

HOW MOUNTAIN
DESIGNERS DECK THE HALLS

ANTLER WREATHS & BUFFALO CHECK

STORY ALICITA RODRÍGUEZ

At his pop-up shop named The Holiday Home, Jeremiah Young of Kibler & Kirch dressed up a green velvet chair with cozy buffalo check pillows and blankets. "Nothing signifies Christmas like red and green," he says. >>



What could be better than spending the holidays in the mountains? Twinkling snow outside, a warm fire inside, the scent of pine and peppermint, kids running around with pink cheeks and lost mittens. During the season, the splendors of the mountains seem to multiply. Of course, there are a few tricks for celebrating in style.

Jeremiah Young, creative director of Kibler & Kirch in Billings, Montana, loves holiday decorating. He starts with pattern. "One of the things I feel strongly about is that the holidays give you a free pass to embrace your love of plaids," he says. "They just work." Young also uses plaid in his wrapping. "Presents are the ultimate décor. They build

such anticipation," he notes. He likes to mix plaid ribbons with solid papers to create a cohesive look.

But Young does not forget his mountain roots. Antler wreaths are one of his best-selling items: they can be made in any size and are durable. "In the West, winter lasts so long and you put so much effort into decorating. Using natural elements allows you to enjoy it for much, much longer," he advises. >>

LEFT: Designer Jeremiah Young stops for a moment to admire the holiday decorations, including a bounty of greens and giant gold pine cones. RIGHT: He enjoys wrapping gifts in solid-colored paper, then adding plaid ribbons, leather string and reusable decorations like jingle bells and sprigs of faux greenery.

PHOTOS: ARIANNA SKOOG



Courtney St. John decorated this Christmas tree in a red and silver color scheme. A plaid ribbon with a white background echoes the snow outside. She advises clients to repurpose holiday ornaments as table decoration or napkin holders. >>

One last tip from Young is to “swap the string on ornaments.” He likes to use a velvet ribbon: “It instantly turns a good ornament into a great one!”

Designer Courtney St. John of Courtney St. John Studio in Vail, Colorado, likes to take inspiration from winter: “From Fair Isle sweaters and snowflake patterns to velvet and wool, holiday design just comes organically.” She focuses on her beautiful surroundings. “I love the snow and animals during wintertime,” she says. “Take inspiration from outside.”

Like Young, St. John also indulges in wrapping. “I love

adornments on packages. It’s always so special to see the personal touch as far as placing ribbons, bows, and toppers on presents. It really makes things personal.”

St. John and her family celebrate Christmas by getting a natural tree the day after Thanksgiving. “We never know if it’s going to last after the New Year,” she admits, “especially because people in Colorado keep their trees up until the Stock Show ends in late January!” >>

LEFT: For holiday tables, St. John loves to layer wintry patterns. Her tip for those without holiday tableware: Use white plates and add plaid napkins or pine boughs. RIGHT: St. John in her element.

PHOTOS BRENT BINGHAM





Rush Jenkins of WRJ Design in Jackson, Wyoming, recipient of *Mountain Living's* 2023 Home of the Year award, also enjoys a real tree. "It's hard to get into the spirit of Christmas without the smell of pine," he says. Jenkins and his partner and co-owner, Klaus Baer, enjoy cutting down their own tree. "That's always an amazing experience, because we go with a group of friends," he says. "It's snowing, you're walking through the forest with kids and dogs in tow. Some people find the Charlie Brown tree; some people score the perfect tree."

Jenkins, however, understands the appeal of faux trees and recommends sprucing them up: "For the artificial

trees, add in real pine cones and real sprigs of pine. If you layer those in, it's hard to tell they're not real trees."

While Jenkins and his team at WRJ Design like to go all-out with holiday decorating, he focuses on joy. "First and foremost, your holiday decoration should be what you love—whatever will bring you joy throughout the season," he stresses. "What really matters is the emotional connection to the heart and to other people; it's about slowing down and taking the time to participate as a family." ○

LEFT: Designer Rush Jenkins believes holiday decorating "does not have to be about perfection." RIGHT: He focuses on family, including his partner, Klaus, and their two beloved Newfoundlands, Dutchie and Wolfie.

PHOTOS FROM LEFT: AUDREY HALL; COURTESY WRJ