

Create Your Own WINTER WONDERLAND

Story and photos by Chris Olsen



When it comes to holiday decorating, most of us get somewhat intimidated. You may ask yourself, where do I start? What colors will I choose? Where is the best place to get decorations? The list goes on and on and eventually it becomes as long as Santa's list. Just chill and relax! Everything will be okay! With a few pointers you will have the best looking outdoor display in your town!

Let's get started. First you need to determine what focal points of your house and yard should capture the most attention. This area is where you should concentrate your decorating time and money. You only need one to three focal points outdoors to really shine. For myself, I spend the majority of my time with the front porch and the front door. The front porch and door are usually the most important to your guests. So take advantage of this fact and start there.

Then you need to determine your look. Do you want a real traditional look or maybe something funkier and tastefully contemporary? I usually lean toward the latter choice. Life is too short for the same old, same old. Jazz it up! A few fun elements will create attention and will spread even more holiday cheer.

The next question you should be asking yourself is, what will be your color scheme? Each year be different and change your look by adding or deleting at least one color. My favorite colors are rather traditional, but it is how I use those reds, golds, greens and silvers that make all the difference. I never have the same look twice but I do use the same decorations over and over again through the years. I simply add a few new elements and voila, I have a fresh and original new Christmas display.

◀ **Everything is vertical. Make your front door and/or porch appear bigger and better by simply adding vertical elements such as the Christmas evergreens in urns, the three wreaths in a row and the painted stripe on the front door.**

On the front door most of us hang only one wreath, but challenge yourself and do three wreaths in a row. Better yet, paint a nice wide stripe down your front door – this will accentuate your vertical look. Instead of wreaths of greenery, maybe choose the option of wreaths created from just ornaments. The porch light will be reflected off these ornaments, therefore giving off a warm Christmas glow.

Don't stop there. Give new life to your tired front containers. Just place a wreath on the rim of each pot, place a spruce tree adorned in white and red lights in the center of the wreath, and add a few extra ornaments here and there. I prefer not to cover the Christmas trees with ornaments. I like to see greenery. As a matter of fact, I use very little holiday netting and ribbon as well.

For the finishing touch, hang lit stars or snowflakes from your porch ceiling. Grouped in odd numbers is best. You can even add some oversized ornaments to the mix. But remember to keep it simple, and don't overdo it!

Don't forget about your outdoor steps. Add depth and dimension by placing live evergreens in pots drenched in lights. Remember, not every pot has to be planted with a live plant either. Fill up additional containers with plastic ornaments. Thank goodness for plastic ornaments! They won't break in a windstorm, and they tolerate rain and snow. Go ahead and mix your colors of ornaments together. Also, decorate with a matte finish and shiny ornaments. This adds texture and guarantees you won't have too much "bling-bling." I like some bling but we do not want to look like Vegas. At least I hope not ... Use different sizes of ornaments as well. Mix in some small, some midsize and a few big ones for variation.

For added Christmas flavor go ahead and spray paint your containers a holiday color. Cheap terra-cotta pots, or better yet plastic pots, painted a red or apple green will be seen from the street. This is no time to be timid – speak loud with color!



Painted terra-cotta pots in a vibrant red scream (ever so gently) Merry Christmas. Not all pots have to be planted, just fill with an assortment of plastic ornaments for curb appeal.

When it comes to the great outdoors, I also like to decorate my landscape. Why not decorate a tree or two in the yard. All you have to do (it's easy, so no excuses) is make your own grapevine spheres, spray paint them any color you desire and cover them in lights. Hang from your trees, again in odd numbers, and neighbors will stop dead in their tracks. Even better yet, wrap lights around the trunk of your trees and add the grapevine spheres and I promise no one will have this look on your street but you. Well, at least for this Christmas season.

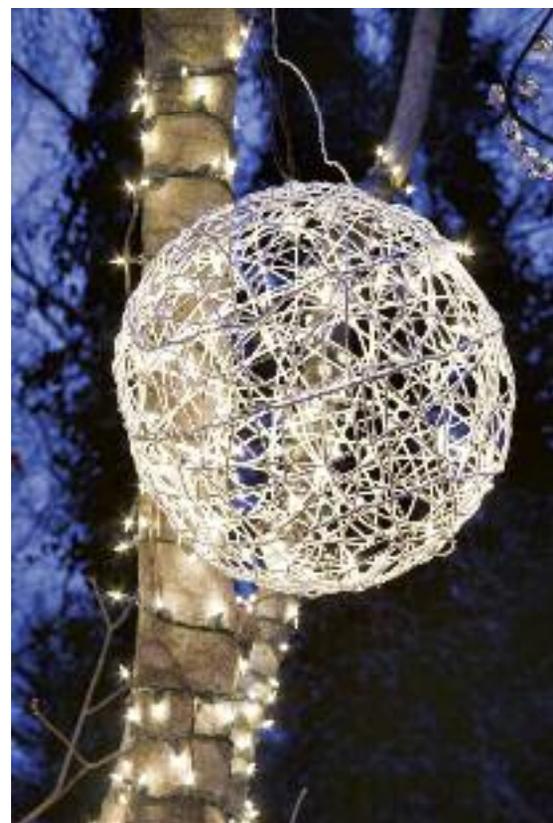
Be strong, be creative, get motivated and make this year the year you break away from repetition from years past. Give your home a new holiday look. Add life to an otherwise plain season in the garden. Your friends, neighbors and most importantly you, will love it. It's contagious, so watch out!

Happy Gardening and Holidays! 🌿

Chris Olsen is the owner and landscape designer of Botanica Gardens in Little Rock. You can get inspired with more holiday ideas. Check out Chris Olsen's new book, Five Seasons. It's loaded with great ideas to make your home and garden a showcase year round. Take a look at chrisholsen.com.



Rosemary topiaries drenched in lights add aroma and glow.



△ Homemade grapevine spheres covered in lights dangling from a mimosa tree mimic snowflakes falling from the sky. Turn the page for step-by-step instructions for making these.

Don't forget the occasional corner of your yard.

You can conjure magic with just a few strands of lights wound over some tree trunks, and then hang lit spheres from the branches. For little effort, you get a great effect.

You will need:

- Grapevine coil, available at florist supply stores. Be sure to purchase enough to create a well-defined sphere. We suggest three rolls.
- A large rubber ball, something larger than a soccer ball but wide enough to use as a focal point.
- Scissors and zip ties

Steps:

1. Soak grapevine in warm water for at least an hour. Moisture will increase its pliability.
2. Wrap vine around ball, covering area but leaving gaps. Secure with zip ties as you go.
3. Secure ends together with zip ties, once you have enough vine wrapped around.
4. Locate an area between intertwined vine and puncture the ball, then remove it.

