



LIVING

DWELLING

Deck the Halls

Two designers share their holiday styles and tips for seasonal décor.

BY LAURA MCALISTER
PHOTOS BY JEAN ALLSOPP

WHEN PAM NORTHRUP DECIDED TO renovate her Shelby County home, she had entertaining—particularly for the holidays—in mind.

Simple white china, a gold pinecone place setting holder, and a fresh flower arrangement sets the mood for a holiday feast.

Jordan used metallics as inspiration for this festive mantel display.



Meet the Designer

Ray Jordan is the owner of Flowerbuds in Cahaba Heights. He is a Jackson, Mississippi native and started his career as a banker. The self-proclaimed “Christmas nut” moved to Birmingham 30 years ago to open Christmas and Company. Jordan also was a partner in Park Lane Flowers, before it was sold 20 years ago. He and former business partner Janet Jackson opened Flowerbuds together 13 years ago.

Flowerbuds | 3114 Cahaba Heights Village 3114 Cahaba Heights Village | flowerbudsinc.com

TIPS FROM THE TRADE:

- To avoid putting holes in your walls, both Hartman and Jordan recommend using removable Command hooks, especially for decorating mantels. If you must use tacks or nails, Jordan suggests trying to hide them under the mantel.
- Layer your look with ribbons and floral picks. It’s any easy and affordable way to change up your look from year to year. Hartman adds that not all ribbons have to be tied in neat bows. Mix it up with knots or flow them through the garland stabilizing them with wire.
- Don’t be afraid to mix metallics. Silver and gold are the new classic for Christmas décor.
- Spend the extra bucks initially and purchase quality artificial garlands. They last for seasons to come, and hardly anyone will realize they aren’t real. Hartman prefers pre-lit ones.
- Look to nature for an affordable way to add to your holiday decor. Jordan incorporates pinecones and berries, as well as live greenery from his clients’ yards to spruce up a holiday space.

Each year, she and her husband host their extended family, which includes parents and siblings from both sides, as well as their two sons and their families. With nearly 20 people, she didn’t have a space large enough for everyone, so the family feast was divided, with some eating in the living room and others in the dining room.

Her new space has the right amount of room to fit the entire clan. What used to be the living room, with a focal point of a rustic brick fireplace, is now the dining room. They replaced the brick hearth with a sophisticated limestone mantel, and a custom-made formal dining table has enough room for everyone to break bread together.

To make this holiday even more special for the family, Northrup enlisted her friend and boss—she works part-time at Flowerbuds—Ray Jordan, to help create a holiday display fit for their formal family dinner.

“I was already looking for ribbon,” Northrup says of sorting through the vast supply of ribbons at Flowerbuds. “I told Ray to just make it look pretty.”

That he did. Working with her collectables and china, Jordan created a holiday scene that is both traditional and modern. He says he

was particularly inspired by Northrup’s collection of mercury glass Christmas trees. He displayed those on the mantel, using the glass pieces to form his color palette.

Instead of the traditional Christmas reds and greens, Jordan stuck with metallic hues for this holiday display.

Though he works mainly with fresh florals and greenery as a florist, for the holidays, he prefers to use artificial. It has staying power, and, he adds, artificial garlands have come a long way. He draped a traditional green garland on the mantel as a base; then wove in a gold and silver magnolia leaves garland. He added more layers with ribbons in different textures and metallic hues. To Jordan, more is better when it comes to holiday decor.

“As one of my old business partners used to say, ‘If it’s worth doing, it’s worth overdoing,’” he says.

Jordan replaced the painting over the fireplace with a wreath to match the silver and gold garland on the mantel. For the table display, he again looked to Northrup’s collections. She had simple china that fit perfectly with the elaborate mantel decor. “It’s just white with a silver band and a wreath around it,” Northrup says. “It was my

grandmother’s.” Pinecones spray painted gold hold the place cards. Jordan hung silver and gold ornaments from the crystal chandelier.

The table is complete with one of Jordan’s fresh floral arrangements of white roses, hydrangea, lilies, and tulips. Though he likes using artificial garlands, when it comes to floral arrangements, there’s nothing like fresh—just make sure to order them close to the time of your holiday celebration, he warns, to keep them fresh for the festivities.

TRADITION WITH A TWIST

When decking her clients’ homes for the holidays, Kate Hartman, owner of Chickadee in Cahaba Heights, says she likes to mix and mingle the old with the new, depending on the tastes of her clients.

She offers a sampling of both styles in a Mountain Brook home with a glamorous mantel display, and a stairwell with a more traditional take on the season.

The house is a new build still on the market, so Hartman had a blank slate with which to work.

In the living room, she chose a metallic palette, saying that silver and gold tend to go

with almost anything, making it easy to incorporate into existing décor.

“Now so many homes have all the grays, so it’s nice to do silvers and golds to have some flexibility,” she says. “It goes with a variety of different decors.”

Hartman draped the mantel in an artificial garland, but she says, you’d never know it wasn’t real unless you touched it.

“In pictures you can’t even tell the difference, and it definitely makes it easier,” she adds. Not only will the artificial ones last for several seasons, but they’re easy to fluff, she says, and are already wired.

Hartman added decorative touches to the garland, filling in the branches with sparkling metallic floral picks, ribbons, and ornaments. Kate says these elements are a great way to change up your greenery from year to year, and the picks come in a variety of forms, such as the leaves and pinecones she incorporated into her mantel display.

A dramatic, modern star-shaped mirror hangs over the mantel to complete the look in the living room.

“We just wanted something a little fun for over the mantel,” Hartman says. “The garland is traditional, and then we mixed it with the modern star. It’s nice to have that mix.”

When it came to the staircase, however, Hartman and her team opted for a traditional Southern favorite—magnolia leaves. Like the greenery in the living room, this magnolia garland is artificial, but you’d never know it.

Berry floral picks are scattered throughout the garland, adding to the rustic appeal. Red velvet ribbons pair nicely with the green of the magnolia leaves, and Hartman added a bit of sparkle with glittering red and gold ornaments scattered throughout.

“This is a very simple black iron rail,” Hartman says of the staircase. “Doing the garland down it with a mix of ribbon and picks just gives it a real full look.”

Whether it’s the traditional red and green or the glamorous gold and silver, both displays are festive and fitting for almost any home. ■



The mantel display in this home plays on the holiday metallic trend with a mix of silver and gold elements.



Kate Hartman and Kelly Neely of Chickadee with a classic staircase decoration.

Meet the Designer

Kate Hartman is owner of **Chickadee** in Cahaba Heights, along with her mother-in-law Carolyn Hartman. The two combined their styles to offer a variety of furniture, home accessories, and gifts suitable for the tastes and styles of both their generations. From traditional and rustic, to glam and glitzy, Chickadee offers a variety of both styles for holiday décor.

Chickadee | 3138 Cahaba Heights Road | chickadeebirmingham.com

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