

DesMoinesRegister.com

Tuck decorations safely away for next year

By LISA LAVIA RYAN • community@dmreg.com • December 28, 2010

Some of the best parts about the holiday season? The lights, the glitter, the fun décor.

The worst part? Taking it down and packing it away.

It's a challenge for most everyone, and professional organizers say the best way to tackle a burgeoning tangle of lights and baubles is to get your storage organized a little bit at a time. This year, add a storage system for holiday lights or the antique glass ornaments. Next year, find a better way to store your wrapping paper.

Eve Patterson of Urbandale, for example, created a unique way to organize and store her eight Christmas trees and all the lights and decorations that go with them. Patterson places each tree and all its components in a separate box so she doesn't have to hunt for the trimmings that hang on each tree.

"I'm partial to clear boxes so I can see what's inside, but as long as everything is all together, they don't absolutely have to be clear as long as they're big enough," Patterson said. New annual additions to her holiday collections are stored in the appropriate box at take-down time.

Diane Bonta started her collection of Nativities with just two that she loved. But, as often happens, her collection took on a life of its own.

"I collect nativities, and when I started, I had only one or two; well, not anymore," said Bonta, a holiday-storage expert at The Easy Living Store in Urbandale. "Many people can't resist new decorations or ornaments from year to year. But if you have a good system, even adding to your collections won't be a problem."

Others, such as Melissa Chipps of Monroe, keep each ornament's original box for storage.

"I have collectible snowmen all in the boxes they came in, and not only do they store better that way, but I don't have to worry about them getting bumped around or damaged," Chipps said. "When we've accidentally thrown (the boxes) out, I store ornaments wrapped in tissue paper and put them in shoe boxes."

Specialty containers sold by organizational stores and websites are worth buying, said Pam N. Woods, a certified professional organizer who owns Smart WorkLife Solutions in West Des Moines. But options also are plentiful for those who can't or don't want to spend extra money, she said.

"For example, a winged-lid ornament box - a big plastic box with dividers - holds up to 75 ornaments and is a great investment, but you can also recycle those partitioned liquor or wine boxes, and they work really well," Woods said.

Boxes made to hold rolls of wrapping paper also work well, but if you don't want to spend \$10 to \$15 to buy one, stand the rolls inside a tall wastebasket, she said.

"If you have some imagination and really stop to think things through, you can make some great improvements with just a little bit of ingenuity," Woods said.

Other ideas from Bonta and Woods:

- Take stock of how much you need to store - counting, measuring and even weighing decorations to help professionals determine how the items should be packed away,
- Beware of overpacking large boxes that can become too heavy to carry and difficult to fit on shelves.
- Use a large twist-tie to secure your artificial holiday wreath to a plastic clothes hanger. Cover the wreath with a big, heavy-duty department-store bag and hang it in a closet.
- Make use of vertical space whenever possible. Building or purchasing basement shelving is more efficient than storing everything in boxes on the floor.
- Invest in specially made hard-sided or quilted boxes to store holiday dishes and stemware. Having to replace a broken piece often costs several times more than the purchase price of a specially designed storage box.
- Store food-based ornaments, such as those that children might make at preschool or day care, in plastic sandwich bags, then slip them into plastic or metal containers to prevent bugs or mice from discovering them.
- Store strings of indoor or outdoor holiday lights by winding them around a coffee can. Make a small cut in the can's lid and tuck the end in the inside. Extra lights also can be stored inside the can.