

# Give A Festive Look To Home

Decorative Wonders Can Be Worked By Simple Ingenuity

by Viola Newton.

Holly over the fireplace, and mistletoe in the hall—these are your usual Christmas decorations? Why not be more enthusiastic this year? Spend a little extra time and a few pence on the job, and give a really festive look to your home.

In the first place, while holly and mistletoe are the best main theme, they need not be the only plant decorations. Laurel, ivy, pine branches and cones are attractive, too, either as main pieces, to back other foliage, or to enhance a few choice flowers.

But don't think you can produce really sumptuous displays without a few accessories. Your greatest helps will be gold or silver paint, floral wire and artificial frost and glitter, with, of course, the usual tinsel, glass ornaments, candles and coloured ribbons.

**COLORS TO CHOOSE**  
If you seek your green decorations about a week before Christmas, you should find a good selection in the shops. Put your purchases in water when you get them home, and, when arranged, wherever possible, keep them in it. Live leaves and branches, if they are not to droop and wither, need water just as much as other cut plants.

If small Christmas extravaganzas include a few choice flowers (bought, of course, near Christmas Day) remember that if they are yellow, mauve or blue they may be disappointing in artificial light. Flame, orange, puce, red, pink and white are safe colors.

If you live in the country you have the advantage of being able to gather a winter harvest of decorations from your garden or the lanes. The delicate traceries of bare branches and twigs are magically transformed with gold or silver paint, or frosting.

The Christmas tree, centre of the festive scheme, cannot really be better dressed than with the traditional tinsel and colored glass ornaments. Tiny, old-fashioned candles are less safe, but give a more romantic glow than the now conventional electric lamps.

An increasingly popular fashion which has ethereal charm is the small, "fairy" tree, placed perhaps in the solitude of the hall. The tiny tree is first covered with flat, white paint, and, when almost dry, sprinkled with glitter. All the decorations must be dainty and delicately colored—small glass icicles and ornaments in pale shades of blue and green.

**A DELIGHTFUL NOVELTY**  
Although rather tricky to make, a "mock tangerine tree" is a novelty that is worth a little trouble. Fill a substantial vase with crumpled wire netting and water. Arrange in it some large branches of laurel, and strengthen some of them with fairly thick floral wire. On these fix the tangerines after they have been impaled on the ends of slender but strong sticks. Laurel leaves, covered with silver or gold, and rising from a base of two or three large pine cones, fit well into a contemporary setting. And laurel branches, with their leaves outlined with glitter, will brighten a dark hall.

Variiegated holly—sometimes called "milkmaid" holly—is always a colorful change from the usual dark green variety. It makes an effective wall decoration when backed with laurel, and worked into a crescent shape.

Shape the curved foundation from wire, pad with moss (about a quarter's worth) will make two or three two-foot-long crescents, and cut the stems of the branches on the slant so that they will easily pierce the moss in which they are arranged.

**FOR THE TABLE**  
This holly makes a bright table decoration, too. Embed small, single sprays in moss, and let them stray along the centre of the table length. Small candles enhance the effect, and for a touch of magnificence, use table mats cut from substantial gold or silver paper.

Mistletoe, alas, is too often just bunched, and hung with a piece of string to a lamp. For its decorative value alone, it should have better treatment. One variation is to hang a bunch at the bottom of a suspended kissing ring. This is made with a wooden hoop, covered with colored silver paper, or folded sheet cellophane, and trimmed with evergreens. Within the hoop hang silver bells, apples or balloons.

If you prefer mistletoe more daintily arranged, use embroidery frames instead of one large hoop. Bind them with tinsel, and suspend with bows.

With some of the berries frosted, mistletoe, in a silver bowl, is an exquisite decoration.

A showy makeshift dressing can be made from pine branches. Bind the shelf with strong wire, and fix the branches into it. Allow them to droop a little over the shelf. Dot with candles secured by wire.

**THE WINDOW LEDGES**  
Neat, individual pieces for side-tables and window ledges can be made from small sprays of pine cones and candles. Place the ends of two sprays on a small, fairly flat ash tray. Where the stems meet add two cones, with a candle between them.

Needless to say, a "fire watch" should be kept whenever candles

Sing the Answer to This



IF YOU BEGIN WITH THE CORRECT LETTER AND FOLLOW ROUND, WITHOUT JUMPING ANY, YOU WILL READ TWO LINES OF A CHRISTMAS CAROL.

T	A	L	S	U	S	E	H
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E	W	N	I	Y	O	I	A
H	E	A	N	G	N	B	R
T	E	M	A	E	R	F	O

See Solution Page 2

are lighted.

If you are not lucky enough to have Christmas roses in the garden, buy two or three, and gain the effect of double the quantity by placing them against a mirror. Small-leaved, trailing ivy is an elegant companion for these flowers.

The economy of a few carnations may be unnoticed if they are used with a comparatively large proportion of pine. If the flowers are white, they will look seasonally snowy against a background of dark green holly.

Carnations, by the way, if they are fresh, should have tightly clustered centre petals, and the outer petals should be bent at right angles to the stem.

Don't attempt to give a festive look to a gift of a bunch of roses or other Christmas luxury flowers. Rather, place them in vases which harmonize with their line and color, and the size and character of the room.

The potted solanum, or cape cherry, is a popular present. It is a good decorative proposition, because it will outlast Christmas. All the solanum needs is a festive paper foil round its container. But don't expect it to live in a room with a gas fire—it won't.

**TIPS TO REMEMBER**

These odd tips are worth remembering—For topping up water in which carefully arranged displays stand, use an old teapot, and they won't be disarranged.

To give an extra gloss to decorative leaves and fruits, wipe with cotton wool moistened with olive oil.

In your enthusiasm, don't absentmindedly place decorative groupings in the way of the Christmas party, or as a partial barricade to

## Away In A Manger

The Stable of Bethlehem did not in any way resemble the airy portico—complete with plaster of paris animals and adoring shepherds—so dear to the heart of modern Christendom.

With comfort increasing throughout the western world, the poverty of the Nativity scene simultaneously startles and fascinates us—as perhaps Matthew, the publican, was impressed by the story of the Wise Men; and St. Luke, who had been a ship's doctor and probably knew very little about shepherds, was charmed by the shepherds abiding in the field.

There was no room in the inn that night so Jesus was born in a stable: a place of shelter hewn into a rocky ledge of the Judean countryside. It was cold and dark and damp, and Judean travellers—frequently "put up" in such caves—welcomed rather than disdained joint tenancy with beasts because the breath of the cattle and the heat of their bodies provided a little warmth, while the guests inside the inn had no heat at all.

The cave, which was the birthplace of the Saviour, is now a grotto beneath Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity; and though fascinated by the simplicity of the original Nativity scene, Christianity has been unwilling to maintain its poverty and has covered the entire surface with costly ornamentation.

And, for quiet moments looking out the window, make the trees outside centres of activity by hanging them with pieces of suet and cake. They are the only decorations the birds will appreciate.

## On Christmas Day In The Morning

—A Mystery Story—

By MARGERY ALLINGHAM

Sir Leo Persuivant, the Chief Constable, had been sitting in his comfortable study after a magnificent lunch and talking shyly of the sadness of Christmas while his guest, Mr. Campion, most favoured of his large house party, had been laughing at him gently.

It was true, the younger man had admitted, his pale eyes sleepy behind his horn-rimmed spectacles, that, however, good the organisation, the festival was never quite the same after one was middle-aged, but then only dear old Leo would expect it to be, and meanwhile, what a truly remarkable bird that had been!

But at that point the Superintendent had arrived with his grim little story and everything had seemed quite spoiled.

At the moment their visitor sat in a high-backed chair, against a paneled wall festooned with holly and tinsel, his round black eyes hard and preoccupied under his short grey hair.

Superintendent Pussy was one of those lean and urgent countrymen who never quite lose their fondness for a genuine wonder. Despite years of experience and disillusion the thing that simply can't have happened and yet indubitably has retains a place in their cosmos.

He was holding forth about one now. It had already ruined his Christmas and had kept a great many other people out in the sleet all day, but nothing would induce him to leave it alone even for five minutes.

The plate of turkey sandwiches, which Leo had insisted on ordering for him, were disappearing without him noticing them and the glass of scotch and soda stood untasted at his side.

"You can see I had to come at once," he was saying for the third time. "I had to, I don't see what happened and that's a fact. It's a sort of miracle. Besides," he eyed them angrily, "fancy killing a poor old postman on Christmas morning. That's inhuman isn't it? Un-natural."

**RUN DOWN?**

Sir Leo nodded his white head. "Horrible," he agreed. "Now, let me get this clear. The man appears to have been run down at the Benham-Ashby crossroads..."

"Pussy took a handful of cigarettes from the box at his side and arranged them in a cross on the shining surface of the table."

"Lost," he said. "Here is the Ashby road with a slight bend in it and here, running at right angles slap through the curve, is the Benham road."

"This morning the Benham postman, old Fred Noakes, a bachelor, thank God, and a good chap, came along the Benham road loaded down with mail."

"On a bicycle," murmured Campion.

"Naturally. On a bicycle. He called at the last farm before the cross-roads and left just about ten o'clock. We know that because he had a cup of tea there. Then his way led him over the crossing and on towards Benham proper."

He paused and looked up from his cigarettes.

"There was very little traffic early to-day, terrible weather all the time, and quite a bit of activity later, so we've got no skid marks to help us. Well, to resume, no one seems to have seen old Noakes, poor chap, until close on half an hour later."

"Then the Benham constable, who lives some three hundred yards from the crossing, on the Benham road, came out of his house and walked down to his gate to see if the post was coming."

"He saw the postman at once, lying in the middle of the road across his machine. He was dead then."

"You suggest he'd been trying to carry on, do you?" put in Leo.

"Yes. He was walking, pushing the bike, and had dropped in his tracks. There was a depressed fracture in the side of his skull where something—say a car mirror—had struck him."

"I've got the doctor's report. I'll show you that later. Meanwhile there's something else."

Pussy's finger moved to his other line of cigarettes.

"Also, just about ten, there were a couple of fellows walking here on the Ashby road, just before the bend. They report that they were almost run down by a wildly driven saloon car which came up behind them."

"It missed them and careered off out of their sight round the bend towards the crossing. But a few minutes later, half a mile farther on, on the other side of the cross-roads, a police car met, and succeeded in stopping, the same saloon."

"There was a row, and the driver, getting the wind up suddenly, started up again, skidded and

Continued on page 8

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