

Deck the halls

From the lights on the tree to the garland on the mantel, from the bowls of balls to the boughs of mistletoe, decorating for the holidays is a job perfectly suited to decorators. They'll even buy the ornaments for you, or use your holiday heirlooms.

If you've got a regular interior designer or decorator, December is a good time of year to call on their services once again. They'll edit your rest-of-the-year displays and spread the spirit of the season with tastefully chosen and themed decor.

"It just depends on what the house looks like in the beginning, what the furnishings look like and what the homeowners are like," says Elizabeth Nandee, interior designer and owner of Basic Black Designs Inc.

She's created a tropical Christmas for clients from the

Caribbean and a Victorian look for bed-and-breakfast owners.

It helps to know your entertaining plans. Laura Le, interior decorator and owner of Creative Enhancement, tackled the main entertaining areas in a 10,000-square-foot Springbank home last year before the owner hosted a party for 120.

Le moved furniture and selected where to put up the tree to create conversation-friendly spaces. The owner had plenty of decorations, so Le finished in a day, leaving behind a silver-and-red themed winter wonderland.

The damage: Nandee's starting rate is \$2,000 to shop for and decorate the main floor of an average house.

Le charges \$500 a day to decorate, and bills \$40 an hour to shop for decorations. Taking everything down costs extra.