



Surprise Package

There's no place like home for the holidays, especially when it's filled with lively colors, original touches, and fun traditions.

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An unconventional wreath—a silver dish and cluster of bright ornaments, *opposite*—signals a glimpse of things to come in Jennifer and Richard Grayson's home. In the living room, turquoise and lime packages play off the subdued sea-inspired color palette.

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hristmas starts early—way early—for Jennifer Grayson. In October, she’s decking out trees in her Savannah home design store. By Thanksgiving, she’s wrapping gifts for holiday shoppers. Neither the retail grind nor the usual hustle-bustle, though, keeps Jennifer and her husband, Richard, from making Christmas extra-special for their two kids, Sophie, 9, and Gray, 7. “Sure, the season gets hectic, but you only have a few years to put traditions in their hearts,” she says. “I’ve just learned to stay organized so I can make things magical year after year.”

That magic starts the day after Thanksgiving, when Tommy, a toy elf that serves as a Christmas conscience, appears. When the kids are good, the elf moves to a new hiding spot for them to find; if they’ve been a bit naughty, he sits tight for another day. “It’s a



way to get them to reflect on their day and remind them Christmas is a time to be your best and think about others,” Jennifer says.

Other easy-does-it traditions help Jennifer and Richard squeeze in more together time with the kids. There’s *The Night Before Christmas*, read over and over during the season near a crackling fire in the living room. And there’s Christmas Eve, when Richard and the kids make sugar cookies, heavy on sprinkles, that the family delivers to neighbors. “Really, what we do are just simple, old-fashioned things,” Jennifer says.

Simplicity extends to the decorating. “Some people bring Christmas into the house in one day, but I take it a little at a time,” Jennifer says. On walks, she and the kids hunt for inspiration. The topper on the tree is one of their scavenges. “I was holding a few palm fronds, and I kept thinking there had to be something I could do with them,” Jennifer says. Wired together, they’re a star.

Though Jennifer changes the color scheme every year—fun, upbeat colors are her thing—she doesn’t start from scratch. Freshening up is as easy as changing ribbons—turquoise and orange are part of this year’s multicolor decor—or displaying only certain colors of her vintage ornaments. “Every room of my house has something in it, even if it’s just a little,” Jennifer says. “I’ve just learned to figure out ways to keep things simple so I don’t lose sight of what the season is about.”

“I love using bright colors at Christmas—it’s unexpected and fun,” says Jennifer, with Richard and their kids, Sophie and Gray, left. Fresh garland draping the porch railing, above left, is a must for Jennifer. “There’s something about smelling it while walking up to the front door,” she says. On the dining table, above right and opposite, she loosely knots napkins instead of using rings and fills glass globe vases with ornaments. Magnolia leaves in a bowl are an easy centerpiece.





There's no place for formality in Jennifer's home. The kids' spray-painted angels and bowls of M&Ms are right at home with silver serving pieces. "We live with our things and enjoy them," she says. "I love a house that's comfortable."



Indoors, Jennifer goes easy on the garland, using a few simple swags for most-seen places, such as the wide kitchen window, *opposite*. Handmade tags personalize packages, *top*. Three ornaments clustered together with bright purple ribbon gain impact and fill bare spots on the tree, *above*. Sophie and Gray have started a tradition of their own: On the day after Thanksgiving, they set up a hot cocoa or lemonade stand outside their mother's store, *One Fish Two Fish*, *right*. The kids pick a charity—often one centered on animals—and donate the proceeds.





Spray-painted book angels made by Sophie and Gray get prime billing on the rustic entry table, *left* and *below left*. Sophie and Gray toss “reindeer food”—rolled oats and glitter—onto the lawn to help Rudolph spot the house, *bottom*. Ribbon-laced ornaments are a festive adornment on the headboard in the master bedroom, *right*.



A champagne bucket and baby cups and spoons tied with ribbon dress a little tree—actually three branches Jennifer wired together and propped in florist foam. “It’s a great way to bring Christmas into a small space,” she says. ■



“Soulful is how I’d describe our Christmas—I like things to have meaning.” Jennifer Grayson