



## Organizing Articles, Newsletters and Tips

Free Information from Space4U

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### ORGANIZE DECORATION BEFORE DROWNING IN THEM

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*written by Wendy Thomas, Telegraph Correspondent*

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is a special edition of the monthly decluttering series.

The holidays are here with a bang. Halloween started it off, and we won't get to catch our breath until well after the linens and whites sales in January.

How are we to handle all the clutter that inherently comes with these days of celebration? Do you remember when Halloween was just a few cut-out ghosts and moons that we taped to our front doors? When did it become overly large blow-up cauldrons in which bats fly around thanks to the help of an attached air pump on our front lawns?

And when did Christmas ever start before Thanksgiving? But you know as well as I do, times have changed and before we begin to drown in all the decorations and activities, we must change as well.

I asked Sue West of Space4U Organizing Services in Amherst (765-9267 or [www.organizenh.com](http://www.organizenh.com)) and Suzanne McCarran of IOrganizeIt in Derry (432-0984 or <http://home.comcast.net/~iorganizeit/OrganizeIt.html>) to give me some of their best holiday decoration tips for organizing and storage.

#### Define the Purpose

Much like any other sort of organizing activity, it helps if you define the purpose before you begin to declutter and organize your decorations.

"Holidays are individual to each family," McCarran said. "Ask yourselves what you as a family want out of the holiday season. What specifically needs to happen to ensure that you get what you want? Is it about the decorations? Is it about the activities? Is it about the food? Is it about the traditions? Only you can answer those questions and be honest with your answers."

Once you have the holiday purpose in mind, you can start to take a look at your decorations to see if they really fit what you have defined or if they are simply clutter taking energy away from the true spirit of what you want to celebrate.

#### Decide on Decor Types

Some questions that West suggests you ask yourself – with regard to those sometimes incredibly large and overly abundant seasonal decorations – include:

- ⚡ How much time do you have to put out these decorations?
- ⚡ How much time do you have to put them away?
- ⚡ When was the last time you used each one?
- ⚡ Do you have space to store?
- ⚡ Did your children love it once but now they are older? Divide up: Do you all still love this decoration or just like it?
- ⚡ Does it still work?
- ⚡ How many hours do you have to set aside to get all those larger ornaments filled with air, set up, checked out, etc.? Is it worth the time decorating, or could you decorate with less but have more time to relax with your family?
- ⚡ Do you still enjoy putting up all the decorations?
- ⚡ And mostly, how much time and enjoyment is involved in “de-decorating.”
- ⚡ What is too much?  
Those beautiful homes, the ones we see in magazines, often have us competing to fill every space in our house with some sort of bright, colorful or blinking decoration. But just how many are too many? And are all those decorations worth all that work?
- ⚡ “How do you feel when you walk in the house and the kitchen counter is covered with papers, mail, school papers and more? You look at the pile and groan, right?” West said. “How do you feel when you walk into a clothing store, and the racks are so close together that you can’t move easily or can’t find what you want? For many people, more stuff makes us feel closed in. Stressed. We can’t really see each individual item, because too much stuff is stressful.”

McCarran absolutely agrees and recognizes that getting rid of extra decorations may be difficult for one who is not used to decluttering.

“There comes a time in everyone’s lives that they downsize, whether by choice or by necessity,” she said. “As with any decluttering, you have to be really ready to let go of things, but I think the holiday decluttering is one of the most difficult tasks for most. So many memories are attached with each object and one thinks that by throwing out or giving away the item, the memories too are being tossed.”

This doesn’t mean everything has to be trashed, she said.

“Just toss the extraneous things . . . the excess so to speak. Broken ornaments that can’t be repaired . . . old lights that only some or none work . . . boxes of unused tinsel and garland that were bought in the ’80s . . . wreaths that have seen better days,” she said. “Once that first step is taken, it somehow becomes easier.”

### Homemade Decorations

They’re lovely and charming. The painted macaroni frame Christmas decoration can bring tears to our eyes. But do we really need to hold onto it forever just because our child made it? And if you have more than one child, after a few years those homemade decorations seem to take over – and sometimes away from – everything else.

“Hang a few on your tree or whatever your main holiday decoration is,” West said. “And then give them their own place to hang whatever else they want to – their own kids’ corner or tree or something you make together, which you can show off.”

And if you just can't bear to part with any of the homemade ornaments, McCarran suggests, "They have these great holiday memory albums now. Have the kids pick out their favorite keepers, and either have them displayed in a designated area for each child . . . their bedroom or somewhere they can enjoy them. The rest can be tossed, but take pictures of them and put the pictures in one of those albums or a special photo box designated for Christmas."

#### Decoration Storage

Now that you've culled at least the broken and not-working decorations out of your collection and given away ones that hold no meaning to you, it's time to think about storing them for next year.

"Use bins with labels and list specifically what is in the bin, the amount you have, etc.," West said. "As you pack away items this year and notice you need more lights, immediately write this on your to-do list so you can get a deal and buy them now."

And get even more specific with those labels.

"Store based on groups or rooms or type," West said. "For example, 'Dining room decorations.' This is good if you have certain items that truly belong in specific rooms, and it is a fast way to decorate."

"Document your holiday season," McCarran said. "Make it a point to write down or take pictures along the way, and once the holidays are over, put the photos in a designated box or album. As you dismantle your decor, think ahead. Put things away with the thought of how great it will be to open up a neat and organized box next year!"

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