

Decorating for the Holidays Made Enjoyable

The prospect of decorating for the holidays every year no longer fills me with dread.

Forty years ago, LuAnn and I were able to affix a minimal but adequate number of seasonal exterior decorations in just a couple of hours, but then came the slippery slope.

Every year we added a bit more, until we finally reached the current point that requires an estimated 20 hours of our time, 250 feet of evergreen roping, and innumerable strings of lights. Not to mention the countless extension cords that surround our house like an electronic snake pit. The weather is not always cooperative, but we forge ahead in sub-freezing temperatures when necessary.

I know our efforts will not impress the tiny minority of homeowners who mortgage their houses and use two weeks of their vacation time each year to cover every exterior surface with something horribly festive. There is a fine line between holiday cheer and obsessive behavior, and I define the latter as putting out one more string of lights than we do.

By the way, when one bulb in a string goes out the rest should stay on unless you teleported back to the 60's to purchase them. Since bulbs are usually wired in series, a broken filament in any of them would formerly break the circuit. In the early 70's, manufacturers introduced a tiny shunt wire at the base of each bulb that gives the current an alternate path if a filament goes bad. It's a fun holiday fact to know and tell.

Back to the dread part of this activity mentioned above, something happened years ago that made this annual chore much more tolerable, even enjoyable. I used to feel the same way about summer gardening as I did about holiday decorating, but one day a friend introduced me to the concept of "gardening wine."

It's not complicated. Fill a glass with a good white wine, set it on the ground next to wherever you're kneeling and take a hit every now and then. The hours fly by. This same approach works as well in December as it does in July; switch from

white wine to red and you're good to go. It also does wonders for arthritis. And mosquito bites.

Of course, there are minor drawbacks. Late in the day, the strings of lights become a bit crooked, stepladders become unstable and tangles of cords invite electrocution, but I seem to worry less about such niceties by that point.

Speaking of slippery slopes, it was just a matter of time before I began to expand the scope of this marvelous concept. I now have a bourbon for vacuuming, a scotch for mowing the lawn, and a chainsaw tequila. Do not tell my insurance company.

Don't worry, it's not like I indulge in reckless drunken decorating at all times of day and night. I always wait until it is five o'clock. Somewhere.

Please resist the urge to inform Writer's Group Member Dave Parsons about the evils of alcoholism, drunk driving, underage drinking or light beer; he knows these are all very bad things. Lie down until the feeling passes.