

The North Carolina Journal for Women

December 2003 Edition



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[Cyndy Ratcliffe](#)

Enjoying the Decorating Season! Well, maybe next year.

Too often the dread of digging up the holiday decorations dilutes the **Norman Rockwell vision** we have of what the holiday should be. The holiday décor may be a storage mess for this year, but with a plan in place you can store your decorations in a way to make it easier, maybe even inviting, to decorate next year.

The number one holiday decorating complaint on is: **those !?*#@! lights** that always come out of storage in a tangled mess. Certainly,

patience is in short supply with the demands of the season to begin with, and now you have to find more patience to get the strands untangled. When you finally get it untangled and plug it in.....you guessed it, it does not light because **ONE bulb is out!** Now gather up the extra patience, (what do you mean you don't have any?) to figure out which bulb is loose or out. Ughh! Then you realize that this is the 50-bulb strand and you needed the 100-light strand! Sound familiar?



your lights after the holidays, **put them on an extension cord paddle.** These are inexpensive and will allow you to quickly unwind the lights onto the tree or the house. To determine which strand of lights you are using, use a **permanent marker to write on the plug** of the strand "50 bulbs non blinking" or "100 blinking". Another idea is to take the small packet of additional bulbs and tape it on the end of the string of lights. This way when you need to find a small bulb of the proper size and type, it is right there on the strand.

Extension cords are used more during the holiday season than any other time of year. Fortunately, they are not expensive. I recommend **keeping the extension cords with the holiday decorations** you use them with. Purchase additional extension cords for everyday use around the house. Weigh the cost of the additional extension cords versus the cost of your frustration at not having



or not finding enough of them for your decorating. So, **wrap that extension cord right along with the lights on the paddle.**

This year when you are getting your decorations out, make note of the items you need at the start of decorating. This will become your **"Important: Use First"** box for next year. A simple clear box (shoe box) with items such as extra ornament hangers, tape, ribbon, stocking hangers, etc. all together in a "kit" will allow you to set up your decorations with much less running around and searching.

A large part of how you store your decorations depends on where you are storing them. If you are storing in a garage or **attic in North Carolina's humidity** you may want to weigh cardboard containers vs. plastic. The advantage to cardboard is the fact that it will breathe allowing items stored in it to remain dry. However if cardboard boxes are stacked on each other they will collapse on one another and **cardboard does break down over time.** Some would debate **storing items in plastic,** but we personally have done it every year and have not had any problems with it. Clear boxes are always better so that you know what is in each box. I recommend the **best quality plastic containers** you can find so that they will stack nicely and not crack or break when handled. In the long run you will save money and time not having to replace the boxes each year.

To protect those collectible and fragile Christmas bulbs, or all bulbs for that matter, **purchase the boxes with dividers designed especially for Christmas bulbs.** I recommend the type that comes two layers deep. You will discover some of the more fragile bulbs will need additional cushion than these boxes have. So, this year save the **left over white gift tissue** and use it to cushion the most fragile bulbs for next year. Remember collecting tissue is only necessary this year. With careful use, you will have the same tissue cushions for years to come. Save one little divided section in each box to hold your spare ornament hangers. Where is it that they go each year anyhow?



Now, how about that wrapping paper you got during the after **Christmas sale last year?** Is it still in good shape or has it been crushed in your attempts to store it? My recommendation is to use a tall standing gift wrap containers you can find in most home or decorating stores. The gift wrap actually stands upright in the container. Be sure to get the **extra large (tall) size,** as the regular size is not tall enough for most Christmas wrap. By the way these are also great containers for those large rolled up home blue prints! **Storing bows to go with the wrap** is another tricky one. They seem to damage so easily. Use one of those clear boxes to loosely store your ribbon and bows.

Keep in mind some very fragile or **heat sensitive items** will need some room in your home for climate-controlled storage. For example, many candles can be used throughout the year by simply changing the way they are displayed. A little creativity will allow you to enjoy and use your candles year round. Not just for holidays, they can bring enjoyment all year round.

In our house the big discussion is whether we will get a real tree or simply use my eclectic **white-light "faux" trees** (I am a minimalist).



Every year, with the exception of one, we have gotten a real tree. The best thing you can do to make your after Christmas tree clean up simple is to **purchase a tree removal bag** that you slip under your tree prior

to setting it up and simply slip over your tree for removal after Christmas or Valentine's Day (I understand this is the case in some homes). No more "Christmas reminder" stains on your carpet or pine needles sticking in your favorite slippers two weeks after tree removal.

These are just a few **holiday storage tips**. Keep in mind that you won't need to inventory if you use plastic containers, because you know instantly by looking what you have. In addition, you won't be hunting for items like extension cords, **ornament hangers** or spare light bulbs because they will be stored with the items you use them with. So, investing some time and energy this year packing up your decorations can bring back the joy of holiday decorating in the future!



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She received her bachelor's degree in Business Administration from Ashland University in Ohio and was a senior-level manager for over 20 years supervising 130 retail stores before launching Organizing Solutions, Inc.

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 **Organizing Solutions, Inc.**



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