

# Happy Holidays

Last in a three-part holiday gift guide series

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## Seasonal lighting can offer warm atmosphere

By STACIE CARLSON  
Special to the Record-Eagle

Nothing warms up the holiday season more than the glow of holiday lights. From candles that add ambiance to a home to special floor lamps and tree lighting, area retailers offer several suggestions to add a little holiday sparkle to your home.

"Candles add so much. They're representative of knowledge, freedom, protest, celebration, memorial, love and so much more," said John Teichman of The Candle Factory in Traverse City. "Candles bring so much emotion into a home. They can act as a greeting, an offering of good wishes or a way to inspire good feelings. Plus, more and more, they also disperse scent into the home."

For the holiday season, many scents typically have hints of evergreen in them. Red, green and white remain popular color schemes.

"We see a lot of candles with pine or evergreen influences in combination with spicy or sweet scents," added Teichman. "For those using candles on the dinner table, it's important to make sure they're unscented. Scented candles compete and interact with the scents of the food."

Lighting sets the tone for everything from dinner to family conversations around the fire, so creating a mood that's appropriate is important.

"Dimmers are really popular," said Jim Valesano, manager at The Lighting Center in Traverse City. "People can actually plug their table lamps into the dimmer and adjust the light as they like. In addition, dimmers are really nice for older people who may have difficulty manipulating the small switches on lamps."

In addition to dimmers, there are several standard watt light bulbs that add to festivities.

"We offer a 25-watt light bulb that produces a look like light through stained glass," said Dennis Golec, team leader and assistant manager at Ace Hardware located in Traverse City. "Plus, we also have red and green bulbs with stenciling that give off an image when light shines through them."

To create a more festive feel in the home, accents can be added to an otherwise neutral decorating scheme.

"A lot of people bring out seasonal accents like red, green or white candles to add a little festivity to neutral background colors," said Teichman.

Valesano also suggests using

decorative fabric to cover chandelier chains. The fabric can be holiday-themed and directly velcroed around the chain.

In addition to newer trends, many people look to the past for lighting ideas.

"People are often looking for lighting that they grew up with," said Dave Wood, owner of Grey Wolf Antiques in Traverse City. "A lot of people buy oil lamps, old tin candle holders for holiday trees or decorative bulbs that screw into electric lights. Antiques give a cozier, warmer feeling that's distinctly different from newer lighting fixtures."

For those who struggle with indoor and outdoor strand lighting, there are many options.

"There's a lot on the market in the way of strand lighting and most can be used indoors or out," said Golec. "Plus, for those who put lights outside, we offer a remote outlet that lets people turn on the outdoor lights from inside. Basically, the outlet plugs into an outdoor electrical socket and people plug their lights into it. Then, they can use a remote control from indoors to turn the lights on. Timers can also be used and they're great year round. I use my remote outlet to control my pond in the summer."

According to Golec, rope lighting, globe lights and swag lights are popular this year. Rope lighting doesn't tangle and it offers low voltage light that's encased in a tube. Globe lights are larger than traditional electric strands and the bulbs are round. They can also come with different finishes. Last, swag lights are typically three rows of lights in a scallop shape. They often come in 10-inch sections.

"We're also seeing an interest in rice lights," added Golec. "They're mini lights that burn really bright. In addition, people remain interested in decorating their reindeer in their yards. We've got lights with brown wire so they match the deer made of grapevine better than lights with white or green wire."

Retailers are also making it easier to hang lights outdoors. Many offer net lights that are connected and can be draped directly over bushes and shrubs or wrapped around tree trunks — as an alternative to standing outside for hours in frigid temperatures wrapping lights around trees and bushes.

Fiber optic trees offer yet another way to bring light into a home during the holidays. They come in a variety of sizes,



Record-Eagle/Elizabeth Conley

The Candle Factory in Traverse City has a diverse selection of holiday candles and accessories. Above are red candles, available in both scented and unscented, with a red berry garland used as an accent. Right, gold leaf is incorporated in the candles for a decorative touch. Below are a variety of candle holders.



ranging from two to seven feet in height and oftentimes they replace traditional trees.

"A lot of people are really interested in fiber optic trees," said Golec. "They change colors and are really quite beautiful. Fiber optic trees show up best in a dark room or one with very muted lighting, and many of them come with mini lights already interwoven."

Stacie Carlson is a local freelance writer.



  
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