones and candles to decorate your coffee table or use different sized tea-light holders grouped together to create a warm glow. If you have a fireplace that's not used, fill it with different-sized candles – this will not just decorate the space but look appropriate.

If you hate the idea of chopping down a tree that will only be used for two or three weeks, why not try a real tree in a large pot instead of a Christmas tree and then plant it out in the spring. It can look just as good and if you have a big enough pot, it can look just as big. The smell of a real tree can't be replicated but if this is not an option, use the cut-off from your local Christmas tree supplier and pot up your vases with the branches and then decorate with mini baubles and lights.

CHRISTMAS TABLE

The table is one of the highlights of Christmas Day. Decorate with white linen and add purple baubles and candles for a very luxurious look.

Alternatively, keep all the accessories and decorations white and use a patterned table cloth with purples, greys and white. This is a sophisticated look and it's easier to disguise the red wine stains!

Decorate a tiered cake stand with baubles and candles for a very individual centre piece.

If you're looking for something fun and new, try folding a napkin into a piece of art. It's not so difficult and your guests will be impressed. The Rosebud napkin is a good place to start. Begin with a well-ironed, starched napkin (it needs to be square). Lay the napkin face down in



Fill a silver tray with cones and candles to decorate your coffee table.





↑ Welcome your guests in style with candles and lanterns.

→ Christmas tree trimmings and candles create a great feel.

← Decorate a tiered cake stand to use as a centrepiece.



front of you and follow these steps:

- 1 Fold the napkin in half diagonally.
- 2 Arrange the napkin so the open end points away from you.
- 3 Fold the right corner up diagonally to the top point.
- 4 Repeat step 3 on the other side, creating a diamond shape.
- 5 Flip the napkin over, while keeping the open end pointing away from you.
- 6 Fold the bottom of the napkin three-quarters of the way up towards your and press down well.
- 7 Flip the napkin over.
- 8 Curl both sides up so they meet in the middle and tuck one into the other.
- 9 Stand it up and straighten it out. If it flops, you need to starch your napkins and iron well.

MAIN ENTRANCE

Don't forget the outside of your home. Greeting your guests is never nicer than when you have made an effort. An assortment of candles and lanterns always makes a great first impression.

Create a stunning door hanger with leftover trimmings from your tree, add a beautiful bow and voila. If lanterns are not available, then use flower pots in varying sizes, fill with stones, top with pine cones and a group of candles or a centre candle to give a super effect. Don't forget the sound of Christmas. Use bells on your door wreath or you could also have a small wreath with bells attached inside door handles for a gentle jingle all day long.

The most important thing to do is make the most of a special family time. We will make the most of this Christmas and thankfully we are all safe and well. ☺



10 OF THE BEST DECORATIONS

€2 for a set of six from Penneys

€15 from Monsoon

€27.50 from Newbridge Silverware for the Make a Wish Foundation

€1.50 from Heaton's

€1.50 from Dealz

€15 for a set of three from Next

€3.95 from Carraig Donn

From €5 from House of Fraser

€6 from Debenhams

€4 from Marks & Spencer