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IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE that November is here and the busy holidays are right around the corner. Take a deep breath and try to embrace it! Some of you will disagree with me, but this is my favorite time of year. As a decorator, we get very busy and are always pressed for time. I guess the best way to describe decorating multiple houses for the Christmas holidays is "challenging, but always fun."

Some words of wisdom as you venture out to begin your holiday shopping: start early and buy it when you see it, or else it will be gone. Remember, try not to stress about things, this should be a blessed time of year, a time for celebrating family and friends. Here are a few suggestions I have learned over the years that may help you.

DECORATING TIPS

In my household, we put up multiple trees...all with a different look or theme. My living room tree is a more dressy look with jewel tones as compared to others throughout the house. I also have lots of garland...lots! Larger stores such as Wal-Mart, Garden Ridge, Target and Decorators Warehouse have many different types of garland and swags. I definitely recommend purchasing the pre-lit garlands. This tip will save time for the many tasks ahead of you. Yes, they cost more, but you can use them for two or three seasons. Always check the lights to make sure they work before you put them up - I've learned the hard way. If you think you will need four garlands, buy five or six just in case.



Radko ornament

photo by Chris Fritchie

Holiday Shopping Made Easy

By Karen Long

You can always return them. Having the "extra" will save you from scrambling for more at the last minute and running the risk of the item being sold out. Hobby Lobby and Decorators Choice also have a great holiday décor section.

I have recently found another place that makes my heart pitter patter. A floral shop on Harry Hines carries very

beautiful decorative items that I use for Christmas trees. This year, they have butterflies and flowers with glitter and jewels for half the price of any other store. They have flowers and wreaths and berries that are beautiful and can be used for anything you can dream up.

HOLIDAY GIFT IDEAS

Start your shopping before you get in the car. Think about who you'll be seeing over the holidays so you can purchase the most appropriate gifts. My favorite stores in Frisco for unique gift giving ideas are Panache and Heart's Desire. Heart's Desire carries Radko ornaments that are beautiful and a great gift idea. The store will even wrap it for you. Who knows, you may start a collection of your own. I especially love the rose bowls and candles at Panache. They are a timeless gift most would love to receive.

A gift from Harry and David or Williams-Sonoma is always a nice touch for a friend or hostess who loves cooking. These stores always have great gifts like platters, candy dishes and unique kitchen accessories. Harry and David also has delicious chocolate covered blueberries and cherries.

A spa gift card from Frisco's own Solare Spa and Café is especially nice and you don't have to spend hundreds. Purchase a gift card for a wonderful healthy lunch or some type of spa treatment. A hint for the guys: add a cream or lotion along with the spa treatment for the complete gift.

And while we are into pampering, we women of Texas love getting our nails and toes done. You really can't go wrong with a pedicure gift card. It can be a great gift for the guys, too.

Fun workout apparel is always a great gift if he or she is into fitness, and shouldn't we all be? Target, Academy and Dick's have a great selection of workout gear and athletic shoes.

For our book-loving friends, purchase a gift card from Barnes & Noble, Half Price Books or The Bookworm. Add bookends or a bookmark to personalize your gift.

Start shopping before you get in the car. Think about who you'll see over the holidays so you can purchase the appropriate gift.

Remember, the fun of giving is not always being practical. Put some personality into your gifts and always give something you would love to receive. A word to the wise...no fruitcakes.

At the moment, my household includes two grown sons along with twin 15-year-old girls (going on 21). So, holiday giving is not what it used to be. I really miss my late-night Toys R Us and Target runs for dolls and other last minute toys. These

days I do not have as much say or dare to choose the clothes that are purchased. Although not the personal touch I like, you can't go wrong with a gift card from their favorite store or mall.

My experience with purchasing gifts for my kids' friends also reveals, in general, young males love receiving gas and restaurant gift cards. They always seem to be wondering how they are getting to and affording their next meal. Starbucks and iTunes are also a favorite.

The best place to get wrapping paper and professional ribbon at an extremely low cost is Under Wraps. They have a booth every month at Canton Trade Days but also a warehouse on Floyd Circle in Richardson near Texas Instruments. Under Wraps sells wrapping for every occasion, but Christmas is their biggest event. They carry special decorative pieces to personalize the package, ready made bows in every color, tissue paper, bags, ribbon shredders, etc. Under Wraps is open Tuesday through Saturday with sporadic hours on Mondays.

HOLIDAY ATTIRE

If you don't have your holiday outfits picked out, you better get busy. If you are looking for dressy, I would recommend you start at department stores where the selection is large. Saks at Willow Bend always has a great selection of

Gift wrap; Wine bags (below)
photos by Chris Fritchie



beautiful long and cocktail length dresses. The separates department has beautiful tops that can be worn with dressy jeans and fun shoes.

If department stores aren't your thing, then try Cache located in most malls. Cache carries long dresses as well as quite a few dressy separates. Also, White House, Black Market features cocktail length dresses and separates. Clothing is offered in black, white and some gray shades. Express always has holiday separates in great colors and, as a bonus for tall women, they also carry longs in some of their dressy slacks.

Five Clever & Quick Gifts for any Recipient

REMEMBER, choosing a special gift for a hostess or family friend should be well thought out and personal. Here are some ideas to help you get going this season:

1. Any kind of throw makes a wonderful gift, especially at this time of year. You can find these in faux fur and other cozy fabrics at any department or house wares store. Add a couple of mugs and hot chocolate mix to make this gift complete.
2. A bottle of wine and decorative portable wine rack or wine bucket is a nice hostess gift for a wine lover. A bottle of wine with special cheeses is also a great touch.
3. Any holiday collectable such as an ornament, Santa or snowman is a great gift to give or receive.
4. A candle and decorative holder is something anyone can use. You can buy really nice cut crystal rose bowls and votives or a more rustic hurricane style with some votives. Always choose your gift to match your recipient's personality or lifestyle.
5. Anything monogrammed, such as hand towels or kitchen towels add a personal touch.

Saving the best for last, Sussies is a wonderful boutique that carries one of a kind designer clothes and selection you will not find anywhere else. If you need help or are worried about putting the outfit together, not to worry. The sales staff often has great ideas and will help you choose the perfect outfit.

For the guys, Nordstrom is always a safe bet, especially if you want to get in and out quickly. And for most guys, that is the man's way o f



shopping.

Men's Wearhouse is known for their fast turnaround on suits, tuxes and alterations for the last minute shopper. Express at Stonebriar just started carrying mens clothing. I've always liked the women's selections, so I'm sure they have some nice things for the men as well.

I hope I have given you some ideas and incentive to get your holidays off to a great start. Remember, 'Tis the season to be jolly.' Happy Holidays!

Karen Long is a Frisco resident and a partner in Before & After Interior Makeovers.




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