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## Hang it all

Muster your creativity  
to create an atmosphere

**C**HRISTMAS IS a time when your whole house can become a backdrop for holiday galas, festive suppers and intimate family gatherings.

But you don't need a design specialist to create an unforgettable holiday stage. Just muster a little creativity and some supplies from your favorite department store, craft retailer or florist. Even the most ornate decorations can be easy on the Christmas coffer.

If you want guests to make a memorable entrance, why not start by decorating the door? "Beautiful Parties: A Practical Guide to Entertaining With Flowers, Food & Flair," (Taylor; 1986) written by authors Dianna McDermott and Sandi Britton, suggests decorating the door like a giant present by wrapping it from top to bottom and side to side with a wide ribbon, then tying a giant bow at the top of the frame.

Because wide ribbon is hard to find, you can make your own by cutting a pretty, silky fabric to the desired width and finishing the edges with a seam.

INSIDE, YOU'LL want the scents of Christmas everywhere. Simmer pot-pourri on the stove or stash freshly cut evergreen boughs somewhere in the house. Better Homes and Gardens Christmas Ideas suggests gathering pine needles, orange peel, spices, pinecones and herbs, and assembling a wreath or tray of the dried mixture.

Decking the halls with boughs of holly is still fashionable in the 1980s. Or use branches of mistletoe, pine, ivy, cedar, juniper, fir, spruce, cypress or boxwood to adorn the fireplace, mantle, banisters, window ledges, tables and other furniture.

Or use them as centerpieces, arranging them so the stems don't show and adorning your arrangement with candles, pinecones and berries. You can arrange greens around your favorite Christmas symbol, such as the nativity.

Loop evergreen ropes across mantels, hung with miniature Christmas lights and small Christmas tree balls. Secure the same ropes around a banister with lush velvet ribbon.

FOR A FESTIVE centerpiece, create your own topiary tree. You or your florist can make them from Styrofoam balls, one on top of the other with a space between, stuck onto a rod-painted green and held in place with a pot filled with plaster of Paris.

Tiny pieces of boxwood are inserted

in the Styrofoams, creating a green background. At intervals, insert tiny white or pink roses, each in its own aqua pick. Then wrap green cloth around the base.

For a quaint country celebration, revive the custom of the "kissing ball." Form a ball from large mesh wire and cover with sprigs of boxwood, mistletoe or holly. Insert several red roses in individual aquantubes around the sphere and hang the ball with red ribbon in a doorway.

To keep your kissing ball fresh, refill the tubes with tepid water daily, according to the Rose Information Bureau.

IF YOU'VE always wanted a gingerbread house for Christmas, but were afraid of the time and talent involved, Hallmark Cards Inc. suggests using holiday gift containers as the foundation and adding graham crackers and assorted candy with stiff decorator's icing.

Wreaths are as traditional as the Christmas tree. For a quick, new wreath, start with one made of undecorated evergreen branches or stripped twigs. Dress it up with lights, roses, pinecones, wood, foil cutouts, paint, ribbon, stuffed cloth shapes, family photos, small dolls or toys.

For quick decorations, stuff glass and silver bowls with bright tree ornaments, pinecones or fruit. If you have any large indoor plants or trees, decorate them with tiny Christmas lights and red bows.

Let the kids stencil letters and shapes in red and green on plain blocks. Stack them to read "Merry Christmas" or "Noel."

YOU CAN spread the warm glow of the season throughout the home with candles. A candle display can always be a part of a table setting, but can be equally attractive on a mantel, a table, in an entryway or on a buffet.

Don't limit yourself — try candles in pretty glasses or tapers in oranges and apples, suggests Better Homes and Gardens Christmas Ideas. Add tiny sprigs of evergreen or holly at the bases of the candles.

Of course, there are the family keepsakes you'll want to unpack and add to each year's decorating. Many families add one new decoration a year, visiting specialty shops, craft boutiques and out-of-the-way stops for creches, angels, Christmas pictures, pillows and stockings.