

Christmaximalism: Why This Is the Year to Go All Out With Holiday Decor

This year, we're decking the halls like never before.

BY [HADLEY KELLER](#) NOV 24, 2020



The weekend before Thanksgiving, designer [Eneia White](#) took to Instagram to unveil a video of her swathing her Queens apartment in over-the-top [Christmas decor](#). "Since I'm not going home for Thanksgiving, I used the final leg of my vacation last week to create a holiday explosion in my apartment," she explained in the caption. While she may *physically* be solo this season, White is hardly alone in her newfound attitude towards holiday decorating. In a year that has been tumultuous at best, often difficult and depressing—and at a time when we're spending more time than ever at home—there might be no better reason to pull out all the stops for end-of-year merriment. Early decorating timelines, larger-than-life ornament displays, [whole-house decorations](#): We're dubbing this reinvigorated passion for holiday decor **Christmaximalism**—and many of our favorite creatives are in on the trend.

"Let's face it—it's been a rough year for everyone," says Indiana-based designer Amanda Lantz. "There is a certain joy that comes along with putting up Christmas decorations. It signifies happy times, togetherness, family, friends, love, kindness, celebration. And we all need more of that in 2020."

That's why Lantz decided to expedite the holiday decor at her shop, [Lantz Collective](#). "We decided that our customers—and us—could use a lift," she says.



Designer Josh Young, whose Washington, D.C. townhouse has gone viral on Instagram for its early Christmas decor, agrees: "It's been quite the year for everyone—some much harder than for others," he tells *House Beautiful*. "But given the current circumstances, I still believe it's important to try and find the silver lining and celebrate this special, meaningful time of year. I've always found decorating my home for the holidays is a magical and welcomed distraction from our day-to-day lives."

As White puts it, "I live alone, so creating a festive and comfortable environment will help keep my FOMO at bay." Though she usually recycles decor from year to year, "I actually invested in new ornaments and decor this year," says the designer.

"2020 hasn't given us many reasons to celebrate, which means that making the most of the holiday season is more important than ever this year," says Houston designer Marie Flanigan. "I've already seen homes in my neighborhood with Christmas lights, and I'm not one bit mad about it!"



Philip Thomas's Christmas decor is a blend of natural, glam, and heirlooms that extends to every room of his house (hallways included).

AYDIN ARJOMAND

New York-based Libby Langdon wholeheartedly agrees: "Some people think decorating is mostly for little kids, but we see it as a way to bring out the kid in our adult selves," says the designer, who typically spends a full ten days outfitting her home for the holiday right after Thanksgiving.

And while all-out decor may be a regular tradition for Langdon, it seems the complexities of this year are turning even the tree-averse into embracers of holiday home decor—often in the absence of other traditions that will be suspended in 2020. "As we approach the most wonderful time of the year I am sad knowing so many traditions won't happen," says Chicago designer Jenny Brown. "Yet the one thing that cannot be cancelled is how we celebrate at home."



 **jyoungdesignhouse**
Washington D.C.

[View Profile](#)

[View More on Instagram](#)



7,397 likes

jyoungdesignhouse

The holidays are almost here! I can't wait to take you inside...❤️

.
. .
. . .
. . . .

#holidays #joshyoungdesignhouse #christmas #christmasdecor #home #townhome #townhouse #brownstone #holidaydecor #christmasgreenery #williamssonoma #exteriordesign #architecture #artisthome #design #designer #interiors #interiordesign #festive #designlovers #decor #dc #washingtondc #capitolhill

[view all 222 comments](#)

Indeed, it's no secret that one *good* thing to come out of a year spent largely at home is a renewed interest in our personal spaces. 2020 has spurred unprecedented spikes in sales of home furnishings, searches for decorating advice, and other indications of newfound interest in perfecting our nests—so it should come as little surprise that this enthusiasm will extend into the holidays. Like decorating the rest of this year, decorating for the holidays is a way to make the home a happier place to be. So why *not* go as big as possible?

"We've found more meaning this year in decking our home for the holiday, since our home has been such a source of comfort for us this year," says Victoria Ford of the blog Prepford Wife. "Decorating even early has provided us with a sense of normalcy and routine and brought a little joy during a time when we are definitely needing it the most. **And it doesn't hurt that thanks to the number of hours that we are spending at home by not traveling, we actually get to see our decorations this year.**"

Going all out doesn't just mean visually, either: "Don't forget the importance of fragrance to set the holiday mood," says Atlanta designer Beth Webb. "Think freshly cut evergreen branches and burning wood."

"The holidays should be a delight to all of the senses," agrees Brown. "Our house will have carols playing, lights twinkling and maybe even cranberry bread baking in the oven."

While we love a good pun, it should be noted that the spirit of "Christmaximalism" isn't restricted to one religion or holiday, per se: "**This year is all about filling our homes with festive decor and our hearts with fond memories and comfort,**" says designer Susan Jamieson, founder of Richmond-based Bridget Beari Designs.

"Bringing out beloved and passed down decorations reminds us to appreciate the small things in life and evokes fond memories."

For Brooklyn designer Natalie Kraiem, that means ensuring decorations for her Hanukkah table are especially personal: "I always fill the table with traditional dishes such as latkes, mini donuts and desserts to commemorate the miracle of Hanukkah," she explains. And while her palette is usually a traditional mix of blues, whites, and metallics, Kraiem says, "I always like to place something special on each plate, such as a personalized small gift and note."

Besides the celebratory element, decorating for the holidays allows us to tap into the DIY muscle many have been flexing more than ever this year. "People are craving ways to make their house feel more like a home, without calling a contractor or placing orders for things that will be backordered until the end of time," explains Lantz.

In her shop, Lantz filled baskets with ornaments and arranged foraged branches on mantels, while at her home, Brown strung the kind of popcorn garlands she made as a child and created centerpieces with oranges and cloves. In Washington, D.C., designer Josh Hildreth mixed wreaths, garlands, and tartan bows on his cherry red front door, and in Sag Harbor, New York, Langdon admits "I will still set the table for every lunch and dinner even when it's just me and Keith!" (We've been on the set-every-meal-like-a-special-occasion wagon for months now).



The door of Josh Hildreth's 1891 farmhouse (which he renovated with Hugh Newell Jacobsen) looks picture-perfect for Christmas.

GORDON BEALL

For homebound kids growing sick of virtual school, this can also be a reason to get excited for the holidays sooner. "I like to decorate the table with my children as a fun bonding activity," explains Kraiem of her Hanukkah tradition.

As for Flanigan, the impetus in 2020 to take stock of family and tradition has inspired her to go more traditional with decor: "I plan to stick to nostalgic holiday decor including traditional red and green accents, tartan plaids, sparkling whites, and a flocked tree," she says.

The concept of holiday decor as a way of honoring family gets renewed meaning in a year when many won't get to be together in person, making those memories all the more special. That's long been the driving source of inspiration for Matthew Bees, who is known for turning his Charleston home into a veritable winter wonderland. "Holiday decorating is in my blood," says Bees (whose home is pictured at the top of this story). "Both my grandmothers were obsessed with holiday decor and as a child, the holiday season was my first chance to express my creativity in design. Getting to recreate all those wonderful memories is a favorite part of the season."

The idea of tradition-meets-new ideas is a common thread for those wanting to go bigger and bolder than ever this year. "I'm a traditionalist for exterior decorations (classic wreaths on every window please!), but would LOVE to throw in something fun and spunky this year," says Atlanta-based Lauren Lowe of Lauren Elaine Interiors. Her ideas? "Something like a light-up sign that says 'Everything's Going to Be Okay' or 'It's Almost 2021' (check out this Etsy shop!)."

As we maximalists gleefully entangle ourselves in yards of string lights and evergreen garlands, it's important to note, though, that the root of all this decorating—indeed the root of *all* decorating—should be JOY. That is to say, if twinkle lights and jingle bells bring more stress than happiness, there's no shame in skipping: **"It doesn't matter how you deck your halls if it becomes a source of stress for you and your family,"** says Brown.

"Let's all do what makes us happy this holiday season and take advantage of the slowed down pace. You can be sure there will be plenty of freezing sleigh rides and suppressed Santa lines waiting for us in 2021."

The root of Christmaximalism, after all, is the best of the holiday spirit. "To me, Christmas—and the decorations that go with it—represents a time of hope, of love, and what magic can be," says Langdon. "We need that in our lives now more than ever before!"

And ultimately, as Christmas decor enthusiast Garrow Kedigan posits, there's something about celebrating year-end festivities that is inherently optimistic, putting us in a better place to start the next year afresh. "This year especially, I think we all need to embrace the holiday season with positive vibes and hope for 2021."