

Fall is in the air — and should be in your home, too

Several years ago, I interviewed Martha Stewart, a career highlight that made me feel the way Neil Armstrong must have felt when he first stepped on the moon.

I had a lot of questions for the celebrity TV chef, master gardener, media maven, prolific author, brander of household products, doyenne of decorating and goddess of gracious living, including “How do you do all that and still maintain a flawless complexion?” (She credited her morning smoothie made with greens.)

Another question I had: “What is your favorite holiday?” I expected her to say Christmas or Easter. But she didn’t.

“My favorite holiday is always the one coming up,” she said.

With that, she reminded me that a large part of holiday joy is the anticipation, getting ready for it.

Treating every day just like the one before isn’t really living. It’s existing. Having a home that looks the same day after day seems to me complacent and even sad. Which brings me to another insight Stewart shared.

When I asked her what the secret was to living well, she said, “You can’t slough.”

She’s right. Living well, and that includes making a gracious home, takes work. But even a small effort has big payoffs. See, too often we get so busy focusing on the day, we miss the month; we get so caught up in the week, we miss the season.

Autumn is here. Halloween is coming. And we should all take a fall leaf from Martha Stewart’s playbook.

I turned to Nikki Jenkins, senior buyer for holiday merchandise for Kirkland’s, a Tennessee-based home-décor retailer with 400 stores in 37 states, for some tips.

“Many people think seasonal decorating is overwhelming,” Jenkins said. “It doesn’t have to be. Just pick up a few fall items that you can rotate into your décor this time every year. It really is that simple.”

Back to school and Labor Day trigger the start of fall, said Jenkins. “That’s when we see the fall wreaths come out. By end of September, Halloween décor is starting to show up.”

This weekend, to honor the season, I hung a fall wreath on my front door, tossed a chunky knit throw over the back of the sofa, placed a collection of décor pumpkins (in different colors, textures and sizes) on my coffee table and set out fall-colored guest towels. It took 10 minutes.



AT HOME WITH
Marni Jameson

Making those few small changes forced me to not only connect with the season, but also to slow down and pay attention to living well, not just getting by. Here are some small ways Jenkins says you can add simple seasonal and holiday looks that net big results:

Create a seasonal base

Start with a seasonal throw pillow, said Jenkins. “They are easy to put out and put away.” Set one on a chair in the entry, or on the sofa or a window seat. Hang an autumn wreath on the door, place pots of mums on the porch or patio, set a few pumpkins on the hearth and run a maple leaf garland over the mantle. In under 10 minutes, your home will reflect the season.

Layer in the holiday

On top of that base, you can later layer in holiday accessories for Halloween and then Thanksgiving, she said. For Halloween, tuck a few skulls into the leaf garland, perch a skeleton and a few black crowns on the pumpkins. Put creepy fake spiders in the potted mums. If screams are what you’re after, go for the motion-activated zombies that turn on and move when someone walks by, a pop-up gravestone and a drop-down Dracula. The day after Halloween, peel off the creepy and crawly accessories and replace them with touches of Thanksgiving, said Jenkins.

Feature a pumpkin patch

One of Jenkins go-to fall looks is to cluster a variety of décor pumpkins made of different materials. “Mix up the materials and sizes, and bunch them together on the hearth, porch or coffee table.” I did this with decorative pumpkins made of blown glass, metal, wood, velvet and burlap.



Bring on the fall – Pumpkins on the hearth, a fall throw pillow, maple leaf wreaths and a “Spooky” sign are simple moves that create a seasonal feeling at home. *Photo courtesy of Kirkland’s*

Make a statement

Among Jenkins’ favorite new products are Kirkland’s pumpkins that feature phrases like “Creep it real,” and “If you’ve got it, haunt it.” I liked the retailer’s “Trick or treat, wipe your feet” doormat. Wooden or metal trays and wall art with painted-on words like “Spooky,” “Harvest,” “Blessed” and “Thankful” also capture the spirit of the season.

What’s new

“Black-and-white buffalo check and other plaids are big in this year’s seasonal décor,” said Jenkins. Velvet is also working its way onto not only throw pillows but also acorns and pumpkin accessories. We’re seeing less bright metallic greens and purples, and fewer cartoony monsters. People seem to prefer skeletons, black crows and skulls.

Martha would approve.

Syndicated columnist Marni Jameson is the author of three home and lifestyle books, including “Downsizing the Family Home – What to Save, What to Let Go” (Sterling Publishing). Contact her at www.marnijameson.com.

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