



## Ornaments, decorations for a gleeful tree

**O**UR EARLIEST memories of Christmas usually revolve around the Christmas tree. This is where Santa placed all



Tree ornaments and decorations take a turn for the traditional this holiday season. Shown here is Hallmark's "The Wonderful Santa-cycle."

our important gifts, from toys to bicycles — to, perhaps, diamonds.

According to "The Joy of Christmas" by Helen Feingold and Mary Lee Grisanti (Barron's Educational Series Inc.), the tradition of decorating Christmas trees originated in Germany.

"Every parlor had a tree, and no matter what the financial status, it was decorated. Jewelry, pieces of mirror, cotton, wool, even silver knives and forks were used, as well as handcrafted ornaments. Then as now, collections of ornaments were handed down from one generation to another and treasured."

Years ago in the United States, trees were decorated with edibles such as apples, fruits, nuts, marzipan, cookies, strings of cranberries and popcorn. Soon, though, elaborate ornaments from Europe came into vogue.

"THESE WERE handcrafted of embossed cardboard, tin, wax and glass — molded, blown and spun," say Feingold and Grisanti. "They came in myriad shapes and sizes, silvered in-

side and with painted decorations outside. Glass bead and tinsel ropes became popular, as well as cotton wool for snow, paper ornaments from Japan, and papier-mache objects.

"Glass ornaments, and, later, molded light bulbs were made in every shape: Santa Clauses, reindeer, angels, pine cones, grapes, drums, fruits and vegetables, houses, animals, trumpets, bears, violins, birds with hangers or clips for fastening to the tree branches.

"With tinsel comes the legend that a spider wove webs over a tree and, when it was blessed by Christ, the webs turned to silver. Bells are for rejoicing on this happy occasion. Lights are for joy and faith. The star at the top of the tree represents the Star of Bethlehem, and angels are, of course, the heavenly hosts proclaiming the birth of Christ."

Holiday decorating often begins with the tree. Designers who create stratagems for the White House tree often carry the theme to other ornamentation as well. One year it was pretty plaid bows all over the tree. The same plaid was used on gift boxes and carried over to floral table arrangements.

A few years back cleverly designed single-color schemes were the rage. There were trees bearing only silver balls, or red, or blue.

Trees made of aluminum shone like rainbows as color wheels turned at their bases. Nothing was to smack of nostalgia.

Happily, the mood has changed and we have transferred those one-color balls to glass bowls or jars, and even straw baskets.

Nostalgia and old-fashioned trees are back. No longer do you have to be embarrassed about hanging the chipped teddy bear ornament that was your favorite as a child.

A HOME WITH a brightly decorated tree feels cheerful and welcoming. The magic you need to transform your home this Christmas is as close as the nearest variety or department store.

You'll find bins stuffed with ornaments and shelves aglitter with tinsel garlands. Many shopping malls open seasonal shops with theme-decorated trees, hundreds of ornaments, music and animated figures.

Remember: The lights go on the tree first — then the garlands, ornaments and last of all, icicles. Whether you select tiny twinkling lights or those with traditional strawberry-shaped bulbs, be sure you have a string (or strings) long enough to wrap several times around the tree.

Cover the base of your tree with a sparkling white tree skirt or "snow drape," mound angel hair below the tree to look like snow. Add your teddy

bear collection or a train set that can gaily traverse the tree's circumference when friends stop by.

Shiny, silvery tinsel garlands come in many colors, including red, green, blue, gold, silver, white — and combinations of colors.

Bead garlands resemble ropes of popcorn and cranberries. They come in gold, silver, white and red; some have a metallic finish, others are clear or translucent.

Vine and wreath garlands in elegant white and gold, or decorated with woody pine cones, apples and berries, lend a touch of opulence to your tree.

Place shiny ornaments, such as glass balls and mirrors, near the tree lights. Reflections will multiply the brightness.

Put tiny, fragile ornaments closer to the top of the tree, at adult eye level and out of the reach of curious little hands. Larger ornaments go lower, where the added weight is supported by bigger branches.

The icing on your tree is icicles. Traditionally, these are made of shredded silver foil, but many colors are available. Drape the strands over the tips of the branches.

**HANDMADE ORNAMENTS** are treasures that greet you with memories, year after year. Making them is inexpensive and fun for the entire family. String popcorn and cranberries for a homemade red-and-white garland. Or ask each friend who stops by to create an ornament — keep a basket of red glass balls, sequins, glitter, fabric and glue under the tree.

Save whole egg shells by piercing each end with the egg and blowing the contents in a dish. Decorate the shells with designs from Christmas cards, using indelible-ink pens.

Thread the holes in each with yarn or string so it can be hung on the tree. (Because blown eggs are fragile, it's a good idea to dip them in a clear plastic craft glaze. This adds durability as well as a glossy finish.)

Make a claylike dough from flour and salt (4 cups flour, 1 cup salt, 1½ cups warm water); roll it out like pie pastry to a thickness of ¼ inch. Cut out shapes with cookie cutters. Place on aluminum foil on cookie sheet; insert ornament hangers. Bake in a moderate oven until hard (45 minutes to an hour).

When cool, decorate the "cookies" with acrylic paint. These are ready for the tree as is; however a clear craft glaze will help preserve them.

Make reindeer and toy soldiers from old-fashioned round-head clothespins.

With the prongs down, the clothespin is a soldier; paint his coat red and his pants blue, draw his face with black ink, glue a red pompon on top for a hat and tiny gold beads on the front of the coat for buttons.

### HOLIDAY FEELINGS

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good food,  
good times.**

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