



When To Setup And Takedown Your Holiday Decorations

Two interior-design experts on when to set up holiday decorations, when to take them down and when to ignore the rules altogether.

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Given the adherence to tradition that informs most holiday rituals, it's surprising just how much confusion there is about when to start and stop celebrating holidays. The fall and winter months are rife with slightly-to-wildly-out-of-season holiday decorations popping up in every venue. Christmas-sale ads on TV in October, pumpkins rotting on doorsteps in November and browning Christmas trees in windows in January. In the ESTATENVY office, the soundtrack switched to Christmas music a full two weeks before Thanksgiving, a point of heated and still-unresolved contention among the staff.

ESTATENVY sat down with two interior-design experts to find out if there are any rules of

thumb that can help home decorators decide when to switch out holiday themes. Kate Thomas, a real estate professional in Chicago, and Shannon Brehm, a design specialist for [Interior Define](#), offered different takes on the issue, but both agreed that some rules are made to be broken.

ESTATENVY: Is it ever appropriate to put out Christmas or Hanukkah decorations before Thanksgiving?

Thomas: Traditionally, it was considered tacky, but you are seeing it everywhere these days. I suspect that a lot of those seasonal rules are among the long list of customs our generation is doing away with. People are more resistant to formality now.

Brehm: I take a harder line on this one. There is a bold line between Thanksgiving, which is a distinctly autumnal holiday with harvest themes and warm colors, and Christmas and Hanukkah, which should have crisp, wintry decor with pops of bright color. These are very different styles, and you don't want to muddy them by mixing them up.

ESTATENVY: Are there any themes or decorations that work for the holiday dry season between New Year's and Easter?

Thomas: I think that's a great time to decorate based on mood and feeling rather than any particular holiday, which is what I tend to do anyway. Find a decoration or piece of art or furniture that you love, and decorate around that. These months are a great opportunity to really delve into your own personal style.

Of course, seasonal herbs and flowers are always a safe bet. You might make bouquets or a centerpiece of seasonal foliage that you love.

Brehm: I love that. I always go with seasonal flowers. You can still give your home a very specific seasonal feeling that isn't attached to any one holiday. Winter greenery, birchwood and candles are all things that can make your home feel festive and comfortable without suggesting any particular holiday.

ESTATENVY: Do the rules for when to change your holiday decorations depend on the holiday?

Thomas: Christmas seems to get a little more real estate than other holidays. I think part of that is people losing a little steam after Christmas and not having the time or energy to redecorate, but personally, I don't have a problem with that. The winter is long, and it's fun to extend that holiday spirit even after the holiday itself is in the rearview mirror.

Brehm: I don't think the rules change for the holiday. The rule of thumb is to change out decorations within two weeks after the holiday. To the extent that you are following the rule, it's the same regardless of the holiday.

ESTATENVY: Does that mean that you don't always follow the rule?

Brehm: Of course! You've got to do what works for you. I typically leave my Christmas tree up until the end of January. I'm just not ready to give up that holiday cheer.

Thomas: I knew it! I don't even leave my tree up that long. But I agree, if the rule doesn't work for your style, it should be ignored. I think it's also important to note that every culture has different ways of celebrating and decorating for holidays. There aren't going to be rules that work for everyone, so I think it's best to focus on what brings comfort and joy into your home.