



# THE SUN CHRONICLE

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## Deck the halls - affordably

BY SUSAN LaHOUD SUN CHRONICLE STAFF

**REHOBOTH** - Decking the halls and house for the holidays doesn't have to be a drain on your finances or your time.

Heidi Caron-Guay of Dragonfly Interiors of Rehoboth recently offered some suggestions for folks decorating on a budget at the Seekonk Public Library in a presentation sponsored by the library's Friends group.

Going through everyday items in the cabinets that can be "repurposed" for the holidays; taking a walk in the woods to gather greens, pinecones and berries; knowing where to find bargains; and developing a game plan can lead to some quick, inexpensive and festive decorative touches, Caron-Guay said.

During her presentation, she transformed a rustic wood-framed mirror picked up at the Christmas Tree Shop for \$15 into a centerpiece using greens and berries gathered in a walk in the woods with her 9-year-old daughter Brenna.

Stone-effects spray paint, which can be purchased at a number of home improvement stores for about \$8, can be sprayed on pinecones and greens for a snow-laced look, she suggested. It won't rub off and there is no odor.

"Greens will last a long time," she said as she placed them on the mirror laid flat, illuminating the flames of the candles added to the arrangement. "Just lay them about."

LED tea lights can add a festive glow without the hazards posed by candles.

Caron-Guay chose tea lights with a yellow cast (she bought an 8-pack for \$3.99) for the rustic-looking candles that she purchased at Pottery Barn for \$12.99. Using the lights will also extend the longevity of your favorite candles, and you can continue to use them for other holiday displays, like New Year's Eve, she noted.

For a seasonal dinnertime centerpiece, find a vase and throw in fruit from the crisper. Caron-Guay used two green apples and two red apples she had in her own fridge and threw in some cranberries that she bought.

Dressing up place settings can also be done inexpensively. Caron-Guay said search for bargain items to deck out your table. Placemats, for example, can be purchased for \$1 at a number of places. She finds she does well at the likes of Marshalls and Ocean State Job Lot, as well as TJ Maxx, the Christmas Tree Shop and Jo-ann Fabrics, especially with coupons and discounts.

An everyday white dinner plate can be placed on a colored charger plate - she chose a red one purchased for \$1.29. Within the dinner plate she placed a smaller red plate decorated with a white snowflake and used a sprig of green and ornamental cardinal to tie and adorn the cloth napkin. A pinecone served as a placecard



*A great gift for grandparents is this homemade ornament. Roll up a family photo then insert it into a glass ornament where it will unfurl for all to admire. (photos by Susan LaHoud)*

holder.

She quickly created a Hanukkah centerpiece using a silver tray (\$7.50 at Jo-ann Fabrics), and three white pillar candles of different heights. She added a white branch-like garland (\$1.69) and draped beads in silver and blue on the tray around the candles.

To the blue and white spread she added a white plate within a bright blue plate, replete with a white cloth napkin knotted with a simple silver ribbon, and attached a silver snowflake ornament - something that can be reused throughout the season in various ways and displays.

Of course, there is the other end of the spectrum from the classic and "back to nature" - "the bling," she said.

Trees of turquoise sequins in varying heights (\$1.99 - \$2.99) can grace a mantle, or become part of a table display.

(Hint: When decorating a mantle, place the items with the greatest height at either end or arrange various heights in triangle shape. And keep it simple, so that it doesn't look cluttered which is confusing to the eye.)

The turquoise trees are arranged with the similarly-colored birds with feathery tails on a sparkling white branch.

"Nothing has to be uniform," said Caron-Guay, "Just play with it," she said as she added small silver ball ornaments to the arrangement, which will act as a centerpiece for a place setting.

Elsewhere around the home, wrap up decorating with a ribbon. A pillow that's in an unused chair can be made to look like a present when ribbon is tied about it. The look can also be duplicated using artwork or windows.

Add finishing touches by using what you have, like glassware or apothecary jars (available for about \$15 at TJ Maxx or Marshalls), Caron-Guay said. Fill the jars with old-fashioned ribbon candy or ornaments.

"Blues, turquoise, hot pink and lime green are hot colors for Christmas this year," Caron-Guay said, though she added that black, white and grays also are in vogue.

"The trend you see for homes usually comes from fashion first," she said. It also reflects what's going on in the world.

"Because of the war and roller-coaster economy people need to feel grounded," Caron-Guay said. "And gray and black are grounding, safe colors."

Grounded and safe doesn't mean lackluster.

New Year's Eve celebrations can sparkle right down to the martini glass. Caron-Guay picked up three small, black-framed mirrors for \$10 to serve as coasters, placed a martini glass on each of them blue cast LED tea lights within the glasses. She then surrounded the lights in the glasses with clear "rocks" or "ice cubes."

To top off her own table, she ties a large silver ornament to the chandelier, she said.

Plain brown paper bags with simple patterns cut in them, grounded by sand at the bottom and containing LED tea lights, can simply and festively light a stairway, Caron-Guay said.

Always look to see what you already have to work with, she said. And then transform it with the seasons. "Change it up" each time, Caron-Guay said.

SUSAN LaHOUD can be reached at 508-236-0398 or at [slahoud@thesunchronicle.com](mailto:slahoud@thesunchronicle.com).