

HOUSE & GARDEN[®]

December
2023

Christmas cool



TRADITIONAL DANISH
RECIPES FOR THE
FESTIVE TABLE

CHARACTERFUL
HOUSES AND GARDENS
IN ENGLAND + FRANCE

PRESENTS THAT ARE
THOUGHTFUL, USEFUL
AND BEAUTIFUL

Q&A: Your problems solved

Expert members of The List Directory explain to TICKY HEDLEY-DENT how to deal with a variety of domestic dilemmas, from top decorating tips to garden guidance



What are your tips for decorating a north facing bedroom?

'Maximise the available light. Source fine sheers – Gastón y Daniela do lightweight voiles or de Le Cuona's 'Orchestra' is a delicate linen sheer with vintage metallic thread. Soft yellows and pinks – such as Edward Bulmer Natural Paint's 'Creami Colour' and its 'Cuisse de Nympe Emue' – work well for north-facing rooms. For a great subdued pink, 'Chai Firoji' by Francesca's Paints is ideal. Consider lighting carefully: it needs to work for dark winter mornings and evenings year round. Combine John Cullen's downlights, Soane's reading lights and a stylish central pendant for added interest.'

Katie Glaister, K&H Design

How can you work inherited antiques into a room scheme?

'I often find that inherited pieces of furniture can look incongruous – they might be a bit worn out and not quite fit in, but you should try to remember that even if they do not speak to you immediately, they will in time. I always recommend people to live with them for a while. I inherited a large mahogany dining table in a very used condition and I made it work in my tiny North Wales cottage by mixing it up with a set of mid-century pagwood chairs. Knowing that my family has dined at this table for many decades, has endeared it to me and I would not get rid of it for the world.'

Drew Pritchard, Drew Pritchard Antiques

What is an interesting way of using an empty space under the stairs?

'The area beneath the stairs holds many possibilities just waiting to be maximised. Incorporating a cupboard with pull-out shelving will help to make the most of available space. Consider adding panelling to conceal the cupboard and add architectural detail, as this area will be visible. Alternatively, leave it free from built-in joinery for an open and spacious appearance. To create an eye-catching focal point, place a console with a piece of art or a decorative object under the slope of the stairs. This will add to the overall charm of the space.'

Thomas Cox, H&M Interiors

Which plants would you recommend for the changing climate?

'Plant a tree. As temperatures soar, shade becomes more important. By 2050, it is predicted that the south coast of the UK will have a similar temperature to the South of France today. Sitting under the canopy of a tree or a climber-clad pergola will offer welcome respite. The species selection needs to take into consideration the increased temperature. The best trees to help with climate change are larger varieties such as oak and beech. Both are under threat and a good alternative species for our native beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) is *Fagus orientalis*. Nothing quite beats an English oak (*Quercus robur*) but good options for the future of our tree canopy are *Quercus coccinea*, *Quercus palustris* and *Quercus rubra*. The Judas tree (*Cercis siliquastrum*) is a smaller tree with a huge impact.'

Helen Elks-Smith, Elks-Smith Landscape & Garden Design

What should you do with a narrow kitchen?

'Designing a kitchen in a narrow space usually involves placing units along two parallel sides to create a streamlined, efficient work area. This will enable ease of movement and maximise functionality. Light-coloured cabinets and countertops will make the space feel bright and airy. For clutter-free surfaces, you must prioritise organisation: pull-out drawers offer versatile storage and quick access. Wall mirrors and glass tiles on a splashback create an illusion of depth by reflecting the light, ultimately making the kitchen appear more spacious.'

Freya Godwin-Brown, SHH Design

How should you plant up a shady area on a north-facing façade?

'The choice of plants must reflect the limited natural light if the space is truly north-facing. There are few flowering plants that will tolerate these conditions, so we recommend creating a tapestry of greens (dotted with luminous greens if possible as this really helps to lift the design), with differing textures and offering good groundcover, such as *Tiarella* 'Spring Symphony' or *Pachysandra terminalis*. A mix of ferns, grasses and hostas works particularly well in this aspect – the varying tones, shapes and leaf forms can create a wonderful green harmony that will result in a surprisingly attractive and rewarding conclusion.'

Marcus Barnett, Marcus Barnett Studio

What works best in a low-ceilinged sitting room in a cottage?

'Embrace the proportions of the room and cultivate a cosy, intimate atmosphere. We always choose to

celebrate any original architectural features. For low-level ceilings, we like to incorporate timber cladding or to extend the wall paint upward onto the ceiling itself. Enhancing the height of the ceiling provides an excellent opportunity to create a welcoming and snug environment that will complement the authentic character of the period property.'

Louise Wicksteed, Sims Hilditch

What are your tips for making the most of a windowless bathroom?

'Often occupying an internal space in the house, the smallest bathrooms usually lack natural light so good lighting design is vital. Recessed LED ceiling strips are effective, as they cast light across the extent of a back wall without taking up the precious room that a wall-mounted light might. Large mirrors are also brilliant at creating the illusion of additional space by drawing your eye further into the room. We like to play with tiling using an array of sizes for either wall or floor to add textural interest to the scheme.'

Olivia Crawford, Crawford Design

What advice would you give for creating a garden on a balcony?

'These spaces usually have a close relationship with the interior of a building, so it is important to think about the view you want to create when looking out, especially across the seasons. Placing pots at various heights adds structure and they can be planted up with spring, summer and autumn flowering bulbs for year-round colour and appeal when looking out the window. The sight of *Chionodoxa forbesii* 'Pink Giant' and *Narcissus* 'Sailboat' in the early spring will be uplifting after the dark days of winter. Do not be limited by growing in pots either: try planting up railing boxes, use stands or train climbers up the wall. By layering different plants like this you will create a variety of views and a more immersive atmosphere in the space.'

Hugo Bugg, Harris Bugg Studio



ILLUSTRATIONS: CHIARA BRAZZALE

TEXTILE TREASURES

Featuring textiles collected by its founder Bernie, **de Le Cuona**'s limited-edition 'Collectables' accessories include these cushions (from left): 'Cardinal' silk velvet with bees, and 'Watercolour' paisley, £320 each; and 'Treasure' mesh-style silver linen, £165. delecuona.com



PARADISE PRETTY

With a picturesque jacquard motif woven on a textured bouclé ground, 'Paradise' by **Evitavonni** is a multi-textured heavyweight fabric suitable for use as curtains, blinds and cushions. Available in three versatile colourways (including moon, shown here), the cotton/polyester has a width of 140cm and costs £201 a metre. 0800 130 3180; evitavonni.com



Chair leader

Kingcome's inviting 'Clancey' chair, shown here in Colefax and Fowler's 'Clancey' viscose mix fabric in green, is ideal for reading by the fire. It has bobbin-style detailing on the arms and legs, and costs from £2,800, excluding fabric. kingcomesofas.com



A FINE FRAGRANCE

Available from **The French Bedroom Company**, Portus Cale's 'White Crane' scented candle features a light, earthy blend of citrus yuzu, vetiver and mandarin in a handmade ceramic jar, £45. 01444 415430; frenchbedroomcompany.com



SIP SERVICE

Hand-painted in two different abstract designs in a choice of two colourways, these 'Zellige' porcelain mugs from **Oka** come in orange/grey (pictured) and purple/green. Dishwasher safe, the distinctive mugs cost £60 for a set of four. oka.com □

