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An invaluable tool for those serious about home decorating and renovation, the Metropolitan Detroit Home Book (\$39.95, The Ashley Group) is a comprehensive source of design, decor, architectural, building and renovation firms and businesses in the Detroit area. It is available at Borders Books and Barnes & Noble.

BOOKS

FROM PAGE C1

Christopher Dresser, widely considered one of the most influential designers of the 19th century. Originally published in 1875, Smith Gibbs is offering not only a reprint of text but also companion note-cards of the book's featured designs.

For the computer-savvy, consider a home improvement or decorating software package. Offerings include software that assists in making decor choices, designing home additions and planning outdoor landscaping and gardens. CompUSA and Media Play, which both have stores throughout metropolitan Detroit, are also good sources for this gift.

If your loved one's resource library is check-out, how about a gadget that makes projects and planning easier?

Brookstone, which has stores at the Somerset Collection in Troy and Laurel Park Place in

Livonia, sells a battery-operated voice-recording tape measure. The gadget assures exact measurements and is a perfect gift for those with a penchant for rearranging furniture. Priced at \$25, the device tape is 16 feet long and includes a belt clip and carrying case. It can also be purchased at Brookstone's Web site, www.brookstone.com.

And, hey, don't overlook another sort of gadget — hand and power tools. Yes, even if your loved one is a woman. A study of female homeowners conducted by Lowe's Home Improvement Warehouse—who, in fact, estimate half of their customers to be women—consider themselves to be “do-it-yourselfers.” Apparently, screwdrivers, hammers and cordless drills aren't just for the handyman or man-of-the-house anymore.

So go ahead, substitute a Phillips head for a box of bath salts in her stocking.

Just don't forget the pearls.

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BEST SELLERS IN HOME DECORATING BOOKS

* List compiled for and by Borders Books
December

1. *Not So Big Solutions for Your Home*, Sarah Susanka (\$24.95, Taunton Press)
2. *Patterns of Home*, Max Jacobson, Murray Silverstein & Barbara Winslow (\$34.95, Taunton Press)
3. *Villa Decur: Decidedly French and Italian Style*, Betty Lou Phillips (\$39.95, Gibbs Smith)
4. *Cabin*, Dale Mullinger & Susan Davis (\$34.95, Taunton Press)
5. *Preston Bailey's Design for Entertaining*, Preston Bailey (\$45, Bullfinch Press)
6. *Creating the Not So Big House*, Sarah Susanka (\$34.95, Taunton Press)
7. *Bungalows*, Louis Vasserman & Caren Connolly (\$29.95, Taunton Press)
8. *Learning To See: Bring the World Around You into Your Home*, Vincent Wolf (\$40, Arlison)

Top 10 for the year so far

1. *French Influences*, Betty Lou Phillips (\$39.95, Gibbs Smith)
2. *Christopher Lowell's Seven Layers of Design*, Christopher Lowell (\$29.95, Clarkson Potter)
3. *Straight Talk on Decorating*, Lynette Jennings (\$34.95, Meredith)
4. *New Decorating Book*, Better Homes & Gardens (\$24.95, Meredith)
5. *Small House, Big Style*, Better Homes & Gardens (\$34.95, Meredith)
6. *French by Design*, Betty Lou Phillips (\$39.95, Gibbs Smith)
7. *Patterns of Home*, Max Jacobson, Murray Silverstein & Barbara Winslow (\$34.95, Taunton Press)
8. *Decorating with Color*, Martha Stewart (\$22, Clarkson Potter)
9. *Provencal Interiors*, Betty Lou Phillips (\$39.95, Gibbs Smith)
10. *Romantic Style*, Better Homes & Gardens (\$34.95, Meredith)

Design build popular remodeling trend

One of the latest trends in the remodeling industry has been design build, especially for major remodels like kitchens, baths and room additions.

"Design build means homeowners work with remodelers to create projects to fit their budget and meet their needs," said Adam Hoffman, president of Fairway Construction of Southfield, one of the local companies offering design build services.

"Good communication between the homeowner and

remodeler is the essence of a successful project and design build gets that in place up front."

Typically, when homeowners want to remodel, they get a few bids. They may end up with very different bids because each remodeler proposes different ways to do the project, making it difficult to compare. With design build, the customer usually uses the remodeler to complete the job since the relationship has been developed. There is usually a

design fee.

Design build promotes cohesive design and customer satisfaction. Remodeling has been increasingly popular because many people would rather stay in their existing neighborhoods and people are buying older homes that need renovation.

Fairway Construction Company is a fourth-generation builder with remodeling projects under way in Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties. It completes nearly 400 remodeling projects each year.

CELEBRATIONS

FROM PAGE C1

Certainly, a sit-down dinner is always acceptable — if you have the room — and want to serve a more formal meal.

Hosting a cocktail party means you don't have to provide plenty of permanent seating because guests are on the move.

"People still like to entertain at home," Gleeson said. "Informal is the most popular. If you want really formal, it is generally off-site."

Choosing a theme right at the start can make party planning a lot easier because you stick to one idea. That includes colors, type of invitations, decorations, and sometimes even foods.

Party planners suggest a four- to six-week lead time for kicking off a successful party, especially for getting out invitations.

Today you have the choice of ordering professionally printed invitations or making your own on your computer.

"I have learned that most holiday parties are generally last minute," Weisserman said. No fear. If you missed the deadline for professionally printed invitations, businesses such as Weisserman's can provide the appropriate paper stock for your own invitations.

"We have a calligraphy computer, which means we can get invitations out in one to two days."

COLORS

Colors help set a party tone, whether it is for your invitations, decorations, table linens or china.

Colors of the Christmas season — red and green — remain popular, as do natural decorations such as berries, greenery, cranberries, fruit, branches and pine cones.

Equally popular are colors and textures of the winter season, such as silver and white, said Jon Gerych of Gerych's Distinctive Flowers & Gifts in Fenton.

With Gleeson's clients, she finds that metallics, such as copper ("the hot new color") are popular, as are bright jewel colors, purple and turquoise.

"Pick that theme and you will be able to find things to go with it," Gleeson said. "Don't limit your thinking."

Scher's clients are choosing iridescent colors in purple, blue and pink "to look like snowflakes," she said. "Warm colors. Definitely warm colors are popular."

SERVING

Because of today's busy lifestyles, catering, including with waitstaff, has become increasingly popular. And that catering can include dishes, flatware, serving pieces and stemware. When dinner is done, the hired wait staff will clean up, as well.

"A lot of people want to be the guests at their home," Ephraim said. "Money here is the issue."

On the other hand, some people love to cook.

As alternatives to catering a full meal, Gleeson suggests deli trays or carry-outs. Hors d'oeuvres provide a variety of foods for your guests, but often can be more costly than a buffet.

If your party is near the dinner hour, assume most guests will make whatever you serve their evening meal.

"Sandwiches are good. And mini-sandwiches are great. They cater to the men. Then they feel like they really have eaten something," Gleeson said.

If you don't have a large dining or eating area in your home, a buffet can be a lot of fun, especially if you use individual food stations in a number of rooms in your home.

To add to the fun, Gerych suggests using a variety of china colors and designs, one each for the different rooms and food stations.

To top the party off as a memorable occasion, how about gifts for your guests?

"They can vary from moderate to extravagant," Gerych said. "You can give a gift of little candles, a piece of crystal or a bell from Tiffany's. Radiko Christmas ornaments are always popular."

When do you know that you have planned a complete and successful party? Probably never.

"Even when you know everything is done, you won't think you're done. You should go for a massage. But we all want to worry," Scher said.

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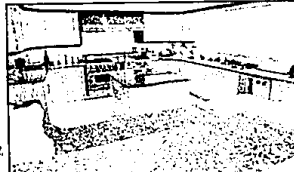
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