

HOMES & REAL ESTATE

DESIGN RECIPES

10 tips to get organized

By Cathy Hobbs
Tribune News Service

Clear the clutter! More than ever before, people are opting for minimalism instead of overstuffed and cluttered homes. From items purchased on a vacation to treasured mementos and those that have been gifted, the accumulation of items may be what is standing in the way of you creating a more organized home.

Closets should be organized and not just used for storage, ditto for kitchen pantry areas and shelving. Bookcases can become organized show-cases for home decor.

Here are some design tricks of the trade that can also help organize your space.

1. Follow the A-B-C organization rule. Assemble items you want to

organize. Create a system for storing these items in baskets, boxes and bins. Consider containers and cartons for organizing as well.

2. Label. Labeling is a key organization tip. One of the best solutions is to use erasable labels.

3. Color code. Color coding will help items be more easily identified.

4. Hide the small stuff. Often it is not the large items that cause disorganization, but the smaller items that less easily have homes. Store small similar items together.

5. Create both open and hidden storage. Shelves work great for displaying books and small decorative items, but you will also want to have closed, hidden storage as well for those items you don't wish to be visible.

6. Follow the one in, one out rule. When you get a new item, discard or donate an older,



Bins, baskets and boxes help to hide small items. [DESIGN RECIPES/TNS]

outdated similar item.

7. Inventory. So often, items are boxed away in an attic or basement never to be seen or heard from again. A minimum of once a year, take inventory of what you have, what you

need and what you can toss.

8. Minimize. Ask yourself: "Do I really still need this?" Typically if you haven't used it in a year, the answer is no.

9. Use clear storage solutions. Clear

bins and containers allow you to be able to see what you have and actually use what's inside.

10. Purge! Each season, get rid of something that can go to a new home.

GARDENING

We kiss under a parasite: An enigmatic holiday tradition

By Taylor Clem
Columnist

The holidays are here. Hanukkah, the Festival of Lights, begins Sunday evening, Christmas is on Wednesday, Kwanzaa is Thursday, and New Year's Day is right around the corner. The planning, coordinating, and utter exhaustion culminating over the past couple months comes to fruition. Despite the continuous motion, make sure you stop and be present. When I was a child, my mother would always say, "Your presence are my presents." She would then hold a mistletoe over my head and kiss my cheek.

Mistletoes, to me, are a holiday enigma. Many different cultures provide differing origin stories or use of the mistletoe, and details differ depending on the source you read. Norse mythology has us kissing under a mistletoe in remembrance of Baldur, whom Loki had Höðr kill with a mistletoe. Ancient Greek's Aeneas collected a Golden Bough (or Mistletoe) to travel to and

from Hades. Ancient Druids, according to Pliny, collected mistletoes with golden sickles for rituals or medicines.

Riddled with interesting origins and meaning (I recommend reading more about them), the modern tradition of kissing under the mistletoe popularized during the Regency and Victorian Era. During a resurgence of druidic ideas the tradition became popularized as representation of fertility and good luck, but is completely unrelated to Christmas. In fact, the Christian Church banned mistletoes for a long time because of its pagan origins.

The mistletoe's symbolic representation of fertility arose because their presence in the canopy of deciduous trees. As trees drop their leaves, the evergreen mistletoe persisted throughout the winter; providing hope for the spring. There are hundreds of different mistletoe species, but we are most familiar with the Oak Mistletoe (*Phoradendron serotinum*) of the Viscaceae family.

Despite its history and symbolism, the Oak Mistletoe is a parasite. Well, it is a hemiparasitic plant, which means it can photosynthesize and rob its host plant of nutrients. The mistletoe establishes itself by slowing penetrating the host tree with its roots. Over time prolonged damage and infestation of the mistletoe may cause an increased susceptibility to pest and disease pressure, potentially leading to death.

Removing mistletoes may help a tree recover, but sometimes the remedies cause more harm than good. Pruning is one method, but it is important to remove the roots of the mistletoe which could lead to over-pruning of a tree. Chemical applications of Ethephon by a licensed professional during the tree's dormancy period may help reduce populations too. Some people use shotguns to shoot mistletoes from their trees—that is not recommended at all.

Despite its success in our trees' canopies, how did the mistletoe get there

in the first place? That is a sticky story ... literally. Birds love eating the fruits of mistletoes and the fruits are filled with sticky seeds. The seeds get caught in the feathers, on the feet, or on the beaks of birds. As birds clean themselves, commonly within trees, the seeds are dispersed within the canopy's branches.

Although it's a parasitic plant, the mistletoe maintains significant environmental importance. The *Phoradendron* genus serves as a host plant to Great Purple Hairstreak butterfly. From March to November, male Great Purple Hairstreaks are perched high in the canopies waiting for females to come along. Soon after, little Great Purple Hairstreak caterpillars are munching on mistletoes until the caterpillars climb to the crevices of trees to pupate and become a chrysalis.

Mistletoes are still a holiday enigma. Used symbolically and ritually by cultures around the world, it is safe to say that the mistletoe have

embodied itself in human history. So as you gather around with friends, family, and neighbors throughout the holidays, indulge everyone with your newfound knowledge of the mistletoe. But whether you kiss under a mistletoe in remembrance of Baldur, try to travel to and from Hades, collect mistletoes for ancient druidic rituals, or kiss in hopes of fertility and luck, remember to be present.

Happy Holidays from UF/IFAS Extension Alachua County and Alachua County's Master Gardener Volunteers. To learn more about maintaining your landscape and the Florida-Friendly Landscaping Program, reach out to UF/IFAS Extension Alachua County's office to speak with a Master Gardener Volunteer at 955-2402 or mag@alachuacounty.us.

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SIKORSKI'S ATTIC

Rare and valuable items are easily referenced



John Sikorski

Q: Please help me identify these very rare and unusual porcelain pieces that we were lucky to have found and are now the new owners of. I have spent several hours and days of trying to identify the color and exact pattern and its just nowhere to be found on the internet. There are no maker marks on the bottoms of any of the pieces only very FAINT stamp marks. On the almost 3-inch wide teacup dishes there is a stamp mark 4064 and on the 2-inch small teacups a stamp mark of 1166, they are so faint it makes it extremely hard to read. Could these mysterious and rare blue flower patterns be Chinese Ming Dynasty? The 2-inch small creamer and 3-inch double handled piece have



These pieces appear to be soft paste porcelain made in England during the early- to mid-19th century. [SUBMITTED PHOTO]

NO STAMP MARKS on their bottoms. The footing on these pieces are also just off, which seem to commensurate with their age, but none are broken or chipped. One very small chip exists on one of the pieces but no cracks or crazing.

At first, I thought these were turn of the century Volkstedt, or Bavarian or maybe Early Meiji era Japan pieces, but they do not appear to be made from that area. Please note how the three flower petals all have spouts coming out from each

of their individual petals. This exact pattern and stamp marks are nowhere to be found on the internet. I hope you can solve this one and give us the era it was made and where these are from. — R.Y., internet

A: Most of the time if after extensive research you cannot find an example of what you are seeking, chances are it is not important. Rare and valuable items are easily referenced, that is how value is established.

I see no reason to think the pieces in your photographs are rare. Throughout all of Europe, England, America, and Asian countries ceramic tableware was produced by notable porcelain manufacturers. Then all the unknown makers produced look-a-like products that were popularized by the famous makers. I think the pieces you have are soft paste porcelain made in England during the early- to mid-19th century. Potential dollar value is low.

Q: This small little book was given to my great-grandmother early in the 1900s. I hope you can direct me to someone that might be able to help me find out if there is any value in it. It is titled "Pressed Flowers from the Holy Land, gathered and pressed in Palestine" by Harvey B. Greene, Lowell, Mass. It has 16 pages and is 4 1/2 by 6 inches. It is green with silver letters. — M.V., internet

A: I wish you had included a few photographs of your book pages. The book sounds like a little treasure and a nice item to pass on in the family. Current potential dollar value is below \$50.

— John Sikorski with over 35 years of experience in an Ocala based antiques advisor, consultant, and broker. Send your questions to Sikorski's Attic, c/o The Ocala Star-Banner, 2121 SW 19th Ave. Road, Ocala, FL 34471-7752, or email absantique@aol.com.