

Deck your halls with innovative tips and techniques

Merchandiser for locally, gay-owned Replacements, Ltd., dishes on holiday decor

The holiday season doesn't have to always involve the same old, same old when it comes to decorating your home.

Take a few ideas from John Griffith. As the lead visual merchandiser for gay-owned, Greensboro-based Replacements, Ltd., he spends the entire year scouting and developing innovative tips and techniques to deck the halls and trim the perfect tree. So far, Griffith's team has adorned nearly a dozen trees throughout company's retail store. Each tannenbaum is a story in itself, defined by color and style and unique looks created by combining ornaments with what some might consider nontraditional trimmings.

"So many people settle for simply hanging ornaments on their trees, but there is so much more you can do by adding fillers that really reflect your own personal taste and style," says Griffith. "Mixing in ribbon, fabrics, florals, feathers and other natural elements create flair and personality. Adding extra flourishes in the right places can make the difference between a pretty tree and an extraordinary tree."

Griffith says the hot colors for holiday 2012 range from soft pastels to rich jewel tones. Popular ornaments this season reflect the

Victorian era, with glittering gemstones and rhinestones being extremely popular.

And, don't be afraid to forgo the traditional tree topper. Instead, consider using twigs or other natural elements arranged out of the top of your tree. Griffith has even strategically placed a tree beneath a chandelier for extra glow.

If you don't have enough room for a traditional sized tree, corner trees or the flatter profile trees are an excellent fit for smaller spaces. Or, Griffith suggests you may want to go in an entirely different direction.

"I am into repurposing and recycling, so I took the branches of an old artificial tree and wired them together to create swags and then decorated those with combinations of fabrics, bows and ornaments," he says. "You can hang swags on a mantel or place them on top of a door frame. They're a fun family project, and you can even create them with different color stories or themes for each room in your home."

Griffith literally has thousands of ornaments at his fingertips. While most people know Replacements as the world's largest retailer of old and new china, crystal, silver and collectibles, the company has a vast selection

of ornaments from around the globe. These range from colorful blown glass to crystal and highly collected silver.

"As individuals, we chose ornaments for so many different reasons. Decisions may be driven by color or theme, but many choices are shaped by past and future traditions," says Keith Winkler, the company's product marketing manager. "Many people reach back to ornaments that remind them of their childhood, while others are looking to start their own traditions with annual collectible ornaments. For instance, Wallace Silver makes an annual sleigh bell, while Gorham Silver releases an annual snowflake. These have been in production for more than four decades and are a great tradition to add every year."

Winkler says popular dinnerware manufacturers including Lenox, Wedgwood and Waterford all offer ornament lines. For those looking for popular blown glass, he suggests



Fashion tree branches to create decorative swags.

the Merck Family's Old World Christmas line. Those ornaments run the gamut from traditional holiday figures, to birds, sports teams, and pretty much any theme you can imagine.

If you are interested in more ideas, you can find decorating and entertaining tips at replacements.com, while Replacements will post additional ideas throughout the upcoming holiday season on its Facebook page. ::

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