

# Lamorinda

# OUR HOMES

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Handyman touch-up paint tips

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*Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian*

## Night lights



Cynthia's Fire Chief nephew's illuminated house.



Photo Cynthia Brian Cynthia's farmer brother lit up his ranch home.

### By Cynthia Brian

*"The best Christmas trees come very close to exceeding nature." ~Andy Rooney*

Everyone who knows me understands that I am a nature girl. I spend as much time outdoors as possible in all weather conditions. As I meander around my property, I am always investigating the trees, pondering the possibilities for Christmas décor. When December rolls around, there is nothing that gives me more joy than admiring the twinkling lights that illuminate landscapes, glow on houses, and glimmer on Christmas trees.

My family tradition has always been to decorate every inch of the inside and outside with holiday fervor. Growing up, my dad used to joke that for extra excitement, we could watch the electric meter spinning wildly. Our ranch house and surrounding gardens were adorned with thousands of lights, Nativity scenes, sleighs, Santa, elves, reindeer, snowmen, candles, and whatever else was over-the-top festive. Because we lived on a farm in the boondocks, as kids we believed we had to light the night so that Santa would be able to find our house in the deep darkness.

Because my children have flown the coop and have their own homes, I'm not as crazy as earlier in my life with my holiday embellishments, although my extended family still goes all out. My brother's

and nephew's houses could win awards for creativity and innovative illumination.

Trimming a Christmas tree is an active sport. Whether we cut a tree, buy a living tree, erect a fake tree, or bedeck a houseplant, festooning our holiday bushes is as varied as our personalities. It doesn't matter if a tree is perfect or off-kilter. What matters is the meaning of the moment and the joy it delivers during the season. Every year I adorn my aging fiddleleaf fig tree at the base of my stairwell with lights and ornaments as it has grown too large to move. In another room, the Christmas cheer is enhanced with a glistening, garlanded tree as well as freshly cut greenery with flowers from my yard. What makes all trees sparkle and shine are the twinkling lights, clear or colored.

Fresh greenery indoors creates the feeling of Christmas, especially with aromatic boughs of fir, pine, redwood, spruce and cedar. If you have any conifers in your yard, this is a great time to trim the limbs to use to decorate your porch and patio. Holly is a traditional plant to use in garlands, wreaths, and centerpieces, however, any berry-bearing bush adds color and whimsy to arrangements. All evergreens are welcome to create long-lived wreaths and centerpieces including clippings from boxwood, bay, magnolia, and pepper trees.

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