

# HOLIDAY *decorating*



GOING GREEN

## *Real vs.* FAKE

When to go with the real deal for your holiday décor, and when to opt for some artificial assistance

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CTW FEATURES

The most wonderful time of the year can be the most beautiful time of the year in your home. Yet, transforming your rooms into magical holiday wonderlands can be stressful, as every year the hunt is on for the perfect real tree or wreath. Do you have to shop for a new tree every year, or can you create inspirational memories with fake greenery?

"It's about traditions," says Kade Laws, owner of Kade Laws Interior Design in Magnolia Springs, Alabama, when talking about what makes real decorations, including trees, wreaths and garlands so special when decorating for the holidays.

Adds Christine Haught of Christine Haught, Ltd. Interior Design in Shaker Heights, Ohio: "We all can harken back to a time as a child or teenager where you say, 'This is Christmas for me.'"

Barbara Izzo, owner of Nesting Interiors in Milford, Connecticut, is a proponent of using live elements when decorating for the holidays. "You're bringing the outdoors in," she says. "There's just something about real. You just can't fool the eye."

Izzo says she's decorated homes with beautiful fake Christmas trees and garland, but you can always tell when the tree is fake. "It's undeniable," she says, noting that ornaments hang differently



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when dangling off a real Christmas tree.

However, artificial decorations have their place too and can make up some of the downsides that real décor has, including the mess of needles, dealing with allergies and potential fire hazards. Other not-so-fun elements of using real décor is that pets can attack or mark on trees, and you may find unwanted bugs or rodents hiding in them.

“Fake options have come a long way as far as the look, and some even offer a reasonable facsimile as far as the scent,” says Sarah Goodman, a freelance designer in Minneapolis.

One attractive element of buying fake is that you don’t have to shell out cash year after year to purchase the essential ele-

ments like trees, wreaths and garland. Over time, if you store them properly and can get years of use out of them, you’ll save money over time by investing in artificial decorations. “You can spend \$300 on a tree and fake garland and do that once. You wrap it and have it forever. You’re not reinventing the wheel,” Laws says.

Fake also can be a time saver. “If kept dry and in proper storage, the decorations should only require being unpacked, maybe dusted and fluffed and be ready to enjoy,” adds Goodman.

Still, when buying artificial décor, don’t automatically go for the lowest price tag. “If you’re going to buy fake, you’ve got to buy the best,” Izzo says.

Many designers believe you don’t have to be a hard-line realist or solely an artificial aficionado. Mixing the two also can be a great option. “Fake with small amounts of real is the way to go in terms of cost and budget,” Haught says. She recommends mixing in real greenery on fake garlands to create a more realistic look and also get that magical holiday smell that real pine trees and branches provide.

Weaving together real and fake garland and branches also can create an illusion of fullness that you can’t get by using just one or the other. “When you just glance, it looks completely real. You can’t quite tell because it’s mixed in so well,” Laws says.

With some design elements like fruit, it pays to be careful with whether or not you opt to go real or fake. “There’s nothing worse than something that looks like a plastic apple,” says Laws. Instead, Laws recommends putting real fruit such as cherries, red pears and citrus into a tall clear vase and submerging them in water.

Artificial fruit can have its place though. “[If you get] fake fruit, get some that is not too plastic or obvious, then make it artsy,” says Haught, suggesting mixing it with mercury glass balls so it doesn’t look so fake.

Whatever your choice in type of holiday décor, to keep it memorable, Haught says it’s important to change it up. “Every year when you take out your décor, don’t do the same thing every year. Keep on freshening it, mixing it, giving it new life. That’s what’s going to keep it interesting.”

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