

Celebrating the seasons in your home

By Maria Fox

Seasons come and go, and everyone has their favorite. Whether you love summer to fall or winter to spring, the changing seasons renew and refresh our outlook on life. In fall, we like to get cozy and nest; spring makes us want to brighten up our spaces; summer is time for outdoor living and in winter we seek to be comfortable and warm.

In the world of seasonal decorating, September to December is prime time. During this three month period, Halloween, Harvest, Thanksgiving and of course, the mother of all holidays: Christmas, occur. In recent years, Halloween has become the second most popular holiday. And with that distinction, Halloween décor is readily available just about anywhere accessories are sold.

At work or at home, every season change is another decorating opportunity. Adding a few festive touches to your existing décor will enliven and enrich your spaces. Holiday décor includes many categories of merchandise. Along with the customary "sit abouts," manufacturers have expanded the idea of seasonal merchandise to include, amongst other things, pillows, towels, table linens, jewelry, socks, scarves, candles, soap, silk florals, lighting and dishes. Great for gifts as well as decorating, holiday décor comes in many shapes, styles and sizes.

Gretchen Hillman, a holiday buyer at Wight's Home and Garden in Lynnwood, shares these observations. View seasonal decorating as a process, otherwise it can become a daunting, as well as costly endeavor. Think of it as creating a collection of special mementos that you gather over time. Each one should be special to you and make you smile. Some may be made by kids or grandkids, others from your favorite store or something you picked up while on a trip. Memories enrich the heart-warming value of your holiday accessories. Like a fine wine they get better over time. Every year you can add to your collection and in time you'll have created a perennial parade of holiday treasures.

Seasoned holiday decorators shop early, carefully selecting those items that will enhance their collection. In today's retail market, shopping early can mean up to three months before any holiday. Seasonal décor has gone the way of fashion industry — a season ahead is the norm. Try finding a bathing suit in August amongst the many racks of cozy fall sweaters; only a few clearance bathing suits will linger. The same applies to holiday décor.

Today, most seasonal décor is nicely affordable. There are a few higher end designer lines like Bethany Lowe and Department 56, but overall you can find many nice items for under \$20. For the holiday collector, price is often a secondary consideration. Heart value trumps dollar value and time offers annual appreciation. In other words,

something you'll love forever but is a bit more expensive is worth the investment.

The best holiday decorators have learned this important industry tip: BIWYSI or Buy It When You See It. Good holiday décor is not back stocked like cans of corn at the grocery store. Specialty retailers usually buy only a few of any given item and manufacturers do not always repeat the same merchandise from year to year, so when it's gone, it's gone! Best advice: Shop for seasonal décor as if that day is your only shopping opportunity. Avoid being one of the daily parade of regretful customers that lament the hesitation which allowed a coveted item to end up in somebody else's shopping bag. Keeping this in mind will help you identify your favorite items and assure that your collection will make you smile.

Lastly, don't forget about the outdoors for your holiday decorating. Your pots can be changed seasonally as well. From spring bulbs to summer annuals, fall kale to winter pansies, live plants play an important role in enjoying each season. Door wreaths and baskets are traditional adornments, welcoming both our guests and the seasons with style.

Information courtesy of Wight's Home & Garden, 5026 196th St. S.W., Lynnwood. Contact them at (425) 775-3636 or visit www.wights.com.