



## merry & bright become a master gift-wraper

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**D**ON'T OPEN until Christmas! The hardest part of holiday preparation can often be the gift wrapping. There's finding the time, analyzing how to stylishly wrap a pair of slippers, and wondering how to make your present pop into something other than a cardboard box with a squished bow.

Gift wrapping can be glamorous. Your package decor can rival any home designing queen; you can create your own signature style in gift wrapping; and your presents can pop like champagne on New Year's Eve.

Mary Ann Holderness, owner of Rusty's Gifts in Tarboro, has been adding a dash of splash to her customers' gifts for the past 34 years. Offering up some of her quick tips and tricks, she's helping gift givers everywhere toward a stylish holiday.

### Gathering Supplies

"Having a good surface to work on, such as a counter top, is key to being able to spread out your supplies and effectively wrap your packages. Gather scissors, tape, paper, and ribbon all together so you are ready to design in your available space," said Holderness.

In addition to the traditional supplies, bring together berries, magnolia and tobacco leaves, cotton, feathers, and greenery items from your own yard that can serve as a quick topper to your package.

### Wrapping Paper

Wrapping paper is available in all colors, patterns, textures, and weight these days. Some people prefer bright patterns of ornaments, reindeer, and Christmas trees with lavish bows or even the simpler peel and stick ones. Others prefer solid color paper with tied ribbons. Your mood, style, and personality will reflect your paper choices.

Pros and designers suggest a more streamlined look with solid colored papers that can be

According to a Hallmark study on the history and habits of gift wrap — our story of making presents pretty is long and we are particular about how they look.

**1509** Wallpaper was first used as gift wrap in England.

**1917** Hallmark invented gift wrap when the store ran out of tissue paper, the wrap was originally sold in sheets and sold out right away.

**1987** Paper bags with handles were introduced helping gift wrap phobic folks everywhere.

swapped in and out year-round with ribbon colors to match any occasion.

"We suggest selecting four or five different colored papers that match well together under the tree," said Holderness.

For solid colors this holiday season select red, green, and white. For patterns think of red and white striped, polka dots, or red and green plaid. There are companies that make double sided wrapping paper. Go for a medium paper weight as thin paper tears easily and makes wrapping around corners difficult.

### Bow tying and tagging

Often the most daunting task and one people find most challenging is tying the perfect bow. Use the internet to find how-to guides and videos, ask a store clerk, or call your mother. Visual demonstration of bow-tying is easiest.

Satin ribbons make for a smooth bow tying experience. If you are matching solid paper choices, select ribbons in red, green, white, silver or

gold. Sequin ribbons add the extra pizzazz. Layer ribbons for dimension and additional color combinations.

"Gift tags can be creative and show your personality," said Holderness.

Make your own. Take a piece of card stock; design, write, and print your titles; hole punch; tie with a ribbon and voila! Add phrases such as "Drink me," "Open Christmas Eve," "Cheers," and the like to make a tag that's different.

### Gift Baskets

"Giving food items are popular at the holidays. People like items they can share, offer to guests, or eat themselves. Food baskets are always a fun gift — wrap them in clear cellophane and tie big bows," said Holderness.

Gather your food items into a basket, serving tray, bucket, tote bag, or piece of large pottery. Arrange your items and use tissue or shredded confetti paper to act as cushion and support.

"The fun in a gift basket is seeing what is in there. In addition to the food items, you want to include something for the recipient to be surprised by such as a picture frame, coasters, or paper napkins," said Holderness.

This holiday season, stock up on supplies, grab a glass of bubbly, turn on the Christmas tunes, and create a present that pops!



### THE SEED from page C1

where I'm trying stuff."

Like most farming endeavors, these trees are a year-round labor of love. "We turn right around and start again after Christmas," Mike's wife, Sheila Boyce chimed in as she fashioned a ribbon for a carefully crafted mailbox swag.

"That's true, we plant trees the end of January and the first of February," Mike finished his wife's thought, and she took up the ever-present "weather permitting" baton that punctuates every farmer's sentence when they speak of seasonal planting and growing timelines.

The Boyces have been farming their land off of Creedmoor Road since the late 1970s — first strawberries and now Christmas trees. "We started planting trees in 1981, and we started harvesting them in 1986," said Mike.

Integrated seamlessly into their growing operation are the quintessential North Carolina Fraser firs they bring in from a farmer in Alleghany County. "There's another shipment headed this way tomorrow," said Mike, unable to hide his excitement. "They'll probably be even prettier and heavier because they were just cut Monday."

Mike and Sheila laugh in unison when asked about how best to choose and care for a tree, "If the needles pull off it's no good — other than that it's strictly personal preference," said Mike, citing the example of his wife's desire to have a tree with gaps in it.

"Our grandchildren have stuffed animals and certain ornaments we tuck into those spaces," said Sheila. The Boyces admit they are not the last ones to put their tree up, but are "near the end" according to Sheila who has moved from her work on the swag to fashioning a beautiful wreath.

For many years there has been much discussion over adding certain beverages to the water you put in your tree, but Mike refutes that with an easy solution. "All you need is what falls from the sky," he said. "Heck, kept in water and under the right conditions a Fraser Fir might last until March just as long as it doesn't sap over."

Encouraging words for Christmas tree enthusiast everywhere. This year, Boyce Tree Farm opened for business the weekend before Thanksgiving, and they will keep right on running

### Christmas trees by the numbers in the land of the long leaf pine:

- Between **25** and **30** million real Christmas trees are sold each year in the United States.
- North Carolina ranks **second** nationwide for trees harvested and cash receipts.
- Close to **1,300** growers produce Fraser Fir Christmas trees on an estimated **40,000** acres.
- Fraser Firs make up over **98%** of all species grown in North Carolina.
- The Western North Carolina counties of Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Buncombe, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Macon, Madison, Mitchell, Swain, Transylvania, Watauga and Yancey grow the Fraser Fir species.
- A North Carolina Fraser fir has traveled from our forests to the White House to serve the nation as the official White House tree **12** times — 1971, 1973, 1982, 1984, 1990, 1993, 1995, 1997, 2005, 2007, 2008 and 2012.

STATISTICS COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL CHRISTMAS TREE ASSOCIATION AND THE N.C. CHRISTMAS TREE ASSOCIATION.

through Christmas. Mike admits the season has moved back over the years causing their busiest days to inch closer to the Sunday after Thanksgiving.

But then sometimes their business comes on Christmas Eve in the form of a family tradition. "For years we had one customer who came every Christmas Eve, and brought his son with their own axe to cut a tree down," said Mike. "He'd leave the money under our doormat. He was a neighbor and shared with me that the daughter and wife were home stringing popcorn for when they brought the tree home."

The Christmas tree is the center of many heartfelt holiday gatherings. A tree holds our history from the act of decorating to the presents placed beneath.

The real gifts of Christmas are the ones that bring us together.



Rosanne Burke, of Wake Forest, makes a wreath at Boyce Farms.