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Decorative Recycling A Second Life for Pumpkins and Gourds

By Andrea A. Firth



Nikolene Isely sits alongside the festive holiday display she created for the entranceway of her Moraga home by reusing some of her pumpkins. Photo Doug Kohen.

information: nikolenisely@gmail.com, www.stagerbydesign.com, (925) 360-0947.

"Not everything has to be new or custom," says Nikolene Isely of Moraga, who has managed her own real estate staging business for the past twelve years. "My job is to enhance the look of a home by working with the existing furniture and art and adding a few new pieces and interior accents along with some fresh colors," explains the designer.

"I'm all about recycling, reusing, and repurposing," says Isely, who often employs paint to bring a new look to a wall, piece of furniture, or even a brass candlestick.

"We call it upcycling," says Erin Mason, who works as an assistant to Isely in the staging business. Isely laughs at her colleague's new terminology but agrees it accurately describes the approach.

Isely explains that as Thanksgiving arrives, she often takes the pumpkins and gourds that have been sitting on the front steps and kitchen table through the Halloween season and with a little spray paint, greenery, and decorative accents the autumn vine veggies are reborn as a festive entranceway vignette or table display.

To see how bright orange pumpkins and funky-shaped gourds can be transformed into a second holiday decor, Isely and Mason created the displays depicted on these pages.

Isely used bonzes, browns and golds on the pumpkins to create a warm autumn-colored table centerpiece for her Thanksgiving meal. She said that she would update the display by adding some bright red and silver elements for the December and New Year holiday meals.

"My style is eclectic and playful," says Mason with the charming southern draw she brought with her when she moved to Moraga from North Carolina this past summer. Mason's whimsical nature is evident in the bright purple and Kelly green paint she applied to the pumpkins in her entranceway to tie in with the peacock feathers in the door wreath.

"It's all about using something you already have and giving it a new look," says Isely.

Nikolene Isely, Staging by Design, contact



Throughout the harvest season, Isely used yellow and green gourds and orange pumpkins as her table centerpiece. Photo N. Isely



Isely transformed her collection of pumpkins and gourds with some spray paint and fun accents to create a new look for her Thanksgiving meal. Photo Doug Kohen



Holiday wreath with a fun twist, design by Erin Mason. Photo Doug Kohen



Entranceway display repurposing pumpkins in purple and white with greenery, design by Erin Mason. Photo Doug Kohen

Reach the reporter at: andrea@lamorindaweekly.com

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