

Seasonal trim: It's a Christmas tradition

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Collectors won't want to miss the North Pole series, a new group of collectibles from Dept. 56. The fantasy collection, the company's first imaginative series, includes Santa's workshop, reindeer barn, toy shop, Mr. & Mrs. Claus, the helpers and reindeer and sleigh. The finely detailed, handpainted bisque pieces sell for \$15-\$72.

Those charming Snow Babies from Dept. 56 are back with three new babies all bundled in snow white. Special Delivery, Read Me a Story and Wish on a Star are \$13.50-\$25.

Dickens's Village, North Pole Series and Snow Babies are available at Genna's, Rochester; Georgia's, Plymouth; The Plate Lady, Livonia; Birmingham Office Supply; and The Holiday Shoppe at Livonia Mall.

FOR TRADITIONAL Christmas dinnerware, look for Christmas Classic plates and serving pieces, now from Dept. 56. The five-piece place setting (\$135) designed by watercolor artist Roberto Innocenti, includes eight illustrations from Dickens' "The Christmas Carol." Plates include a green garland and 24 karat gold band. Christmas Classic is sold at Genna's, Rochester.

If you like folk art, you'll adore the primitive painted canvas figures of

lunbs, lions and folks like Santa and Mrs. Claus by folk artist Cheryl Smith. Silvestri offers this charming collection of 35 figures, painted, laquered, applied and ready to hang on the tree. Ornaments are \$3-\$20 at English Gardens, West Bloomfield, and Cornwell Pool and Patio, Plymouth.

Those delicate, handpainted ornaments that decorated European trees in the late 1800s are back. From Midwest Importers comes a line of blown-glass ornaments by artists in Germany, Czechoslovakia and Poland.

The collection of 275 imaginative figures includes Santa, birds, animals and fruits and vegetables, like pickles in three sizes. (As the German tale goes, the first child to find the large

pickle hidden in the Christmas tree received a special gift. As the children grew, the pickle became smaller and smaller.) The Old World method is still used to make the ornaments, including the application of liquid silver to create a mirror finish. The Old World ornaments are \$4-\$20.

FROM MIDWEST Importers comes Victorian-style, porcelain ornaments decorated with crystal, pearls and lace. The Floribunda collection includes enough designs to create a pastel-colored theme tree reminiscent of the Victorian era. Ornaments are \$1.25-\$20. The Floribunda collection and Old World ornaments are sold at Genna's, Northville, and all Hudson's stores.

Create a back-to-nature tree with the Wintergarden collection of ornaments from Midwest Importers. Choose bird cages, bird bath, sprinkling can, birds and gates made of metal, terra cotta, grape vine and wood. For an outdoor look, wrap the whole tree in an earth tone, ribbon garland. Ornaments are \$5 and up at Plain 'n Fancy, Rochester; Genna's, Northville; and Christmas Magic, Rochester Hills and Westland.

"Everyone likes crystal ornaments and sells," said Michelle Martin, buyer for The Holiday Shoppe in Livonia Mall. "The traditional things look rich and stand out on a green tree, but there are a lot of new themes to look for this year."

The Holiday Shoppe features a patriotic tree dressed from top to bottom with red, white and blue globes, stars, flags, flag garland and a "Peace on Earth" ornament. Decorations start at \$3.50.

The Holiday Shoppe also sells a collectible nativity set in three sizes from the Fontanini collection. Martin says many families use the set like an advent calendar, setting up one piece at a time through the holiday until baby Jesus is placed in the manger. Since stories are available for purchase with some pieces, she suggests reading the story to children before setting up the figure. Nativity pieces, made of wood-like resin, start at \$9. Complete sets start at \$100.

HOLIDAY HAPPENINGS

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reminiscent of the workshop first built by the Forbys for their grandchildren. "Snowflake soup" and a souvenir for each child. Open 4-6:30 p.m. Dec. 8, 14 and 15 and 5-6:30 p.m. Dec. 10-12. \$2 per child.

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Wear your Halloween costume (adults welcome) at the Dinosaur Hill Nature Preserve's Christmas parade beginning at 2 p.m. To register call 656-0889 by Dec. 4.

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