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13 ghoulish tips to make your home Halloween ready

BY SUE STRACHAN | STAFF WRITER OCT 4, 2019 - 12:30 PM

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The New Orleans Haunted Nightmare house, which opened on Friday, September 13 this year, in Jefferson, La., Saturday, Sept. 28, 2019. The 25,000 square-foot haunted house features a terrifying 30-minute walk through a twisting and turning hotel, as well as escape rooms, a pitch-black "Sensory Overload" maze as well as refreshments at Bar 13.

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After nine years in the haunt industry, Ashley Hill knows a thing or two about how to create a haunted house and the effects that make it scary.

Hill is the operations manager of New Orleans Nightmare Haunted House, now in its second iteration in the location that for years was known as House of Shock. Nightmare is part of Thirteenth Floor Entertainment Group, the world's largest Halloween-themed entertainment company.

The haunted house in New Orleans covers 25,000 square feet with “Darkest Dreams,” “Clown” and “Rise of the Dead” as the latest additions to the layers and tableaux inside.

Hill, who is studying digital design at Tulane University and hopes one day to study architecture, designed the nunnery and the dungeon for the haunted house.

With Halloween approaching, Hill shared some ideas about creating scary decor:

1. Don't overcomplicate things. Hill has found that people want to do a lot with their haunted home decor, but the simpler the better. For example, using fog gives a large outside space the appearance of being more full.

2. Take a look at Haunter's Hangout. Haunter's Hangout is a Facebook group with over 40,000 members. It includes owners, actors and enthusiasts from both pro haunts and home haunts. It is a great place to find ideas that you can apply to your home decor.

3. Collect old fence boards. Adding old fence boards is a great way to turn a normal front yard into a haunted landscape. New Orleans Nightmare has fence boards in its cemetery scenes.

4. Shop thrift stores. As Hill walked through the haunted house, she pointed out the items she had purchased at local thrift stores, with two favorites being a pair of faded purple velvet chairs from the Occasional Wife. Her other favorite haunts are the Green Project and Pelican Furniture and Thrift.



Thrift store chairs, purchased locally, fill out a sitting room at the New Orleans Haunted Nightmare house, which opened on Friday, September 13 this year, in Jefferson, La., Saturday, Sept. 28, 2019. The 25,000 square-foot haunted house features a terrifying 30-minute walk through a twisting and turning hotel, as well as escape rooms, a pitch-black "Sensory Overload" maze as well as refreshments at Bar 13.

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5. Make your own spider webs. For professional and long-lasting spider webs, use a Webcaster gun. (Available at The Home Depot and Amazon for about \$30-\$40). It looks just like a hot-glue gun, in which you feed a stick of glue. However, to generate the webs, an air compressor is attached – the gun will give instructions on what size.

6. Clear fishing line: Use clear fishing line to give your spider webs a frame. Hill recommends you create the shape you want with the fishing line before you spray the Webcaster gun on it.



Fake cobwebs on a light fixture are given structure with clear fishing line at the New Orleans Haunted Nightmare house, which opened on Friday, September 13 this year, in Jefferson, La., Saturday, Sept. 28, 2019. The 25,000 square-foot haunted house features a terrifying 30-minute walk through a twisting and turning hotel, as well as escape rooms, a pitch-black "Sensory Overload" maze as well as refreshments at Bar 13.

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7. Lighting: Lighting makes a big difference for mood. Color-changing LED lights are the best buy. These lights are weatherproof, multifunctional and much easier than using multiple bulbs or fixtures.



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8. Pepper's Ghost Film: No, it's not a film about a ghost named Pepper — this special effect was popularized in the 1800s by John Pepper. The ghost is a reflection off of a sheet of plexiglass, creating a ghostly shape wherever you direct it. A good video to watch for how to do a basic set up is: [makezine.com/projects/diy-hacks-how-to-peppers-ghost-illusion](https://www.makezine.com/projects/diy-hacks-how-to-peppers-ghost-illusion).

9. Fog: Froggy's Fog fluid is what New Orleans Nightmare purchases because the products are nonstaining and nontoxic. Do your research on fog machines and fluid because not all products are created equal.



A final jump scare waits in the fog at the New Orleans Haunted Nightmare house, which opened on Friday, September 13 this year, in Jefferson, La., Saturday, Sept. 28, 2019. The 25,000 square-foot haunted house features a terrifying 30-minute walk through a twisting and turning hotel, as well as escape rooms, a pitch-black "Sensory Overload" maze as well as refreshments at Bar 13.

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10. Mini escape games: "Escape rooms have been around for awhile, but mini escape games have been gaining a lot of momentum in the industry over the past five years," Hill said. "There are a few vendors that sell the props and hardware to properly construct one of your own."



Christopher Stockstill, 12, William Stockstill, 10, and Josh Stockstill check out the Anubis escape room at the New Orleans Haunted Nightmare house, which opened on Friday, September 13 this year, in Jefferson, La., Saturday, Sept. 28, 2019. The 25,000 square-foot haunted house features a terrifying 30-minute walk through a twisting and turning hotel, as well as escape rooms, a pitch-black "Sensory Overload" maze as well as refreshments at Bar 13.

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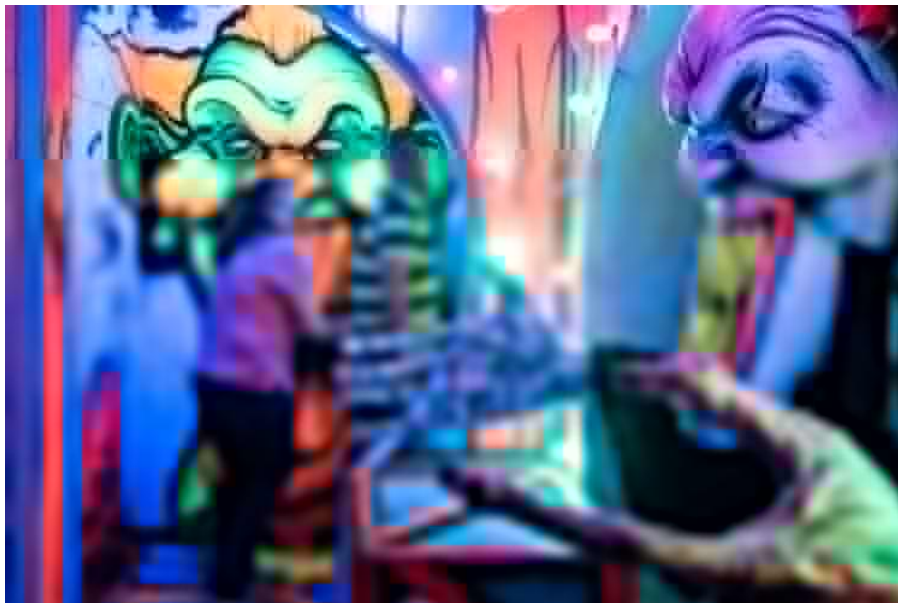
11. Spanish moss and moss: Do not bring Spanish moss inside. Repeat, don't bring it inside, because along with it will come insects and other pests. It's much safer to go to your local garden center and get Spanish moss that has been treated and sold in bags. Even better, faux (plastic) Spanish moss, as well as faux moss create less mess.



Spanish moss may be atmospheric, but don't bring it inside to decorate for Halloween because it may have insects and other pests in it.

12. Use ChromaDepth paint to create a 3-D look. The paint looks fluorescent, but when a visitor puts on the accompanying ChromaDepth glasses, everything pops into three-dimension. The clown section of New Orleans Nightmare is a great example of using this paint in a creative and scary way.

"Our 3-D clown maze was painted by a professional artist with ChromaDepth paint. It would be very hard to replicate our specific designs, but there are very informative tutorials about how to use ChromaDepth. This particular artist, who chooses to remain anonymous, has an acute understanding of how to layer colors to create the illusion of depth," Hill said.

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A giant pop-out clown scares horror fans wearing 3D glasses in a ChromaDepth painted room at the New Orleans Haunted Nightmare house, which opened on Friday, September 13 this year, in Jefferson, La., Saturday, Sept. 28, 2019. The 25,000 square-foot haunted house features a terrifying 30-minute walk through a twisting and turning hotel, as well as escape rooms, a pitch-black "Sensory Overload" maze as well as refreshments at Bar 13.

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13. Candles, candles, everywhere: Buy cheap battery-powered candles to place all over, or create a unified, linear scene by hollowing out a bunch of actual candles with a paddle bit, then inserting through the bottom a string of lights.



Aged dollar store candles, lit from underneath with hidden wiring at the New Orleans Haunted Nightmare house, which opened on Friday, September 13 this year, in Jefferson, La., Saturday, Sept. 28, 2019. The 25,000 square-foot haunted house features a terrifying 30-minute walk through a twisting and turning hotel, as well as escape rooms, a pitch-black "Sensory Overload" maze as well as refreshments at Bar 13.

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New Orleans Nightmare Haunted House

319 Butterworth Lane (by the Huey P. Long Bridge)

Jefferson

Open through Nov. 2. Check website for days and times.

neworleansnightmare.com

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