



Decorated tree at Boonwood



Christine Rose



Rachael Polkinghorne



Vine and Roses Christmas wreath



Christmas décor tips from Kim Merrick, owner of Poppi Red in Hawkshead
 "Use a lovely big ivy leaf as a Christmas place setting for each guest, writing their name in black or gold marker. Another idea is to cut out a piece of chicken wire and attach it with ribbon to a wall in your home. Decorate it with holly and use pegs to display your Christmas cards."

BRIGHT & BEAUTIFUL

Top tips from across Cumbria for creating a welcoming festive ambience and a beautifully decorated home

As Christmas approaches and winter deepens your home is also a welcoming sanctuary. Snow may fall and winds may howl but inside are nostalgic scents, twinkling tealights and the enticing warmth of a fireplace and loved ones' laughter. Touching all the senses is the perfect, and deceptively easy, way to style your home this festive season.

Rachael Polkinghorne, owner of Keswick's Polkadot Interiors, said this year's trends have emphasised classic, natural interiors accessorised with bold acidic colours. This is a colour theme, she predicts, which will carry on into

Christmas. Simply matching your decorations to your home is also a key trend. "You don't have to do the traditional red and gold," Rachael says.

It has also been a big year for home-making and recycling, she says, with many choosing to make their own decorations.

"I'm going to have two smaller trees this year – one very natural in green and white with bunches of eucalyptus and cinammon sticks tied in white ribbon, and a more funky one to match my lime green cushions with simple stars and angels cut from tin cans on lime ribbon with slices of lemons." www.polkadot-interiors.co.uk

Victoria Farley, who with husband Mike

co-owns Lanercost, near Brampton – a gift and produce shop, restaurant and apartments – says it is all "about creating your own look", not following themes. She adds just one or two new decorations to her home each year and treasures the memories associated with favourite Christmas ornaments. In the shop, Victoria stocks scented candles including mandarin and ginger, fresh figs, nuts and spices – "the smell of Christmas morning". www.lanercost.co.uk

Jane Gilman Wallett, owner of Vine and Roses florists, Penrith, recommends keeping decorations "simple and natural".

She suggests picking rosehips (hang to

dry), hogsweed (sprayed white) and ivy to make your own festive arrangements. Pre-made wreaths can also be decorated with fresh, white roses.

"Decorations can be simple but very effective," she says. "Try bowls of red apples as a table centrepiece, handfuls of ivy, or a large rose in a short vase."

"You don't need great, big displays. Fill tiny jars and vases with mini white tulips and daffodils or even snowdrops."

"Use Christmas flowers such as amaryllis, which looks stunning in a tall vase. Hellebore looks great in a small vase." www.vineandroses.co.uk

Christine Rose, owner of Appleby's Christine Rose Designs, says: "I love having lots of candles lit in the winter time. On my coffee table I have an old platter which I fill with white or red candles. They make such a lovely feature."

For door wreaths, Christine uses chunky, twisted willow, in a circle or heart shape, which she paints white. "I then attach three or five wooden hearts or

'CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS CAN BE SIMPLE BUT VERY EFFECTIVE'

handmade felt hearts around it and tie East of India ribbon at the top in a big bow to hang it from – very simple, very stylish and unfussy," she says. www.christinerosedesigns.co.uk

Kay Mossop owns Boonwood Garden Centre at Gosforth (tel: 019467 25330). She loves Christmas so much she has four trees in her home – two real, one artificial and a twig tree covered in lights.

"Most people do prefer a real tree," she says. "With artificial trees they simply miss that lovely smell." Kay decorates her trees with ribbons, silk scarves and clear lights.

When bringing a tree home, she says, allow it to stand overnight before decorating "to relax" and always start at the top when hanging your baubles.

The secret to maintaining a real

Christmas tree is to "treat it like a cut flower". Trees can absorb a pint of water a day, so it's important to keep them in a container filled with water. "Cut the tree's stump off by two inches and then expose fresh bark," Kay says. "Look after your tree and it will keep most of its needles."

Wherever you live in Cumbria there is a wide range of shops offering a fabulous array of stylish items to decorate your home this Christmas. For further ideas head to: Armstrong Ward and Kendal Upholstery in Kendal; Forget me Not in Windermere; The Flower Shop in Ambleside; Satu Interiors and Whitmore & Thwaytes in Penrith; Holberrie in Appleby; Hazel Dene in Culgaith; Lily & Co and Country Pine & Oak in Cockermouth; Southey Interiors in Keswick; Dorothy Wightman in Kirkby Lonsdale; and Vickerstown Interiors in Barrow.