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Deck the Trees; From eclectic to refined, make your tree sparkle

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It's nearly that time of year: Time for rooting around the attic, shed or basement for those ornaments and seasonal decor items. If you're anything like me, the annual decorating spree is something that gets slightly reinvented every year. No doubt, some glass ornaments will have been shattered, despite your best wrapping efforts, and will need replacing. Or perhaps you've seen a new take on seasonal decor in a magazine and decide to try it in your home.

No matter what you're aiming for with your holiday theme, there is a plethora of choice out there to cater to your every whim and fancy. Whether you prefer subtle and sophisticated white and silver, or go for the more over-the-top quirky ornaments collected over years, there's something out there to expand or freshen up your collection.

OVER-THE-TOP ECLECTIC

With homes becoming so neutral and minimalist, this can be the one time of year when you allow yourself to vent all those crazy, eccentric and colourful design leanings. An eclectic tree is also one people will want to get up close to. I love examining the different ornaments and hearing the stories about where they came from (travels, family or new additions chosen selectively).

Eclectic trees are the antithesis of that store-co-ordinated pre-packaged look and it does take a certain amount of skill to keep your eclectic tree chic, rather than tacky. For one, I always stay away from coloured lights. I tend to prefer white ones regardless, but especially on an eclectic tree where the various ornaments will command attention.

Secondly, I keep the garland simple and classic: a nice wide silk ribbon is the perfect backdrop. Finally, avoid anything overtly tacky: Tinsel is most definitely in the tacky category. Every ornament should be painstakingly selected for its individual charm and meaningfulness.

It's not the same thing as haphazardly buying the first 50 ornaments you see and dumping them on the tree willy-nilly. Look for ornaments that will resonate with you and your family: Letters for their initials, favourite animals etc. My mother took some of our old spelling blocks and made them into ornaments, which is a charming way to preserve those memories.

SUBTLE & REFINED

The decorating style that you'll see most ubiquitously represented in magazines is a lot more co-ordinated and styled. Usually one or two accent colours are chosen and the rest of the tree is kept incredibly

neutral.

Ornaments are usually repeated at regular intervals and the lines of those ornaments are usually pretty clean. As a result, there isn't usually a lot of up-close interest on this tree but when you stand back and admire it, the overall effect is stylish and pristine.

Done badly, this kind of tree can appear commercial and lacking personality, but since some struggle with making an eclectic tree work, this is a stylish alternative. One way to add a smidgen of personality to this style, is to make one of your recurring ornaments yourself or with your kids. This way, there will still be a talking point on the tree, without it becoming completely crafty.

For me, seasonal decorating is something not to be taken too seriously. While I love the beauty of an antique mercury glass ornament, I also like plain old glass balls with glitter on them. However you choose to decorate this holiday season, have fun with it and hopefully you'll have memories of a wonderful holiday season.

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