

Life in LAMORINDA

Decorating for the Holidays—Just Do It

By Andrea A. Firth



Nikolene Isely created 3 unique wreaths for these 3 different doors.



Photos Doug Kohen



Sue Cuneo used pine cones and a great bow to create a special entranceway welcome.



Erin Mason in her living room surrounded by a holiday tree, table vignette, and wreath she designed. Photo Doug Kohen



The mantel display in Nikolene Iseley's home mirrors the wall art—a painting by the designer. Photo Doug Kohen

For Nikolene Isely, decorating for the holidays is a joy not a chore. "Making your home festive for the holidays is a creative process," says Isely, the owner of Staging by Design in Moraga. "It's important to be spontaneous and to try something new. That's what makes it fun." To get some fresh ideas for festive holiday décor, Isely took the Lamorinda Weekly on a tour of three area homes – her own, and the homes of her colleague Erin Mason and her friend Sue Cuneo.

All three women have backgrounds in design and staging, and they each have a unique holiday look that fits their home and style.

The holiday décor in Isely's home is traditional with some twists. "I like to combine things in an unexpected way, making new connections is the fun part," says Isely. For example, she pairs crystal goblets with spray-painted gourds,

shiny silver balls, and a lime green fabric remnant to create an elegant and playful table centerpiece. Erin Mason's holiday home has a rustic, natural look, and there is a version of "Rudolph" (without the shiny red-nose) in almost every room. "I've collected the reindeer over the years," says Mason. "I also like organic materials. This year, I am using burlap and jute as accents." And the blues and yellows in Sue Cuneo's cozy, country-style home provide a good backdrop for her Santas and snowmen and make her cherry-red ornaments pop.

Photographs of these homes are displayed on this page and page L3, and a more complete photo gallery can be accessed at www.lamorindaweekly.com/deco.html.

First Impressions

A wreath on the front door is the perfect place to start decorating for the holidays, and the look of the wreath can be easily changed or updated from year to year. Isely likes to use fresh wreaths but finds the faux wreaths available today very attractive as well. It's important to coordinate with the front door color, notes the designer, "The customary red and green colors of Christmas don't work on every door." When Isely shops for wreath decorations she keeps the front door color in mind and builds from there. "Less is more. You only need three or four decorative elements to make a special wreath," she says. "You want your brightest element to really bring some punch and not be overwhelmed. Sometimes a fabulous bow and a bit of ribbon is all you need."

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