

H&A PROJECTS

Festive flowers

Cutting-edge florist McQueens has turned classical to bring *H&A* readers a host of easy ideas for dressing every corner of your home this Christmas

PHOTOGRAPHS RACHEL WHITING STYLING JANE LINTON

With our homes awash this Christmas with jewel bright baubles and retro-inspired decorations, it was refreshing to attend a 'White Christmas' demonstration, held by the florist McQueens at the achingly chic hotel The Grove in Hertfordshire. How lovely it would be, we thought, to ask them to devise a selection of impressive but achievable ideas that you can make at home this Christmas. Eschewing its usual state-of-the-art vases, McQueens rummaged around antiques markets, charity shops and its vast vaults, selecting suitably vintage vessels to give a special *H&A* twist to the arrangements.

Sticking to white and plenty of foliage with

accents of silver, glitter and rustic wood, McQueens has delivered 10 great ideas to celebrate the season, starting with the Idea of Month on page 15. The message is to be inventive with your vases. Ceramic bowls, antique terracotta, copper and brass can all be brought into service. Also, if you're on a budget, be extravagant with the cheaper ingredients, such as pine, holly and ivy, and use fresh flowers more sparingly.

You can source florists' foam, wire and other materials online, via a florist wholesaler or your local flower shop might be able to help. If you're in London, the New Covent Garden Flower Market is a good source of both flowers and a selection of floristry equipment.

Luis da Silva, designer of our floral projects, is the course director at the McQueens Flower School, which is offering readers a 15 per cent discount on all flower arranging courses. Visit mcqueens.co.uk or call 020 7251 5501. Please quote Homes & Antiques when booking

Dining table ideas



◀ Seat decoration

Embellish a small hand-tied bouquet of roses and snowberries with vintage-style mercury glass baubles and tie to your dining chairs.

Place setting ▶

For an all-natural place setting, write your guest's name on a camellia leaf in white felt tip or Tipp-Ex pen; dip a hard green apple in wax and insert the leaf stem.



The centre piece

Stand tiered pressed-glass cake stands on top of one another for a show-stopping table display. Scour junk shops and charity shops – they can be bought for £6-£12. Line with florists' foam and stud with flowers, foliage, nuts and berries, and circle the base with small glasses filled with hand-tied bouquets of ivy and snowberries.



This page CAKE STANDS, find similar in junk shops. Cake stands are on 'Trailing Etched Mirrored' PLACE MAT, £10.50, Laura Ashley. 'Susa' WALLPAPER from Lalika collection, Harlequin, £38 per roll. 'Canterbury' DINING TABLE in burnt oak, £720, Oka. PLATES, £5.90 each, Zara Home. White French linen NAPKINS, £44 for eight; vintage Mappin and Webb KNIVES, £20 for six; and FORKS, £28 for six; pair of French panelled GLASSES, £58; art deco claret jug, Sheffield, 1913, £575, all The Swan Antiques Centre. Far left 'Camargue' CHAIR in weathered oak, £155, Oka. Left Pearl PLACE MAT, £8; COASTER, £8 for four, all Laura Ashley. CUTLERY, NAPKIN and WINE GLASS, as before

Fireplace ideas



◀ Mantelpiece

Display traditional cyclamen in decorative plant pots and alternate with candle holders. Achieve a modern feel by making the display clean, symmetrical and limiting the elements.

Urns ▶

Fill a set of stone urns with different flowers and foliage. For a contemporary look, use just one item in each urn and group together en masse.



Floral garland INSTRUCTIONS



1 What you will need
Plenty of foliage, small green apples, pine cones, seasonal flowers, cinnamon sticks, reel wire and rope.



2 Make a strong loop
Using thin florists' reel wire, wind round the rope supporting the garland to make a strong loop.



3 Start the garland
Using the florists wire again, attach small bunches of foliage securely onto the rope to create a full garland.



4 Build up texture
To keep costs down, build up texture using a lot of the cheaper (foliage-based) ingredients.



5 Add interest
Once the garland is at the desired length, begin to add the decorations, starting with the largest pieces first.



6 Add more decorations
Seasonal favourites such as walnuts, small green apples and cinnamon sticks all add interest.



7 Finish with flowers
Long-lasting flowers such as orchids add a finishing touch. Good quality silk flowers can also be used.



8 And finally...
Glittery butterflies turn the wreath into a piece that's really celebrational and festive.



Floral garland

Festoon your fireplace with fresh flowers to give it the wow factor, or use a garland up stairs or along window ledges.

Baskets

Line a vintage basket with plastic and pre-watered florists foam. Then add plenty of pine and festive foliage. Stud with seasonal flowers such as these luscious amaryllis.

'Oralia' WALLPAPER in chocolate/metallic from Arkona collection, £35 per roll, Harlequin. Mercury silvered TEALIGHTS, £16 for four, Cox & Cox. White Christmas tree CANDLE, £10, Laura Ashley. White ceramic 'Lenita' CANDLESTICK, £11.90; glass 'Shishou' CANDLESTICK, £9.90, both Zara Home. Mercury silvered CANDLESTICKS, £33 for three, Cox & Cox. 'Satu' CANDLESTICK, £14.90, Zara Home

Side table arrangement

Use a Moroccan-style silver bowl to plant hyacinths. Push white-painted sticks into the soil to give height to the display and dot with silver-sprayed pine cones.

'Biblio' library STEPS, £290, Oka. Mercury silvered TEALIGHTS, as before



Wreath »

Make an entrance with an extravagant wreath – and this one is surprisingly easy to make. In general, the key to a really successful wreath is to use a limited colour palette, whether it's bold, bright colours – as with the wreath on page 43 – or in whites, silvers and browns, as seen here. For a more budget-conscious wreath, use more foliage and fewer fresh flowers.



Wreath INSTRUCTIONS

1 What you will need

A ring of soaked florists' foam, florists' wire, scissors, foliage and flowers to match your front door.

2 To fill large spaces

Use small plants such as whole African violets and attach to the wreath with florists' wire.

3 Start adding pine

Foliage such as blue pine should form the bulk of the wreath. Start adding to the outside edge first in order to generate a good, solid shape.

4 Cover the wreath base

Cover the entire wreath base, using foliage with different textures and leaf size for added interest.

5 Layer with foliage

Start to add seasonal, long-lasting foliage such as skimmia or sedum.

6 Add the flowers

Embellish your wreath with your chosen selection of flowers at regular intervals around the circle.

7 Then the finishing touches

Add festive extras such as waxed apples, green apples and silver or gold sprayed pine cones.

8 And finally...

You can either attach the wreath to your door with wire or use a more flamboyant ribbon in a complementary tone. Water the wreath every couple of days. H&A