

## Leave hanging the tinsel to an expert this year

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What do you do when you can't face last year's Christmas decorations yet again? Call in the festive fixers and hand over your credit card. Kathryn Armstrong dreams on....

So by now you'll have foraged in the loft or garage to dust down the big brown box or biscuit tin or plastic toy trunk that is home to your Christmas decorations. It's an experience which means different things to different people.

There's the nostalgia fix of course. Looking at those baubles that were there as many Christmases ago as you can remember.

There are the home-made angels your children fashioned out of toilet rolls and dollies when they were at nursery school.

In between are the lovely, tasteful decorations that are added to every year, usually in my case in the January sales.

For most of us Christmas can be a time of hit and miss in the style department, after all, surely only the hardest hearted can bear to dump the loo roll angel?

Yet these days, swayed by books, TV shows and style experts coming at us from every direction, we've all got to add our home to the list of people to buy for. Or, you could call in the experts. Send out a happy Santa to overhaul those boring baubles and that predictable Christmas look you've grown tired of.

Get someone else to trawl the shops. Twist the garlands and heave a hundred weight of candles through the sopping throng. And foot a bill for £1,600. Clare Rutherford is that woman. And Darras "I met up with her and we talked through the kind of thing she wanted and was able to then go and get the materials without the restriction of a budget, which was very nice!"

Clare headed to W Rouleaux in Newcastle where she invested in hand-made crystal garlands to create a subtle but stylish look for the house, a relatively new property with some traditional interior details such as a stone fireplace which Clare has filled with different sized candles for a warming focal point.

“I started completely from scratch,” says Clare. “She wanted something which would have a wow factor but we’re not talking inflatable Santa’s here, it had to be stylish without being over the top. The final look is about attention to detail. We’ve done that with the crystals garlands on the tree and along the banister.

“Each garland’s flowers are wired so we’ve woven them in the wrought iron on the balustrades to create impact,” she says.

“The crystal berry garlands range from £30 to £100 and were used in a variety of colors, white, red and crystal, depending on where they were placed. They look particularly good around candles and create a very sumptuous feel.” says Clare.

She used shot silk to make huge bows to decorate stairway posts, as you see on the pictures here, which give a really opulent look to the room.

“It took about a day to put it all together and my client was very pleased.” says Clare.

There is a festive comfort zone too – the children’s family room will be home to the family’s traditional decorations, no doubt complete with loo roll angel.

Clare Rutherford runs Regalo Concierge Company in Newcastle, which can solve any social dilemma. Here’s Clare’s guide to easy-life Christmas.

Put the life size reindeer into storage and head to W Rouleaux in Newcastle’s Central Arcade (or [www.vvrouleaux.com](http://www.vvrouleaux.com)) for the most exquisite Christmas decorations. Find a vast selection of colored jewel or silver ivy leaf garlands and white crystal berry wreathes to transform the saddest living room into a sumptuous winter wonderland.

Children’s stocking filler have moved from tangerines and 10p pieces. Letterbox ([www.letterbox.co.uk](http://www.letterbox.co.uk) or call 0870 6007878), offers many presents which can be personalized like mugs and lunch boxes.

Tucked away on Bishops Yard in Corbridge is one of my favorite shopping experiences.

You’ll never leave RE ([www.re-foundobjects.com](http://www.re-foundobjects.com) or 01434 634567) with out having made at least one purchase. This converted garage offers, “the really unusual the recycled, the remarkable and restored.”

If you’ve always dreamed of escaping to a secret haven to spend Christmas, head for the Cotswold’s and take one of Bruern Stable Cottages

([www.bruern.co.uk](http://www.bruern.co.uk)) You can arrange to have the fridge/freezer stocked for when you arrive.

For the person who has everything, consider a hand written voucher. Write a voucher to your husband to use on one occasion, such as, “This voucher entitles you to play golf all day and return with four friends to a home cooked supper in front of your favorite game!”

Christmas is about giving and receiving after all!