

Nearly 300 different ornaments and sprays adorn the tree that the design team from Dream House Furniture and Design created for Frederick's City Hall.



# Oh, Christmas Tree!

## Local Designers Add Creativity, Charm and High Style to Evergreens



BY KATE McDERMOTT

PHOTOGRAPHY BY TURNER PHOTOGRAPHY STUDIO



**THOSE WHO HAVE WATCHED (OVER AND OVER AGAIN) THE HOLIDAY CLASSIC *A CHARLIE BROWN CHRISTMAS* KNOW IT'S NOT THE SIZE OR THE SHAPE OF THE CHRISTMAS TREE THAT MATTERS; it's the love behind the meaning of Christmas that really makes a tree shine. But a little design advice can't hurt.**

We asked three local designers to add their creative genius to Christmas trees located in iconic Frederick locations: the women from Dream House Furniture and Design tackled a tree at Frederick City Hall; Cindy Powell and her squadron of sewers at Needles & Pins stitched together a whimsical

tree for Hood College's Alumnae Hall; and independent designer Tyra Lynn Turner turned the lobby of the Francis Scott Key Hotel into a wild kingdom with her nontraditional take on the Tannenbaum.

Coming up with the theme was probably the easiest part of this assignment, however. The three

design teams had to install, decorate and uninstall their trees in one day! Our thanks to each of them for being game enough to take on the task, and our thanks as well to the management at City Hall, Hood College and the FSK Hotel for allowing us to showcase our trees in their locations.



Black and white are hardly colors associated with Christmas, but designer Tyra Lynn Turner (above, right) created a stunning nontraditional tree using a mix of elements in that color family by mixing zebra print flower stems with traditional glittery ornaments.

### ANIMAL MAGNETISM

For many, the excitement of putting up the Christmas tree is often short-lived. Any anticipated holiday joy can melt away quicker than snow on the Yule log when the lights are a tangled mess, the ornament hooks are missing and the dog eats the garland.

But don't tell Tyra Lynn Turner that. She loves putting up her Christmas trees. Yes, that's plural trees. She's got a tree in her living room, in her dining room and even in her bedroom. "People call me 'Miss Crazy Christmas,'" she laughs. Growing up, she remembers going to the big department stores and marveling at their fancy trees. Today,

the department stores could take a lesson from her.

Although her parents owned a nursery, Turner has no formal training in floral or tree decorating. But you'd never know that by looking at her trees, including the nontraditional 12-foot tree she decorated in the lobby of the Francis Scott Key Hotel. With an overall color scheme of black, white and silver, the tree was adorned with zebra print flowers, glittery feathers and a garland of black and white tulle. She likes to top her trees with her signature "fountain" look, a collection of twisted, curled and sparkly sprays that seem to spurt out from the top of the tree.

### TYRA TURNER'S TREE TIPS

- Pick a color scheme.
- Don't be afraid to mix traditional and nontraditional elements.
- Heavy ornaments are often best displayed on artificial trees, because their limbs can support the weight better than real tree limbs.
- Use inexpensive fabrics and trims for things like garland and tree skirts. "If you position it right, the fabric doesn't have to be hemmed to make a skirt and you don't have to feel bad if you get tree sap on it," she says.



Whimsy ruled the day when Cindy Powell (above), owner of Needles & Pins, and her team of stitchers brought nostalgia in the form of hand-crafted ornaments and garland to their tree at Hood's Alumnae Hall.

Turner is an avid coupon shopper and buys the supplies for all her themed trees at local craft stores. She has, at current count, enough supplies to do at least six different themed trees. And she's not done. "By the end of each Christmas season, I have a plan for next year," she says.

## HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

For those who want their Christmas trees to harken back to simpler times and traditions, a home-spun themed tree can be the way to go. Cindy Powell, owner of Needles & Pins, a quilting and stitchery shop in

Frederick's Everedy Square, says even though country-themed decorating is not as popular as it was 10 years ago,

**"BY THE END OF EACH CHRISTMAS SEASON, I HAVE A PLAN FOR NEXT YEAR."**

many people still want their Christmas trees to tell a story, and what better way than through hand-crafted ornaments. Her shop provides classes and ornament kits that enable families to create ornaments and garlands that will have special meaning for generations



## TREE TIPS FROM DESIGNER MELISSA BROCKWAY AND JOEY AND CASEY BORG OF GARDEN PASTIMES:

- As you are decorating your tree, take photos with your cell phone to help you locate dark spots and holes more easily.
- For optimal lighting, you should strive for about 100 lights per foot of tree.
- As the tree gets smaller as it goes up, so, too, should the size of the ornaments you use.
- Never try to store an artificial tree in the box it came in. "You'll never get it back the same way and you'll probably damage some of the branches in the process," says Joey Borg of Garden Pastimes. Instead, store the tree in parts, using plastic storage bins, old sheets or even garbage bags. "You want to make sure you keep out the dust, the mice and the stink bugs," Casey Borg adds.



Before she hung a single ornament, designer Melissa Brockway (above, right) carefully arranged nearly 60 feet of gingerbread and “yo-yo” garland to make sure the little guys could capture the hearts of all who saw the tree.

to come. Many of the ornament kits require no sewing skills at all, which means even those who are all thumbs can lend a hand.

Dedicated quilters and stitchers created the 100 ornaments that adorned the Needles & Pins tree in the lobby of Hood College’s Alumnae Hall. Most were hand-crafted from wool felt. There were ice skates, bells and stockings, and many included charming little adornments such as buttons and trims.

But upon closer examination, the star of this tree wasn’t the star at the top. It was the 60 feet of gingerbread and “yo-yo” garland. In between the gingerbread were colorful little circles of cotton fabric, what Powell

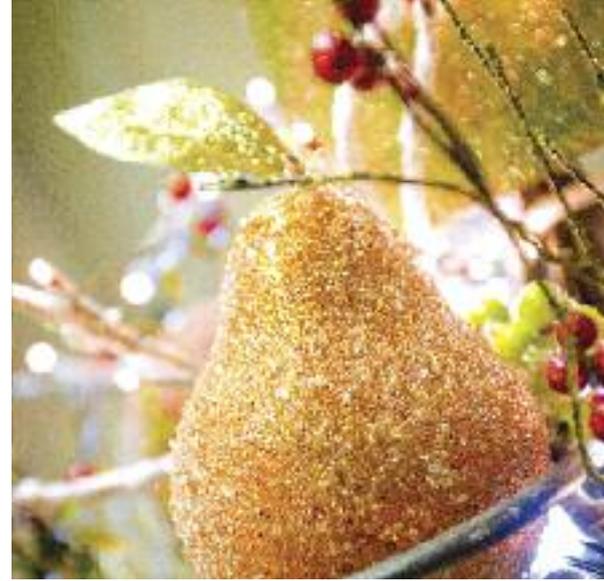
calls “yo-yos” but what look like swirled red, white and green mint candies. Designer Melissa Brockway carefully placed the garland on the tree first, making sure the gingerbread men had enough slack to “dance between the ornaments.”

### BRINGING THE OUTSIDE IN

As co-owner of Dream House Furniture and Design at 102 E. Patrick St., Wendy Flynn knows the importance of building a design theme around an inspiration. When decorating a room, that inspiration piece might be a work of art or perhaps a rug. But when it comes to themed Christmas trees, it might be something much less obvious.



“I saw this ribbon that looked like piano keys and I decided we needed to do a music-themed tree,” she says, complete with miniature trumpets and other music-inspired adornments.



Wendy Flynn and Cassandra Vaira (above) of Dream House Furniture and Design used both organic elements such as clove-studded oranges and glittery pieces like sugared pears and sparkly dragonflies in their fruit and garden-themed tree.

The tree is one of five themed trees that Dream House has on display in its shop this month.

**PEOPLE WANT THEIR CHRISTMAS TREES TO TELL A STORY, AND WHAT BETTER WAY THAN THROUGH HAND-CRAFTED ORNAMENTS.**

One of those is also the tree that Flynn and her team from Dream House decorated at Frederick's City Hall. With a fruit and garden

theme, it featured organic elements, such as clove-studded oranges, poinsettia blooms and fruit sprays, mixed amid a collection of glittery critters including dragonflies and butterflies. And although the elements were quite different, Flynn chose them carefully to create a color palette of greens, reds and oranges that complemented each other beautifully.

Flynn estimates she used a total of around 300 ornaments, sprays and blooms to fill the 7-foot tree. To create the unique tree topper, she inverted a votive holder, using its conical shape to create a defined and elegant "cap" for the tree. **FM**

**TREE TIPS FROM WENDY FLYNN**

- If you are doing a themed tree, use 10 to 12 pieces of the same element, whether that be ornaments, sprigs or fruit sprays. Hang a group of matching elements at the same time. If you have 10 green ornaments, hang those first. Then hang 10 red ornaments. Doing them in groups allows you to better even out their placement on the tree.
- Use over-sized or very large elements more sparingly for a pop of color.
- If you are using ribbon as garland, use one that is at least 3 to 4 inches wide for maximum impact.