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# How to make your New Orleans home, yard or boat shine for the holidays

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Avoid wrapping your tree with lights or ribbon in a circular manner. You want to weave them in and out to create depth and dimension. (This look created by Margaret Ludwig of Giverny Design.)

provided by Margaret Ludwig/Giverny Design

While some people have their holiday decorations up the minute Thanksgiving ends, for others there may be a bit of procrastination. Even if you have already decorated – but want to add more or make things special – here are some tips from the pros.

## **Deck your halls**

Margaret Ludwig, of Giverny Design, knows how to deck the halls. Her work has been featured nationally on HGTV and in House Beautiful, Southern Home, and Flower magazines, as well as in Carats & Cake and Junebug Weddings websites.

### **What does Ludwig like to use when decorating her clients' homes for the holidays?**

- Timeless flowers in arrangements. Ludwig likes to use roses, amaryllis, ranunculus, peonies, ilex berries, viburnum berries, pepper berry or silver bells (eucalyptus pods) to add something unexpected.
- Tucking ornaments in clusters into arrangements, for example, mimicking the shape of a hydrangea. This looks better than a random ornament thrown in.
- For garlands, Ludwig uses a mix of evergreens. That way, she said, if the foliage

starts to fade as the season goes on, the other elements in the mix prop it up.

- Incorporate magnolia, boxwood or other greenery found in New Orleans into an arrangement.
- Ludwig is partial to a drape of cedar for garland because the movement and the scent is seasonal and soothing.

### **Some warnings from Ludwig:**

- Avoid placing garland directly under or over a heat source. It will speed the drying process of your indoor garland.
- Avoid wrapping lighting and ribbon in a circular manner for a tree — you want to weave both in and out to create depth and dimension.
- If you are using candles for a party near your garland (especially near the end of the season), enclose them in glass to avoid singeing or burning it.
- Ludwig tries to avoid glitter as much as possible because there is the possibility of finding glitter somewhere in your house months later.

### **Light up the lake**

For 26 years, there has been some sort of boat parade lighting up the south shore of Lake Pontchartrain. This year, the West End Christmas Boat Parade is at 5:30 p.m. Saturday. There is a competition – the two categories are static and motion/interactive lights – and previous winners, the Uptown Lady, owned by John Rockwell, and Southern Star (the owner prefers to remain anonymous), respectively, have some tips for boat owners who want to decorate that can translate to land-based decorations.

Asked why they do it, they both offer similar answers: “It is fun coming up with the new design elements each year,” said the Southern Star owner, who said watching children’s reactions to the decorations is rewarding as well. (He also conceded that winning is fun!)

Rockwell, a confirmed Christmas fanatic, said, “It’s fun; we like being in the parade and do it mostly for the kids.”

- Use waterproof LED lights. They take up less electricity and last longer. The Southern Star uses a mix of LED and incandescent that the owner says in most instances can not be connected together. Uptown Lady uses only LED lights. “When I

used regular lights, it would use over 30 amps,” says Rockwell. “Now with LED, I use only 3 amps.”

- Give yourself time to decorate: The Southern Star took four days in 2017, and the owner anticipates more time this year. Rockwell says it takes about five days for him, doing it after work.
- Rockwell also starts his design process early, then places orders in October for special pieces to save money.
- Southern Star owner removes his lights within a day or two after the parade. “They are not conducive to driving the boat at night and can impair your vision in a darker area,” adding that where they parade, it is not really an issue. Rockwell has his decorations on from Thanksgiving through New Year’s.

## **Oaks on the Avenue**

A favorite with holiday light connoisseurs, the three oak trees across the street from the Academy of the Sacred Heart on St. Charles Avenue will not be glowing this year.

According to owner Rick Farrell, he is giving the oak trees a rest, as he does every other year.

Farrell and his wife, Lisa, started the tradition of lighting the trees, as well as the property's bushes and fence in winter 2012.

“It takes three weeks, two lifts, two people in a lift,” to get the lights up, said Farrell. The equipment compresses the sod, stressing the trees.

He doesn't leave the lights up after the season, having them taken down around Jan. 6 because squirrels will chew through the wires. While the lights are up, they spray fox urine on them to keep away the squirrels.

Farrell estimates he uses 3,000 to 4,000 strands of lights with a total of 70,000 lights to make his yard look holiday perfect.

Alas, you are just going to have to wait until 2019 to see them.

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