

LIVING

ESSEX

NOVEMBER 2021 • HOMES & INTERIORS • PEOPLE & PLACES • FASHION & BEAUTY • FOOD & DRINK • COMPLIMENTARY

JIMMY DOHERTY

Farmer chats campers, Christmas and his new project with Prince Charles

HOME FOR XMAS

Make it a chic one with tips from our top interiors experts

YOU DESERVE BETTER

East Tilbury star Anne-Marie's journey of self-discovery

'TIS THE SEASON...

... to shop local with our Essex gift guide

Plus
HOMES & INTERIORS
STYLE & FASHION
FOOD & DRINK





ECO-FRIENDLY DÉCOR

From plants which brighten up the festive hearth to home-made decorations and faux furs, sustainability is the main theme for this year's Yuletide

WORDS BY **LINDSEY FURBY & EMMA PALMER**

Natural and sustainable have been key words for 2021, and in the interiors world it seems the trend for a greener Christmas is continuing. From re-usable crackers to DIY decorations, many of us have enjoyed getting crafty since the pandemic and making your own wreaths, garlands and table decorations continues to be a popular choice for dressing our home.

Here, some of our Essex-based interior experts provide their festive verdict on what is going to be popular, how you can dress your home in style and still be eco-friendly.

It's a grand affair in the run-up to the festive season for Lisa Blatch of Scape

Interiors in Leigh-on-Sea. Lisa said: "Every year we go big on Christmas at Scape Interiors. This is a throwback from when my father first introduced pop-up Christmas shops to the UK over 30 years ago. Before that Christmas décor options were limited and quite basic.

"Often decorations were homemade and kept for years and brought down from the loft year after year. With people over the last couple of years having more time in their lives we have seen a re-emergence of homemade decorations and the use of evergreen winter greenery used to add a festive look and feel to homes. This is something we encourage, so every year we showcase two emerging themes which can be dipped into with a

couple of new baubles or a key piece to add to and make your Christmas home look fresh every year. We plan our Christmas a year ahead when suppliers and designers are showcasing what will be on-trend for next Christmas. Lighting is key at Christmas and nothing makes a home look more festive than twinkling fairy lights, and not just on the tree.

"This year we have introduced some fabulous outdoor lights on rope to create a festive garden, too. Lights can be bunched up in a clear glass vase with some baubles to create a lovely centrepiece, intertwined around greenery, wrapped around bannisters to add light and sparkle to any area. Grasses are a big style trend this year and this Christmas there will be lots of LED-lit



‘Think vintage ornaments, burlap and velvet ribbon, candy canes, lots of candles and, of course, a real tree’



pampas and other grasses in variety of colours which look amazing simply displayed in a tall vase. The animal theme has continued this year with both a jungle vibe, wild animals and animal prints finding their way into Christmas décor as well as the woodland animal theme; squirrels, foxes, owls will be used to decorate trees, mantelpieces and Christmas tables.

“With so many people adding a dog to their family over lockdown, it’s perhaps not a big surprise that dogs too have found their way into Christmas 2021! There will be lots of dog decorations this year in many guises.”

You can see the Christmas range and be inspired at 79 Broadway, Leigh-on-Sea.

For interior designers it’s a special time of year and Claire Orders can’t help but love the festive nostalgia. Claire said: “For me, Christmas evokes a rustic and nostalgic décor. Think vintage ornaments, burlap and velvet ribbon, candy canes, lots of candles and, of course, a real tree.

“I love decorating the house each year with natural foliage like fir, ivy, pine cones and holly foraged from the garden and hedgerows. In light of the current pandemic situation, we are all welcoming the idea of family gatherings this season, with authenticity being →

one of the leading principles when it comes to decorating and consumer purchasing.

“So, this year in particular, I will be using natural materials and putting an emphasis on all those lovely earthy elements. Wrapping and decorating presents is one of my favourite things in the weeks leading up to the big day.

“I always like to use brown recyclable kraft paper instead of the glossy, shiny variety and accessorise with a Christmas stamp motif (try The English Stamp Company), finishing off with a pretty ribbon, a sprig of fir or maybe a little bell. Aesthetically pleasing, sustainable and eco-friendly too!”

Living in a Grade II listed cottage, Ellen Upton’s Rhubarb Cottage is the perfect backdrop for Christmas. Running her online homeware store, Rhubarb and Hare, Ellen says if your home is neutral in colour, it is very easy to re-style it at this time of year with throws and cushions in more festive colours to bring in some extra warmth and cosiness.

“In our cottage, as it is has strong colours, it’s all about floral displays and candlelight. I use scented candles to ensure that on a dark, dismal and usually wet day, there is lovely scent as soon as you walk into your home.

“The front door of our cottage opens directly into our sitting room, so I always like to have either a diffuser or a scented candle by the door so as soon as we walk in, we get a beautiful scent and can breathe a sigh of relief.

“On our mantelpiece and windowsills I use a mix of candles - dinner candles on the mantelpiece in seasonal colours. I currently have a pair in a gorgeous olive colour from the store which is perfect for the gentle slide into winter. Then I have tea lights in holders to make sure the gentle candlelight flickers across the room and also more scented candles - a different one in each room



‘I always hang some over the front door of the cottage, but it also looks lovely over a picture frame or up the stairs’



depending on the mood I want to create.

“I tend to have bold and zingy in my sitting room but something deeper and heavier in the snug where we usually sit in the evenings in front of the fire.

“For floral displays, I love gathering what is in the garden or hedgerows around our village and rather than big displays which you can have in summer, in winter I like finding interesting foliage or berries to put in bud vases around the house in key places.

“It’s amazing how cheering a little bud vase by the kitchen sink can be. Or a group of bud vases on a deep window ledge amidst the tea lights is just perfect at bringing the season into your home.

“It doesn’t have to be grand to be effective, even the simplest stem can look beautiful. And, of course, at Christmastime, it’s lovely to start bringing in mistletoe to the house. I always hang some over the front door of the cottage, but it also looks lovely over a picture frame or up the stairs. I like to bunch some stems up and tie them together with

a big green velvet bow and then put around the house. If you have guests staying, it's a lovely little thing to hang from a bedroom door handle or round the handle of a chest of drawers in the guest bedroom."

Shimmer and shine hues always bring the festive magic. "As the modern, paired-back interiors continue to grace British homes, we expect silver to take centre stage this festive season. Its muted and cooler tone will help bring the snowy outside in - without the freezing cold temperatures," says Jennifer Derry, interior design expert and EVP Merchandising at online Christmas store Balsam Hill. "We also expect to see gold - the colour of 2020 - to feed through into festive designs this year too, helping to add a warmth and depth as it contrasts against the leading silver tones."

Fenwick of Colchester has plenty of gold offerings this season, including this Seletti Love In Bloom Gold Porcelain Heart Vase, £88 and this Jonathan Adler Muse Dor Candle, £88.

One way to add instant warmth to the home is through perfectly placed blankets and throws. When it's time to know your fauxs, the Throw Company is the place to go. The family-run business, set up in 2005 is based in Clacton and creates stunning faux fur throws, fashions and rugs that have sold across the globe and even appeared on *Celebrity Big Brother*, Channel 4's *The Jump* and in the Sky drama, *Fortitude*.

The company searches the world for the highest quality, most realistic faux furs. All products are then designed and hand made at the Clacton studio and add instant glamour and snug vibe to any home.

Pat Ogilvie-Bull, founder of The Throw Company said: "From faux fur throws and cushions, pet blankets and accessories, to fashion items for men, women and children, we have the world's largest range of faux furs. The ones we use are hardly distinguishable from real fur, so we feel there is now absolutely no need to use animals for their



fur. They are bought by some of the world's most demanding and discerning lovers of fashion, interior design and fur, who are also animal lovers."

Wreaths and plants are a big part of seasonal décor and perhaps this year will play an even bigger part as the green and sustainability factor kicks in.

Gaye Drummond is based in Essex's beautiful Dedham Vale, where she grew up with her mother and her grandmother who both inspired her to work with flowers.

She has built up a thriving company Gaye Drummond Flowers and works across Essex and East Anglia. She often works with popular restaurants Milsoms and Le Talbooth in Dedham.

"Trends change a little every year," says Gaye. "And there is always something new to tempt me at the wholesalers. I like to work with natural ingredients as much as possible →"

‘The darker days mean plants get less light and central heating can substantially dry out plants and cause issues’

and tend to leave the gold and glitter very much in the background.”

Daniel Bruce who, along with his wife Emma recently opened plant specialist store Leafy in London Road, Leigh-on-Sea, believes plants can play a huge part in festive décor, although they may need a bit more care.

“Indoor plants can be difficult to manage during the autumn/winter months. The darker days mean plants get less light and central heating can substantially dry out plants and cause issues. However, there are many indoor plants which can thrive and even flower during the colder months,” he said. Daniel’s rundown on plants that are perfect for Christmas are:

Poinsettia

“The classic Christmas plant, poinsettias are bright red plants which flower between December and January. Poinsettias thrive with bright, indirect light and require a minimum temperature of 15 degrees, making it a perfect plant for colder months. Water infrequently, only when the surface of the compost has dried out and extend the flowering life by misting regularly.”

Christmas Cactus

“As with most cacti and succulents, the Christmas Cactus is a hardy plant which can adapt to lower light and radiator heat. What must be noted, however, is the cactus does require frequent watering, to ensure it doesn’t dry out. Keep the soil slightly moist but allow the plant to dry out in between watering.”



Aloe Vera

“Aloe Veras are hardy plants which don’t require much fuss or attention, and they can thrive all year round. They store water in their leaves so can go long periods of time between watering, making it perfect for winter months when the heating is on and drying out the air. However, aloe does require lots of light.”

Peace Lily

“A low maintenance yet stunning plant, the peace lily can thrive during the colder months. They don’t require too much light and as winter draws in, they only require infrequent watering. Peace lilies are tropical, so they work well in a centrally-heated home, but care must be taken to avoid them dehydrating.”

Snake plant

“The snake plant needs little light, watering and can deal with the dry air caused by the heating. Attractive yet hardy, snake plants are the perfect addition to any household, at any time of year.”



- Scapeinteriors.co.uk
- claireorders.co.uk
- rhubarbandhare.co.uk
- leafyplants.co.uk
- gayedrummondflowers
- fenwick.co.uk
- fauxfurthrows.com