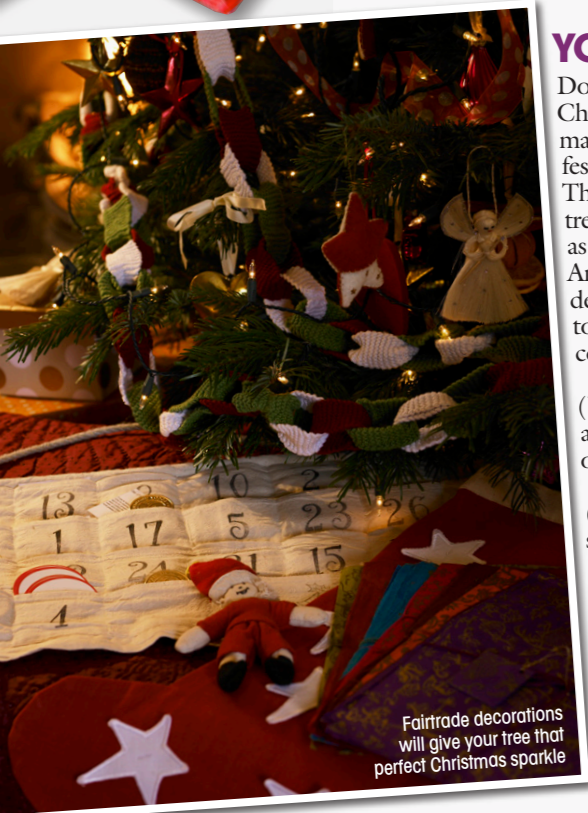
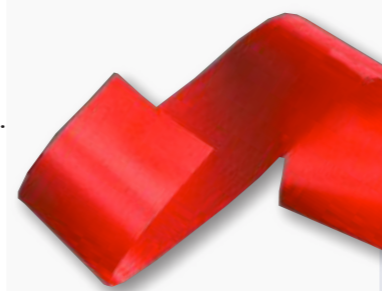




# Melissa Porter's Beautiful Christmas Decorations

Create a stunning festive look for your home – and have a positive effect on the planet, too...



Fairtrade decorations will give your tree that perfect Christmas sparkle

## YOUR TREE

Don't worry! Going green this Christmas won't compromise making the centrepiece to your festive celebrations look fabulous. There are loads of eco-friendly tree decorations that are every bit as wonderful as the regular kind. And I think buying Fairtrade decorations is a really lovely way to help those in developing countries at this time of year.

★ Biome Lifestyle (biomelifestyle.com) has a huge range of handmade ornaments from Indonesia.

★ Calico Moon (calico-moon.co.uk) stocks beautiful Santas, snowmen and stars.

★ And for the top of your tree, why not try Natural Collection's Fairtrade angel (naturalcollection.com, £8.95)?

If you look after them, good quality tree decorations can last for years. I pack mine

.....  
"Buying Fairtrade decorations is a really lovely way to help those in developing countries"  
.....



in tissue paper inside shoe boxes to protect them – it's always one of my festive pleasures to open them each year. The rustle of the tissue paper makes me feel so Christmassy!

If you have children, get them to help you make some decorations. It's fun – and it's eco! Drape ropes of popcorn threaded with a bodkin on to string over the tree instead of tinsel. Or paint eggshells different colours (blow the yolk out first using a pin and a straw) and place them around the tree. You'll find loads of ideas at allfreecrafts.com/christmas.

Finally, you can't have a tree without fairy lights. Although they don't use much electricity, do remember to turn them off at night or if you go out. LED lights are more energy efficient – some save up to 75% of the energy of regular lights. Tesco stocks great LED lights (tesco.com, £12 for 80). Above all, enjoy your tree and make decorating it fun. Just let your imagination run wild!

## YOUR HOME

What with all the present hunting and food shopping, the run-up to Christmas can be a hectic affair – but a few simple festive touches will transform your home. Natural materials are inexpensive and look amazing, plus they're traditional and eco-friendly. If you have a fireplace, drape real ivy over the mantelpiece and mirrors. It's especially effective twined around a candleholder.

I love to have mistletoe hanging up in my doorways – just remember to keep it up out of the way of any pets and children, as it's poisonous. And why not try making your own festive wreath from cones and leaves, then hang it on your front door?

For a really professional look, try theming your decorating. For a traditional theme, I visit antiques shops for vintage baubles

and candleholders – they make for a classic Christmas look.

Don't forget the lighting, too. Whether your house is traditional or contemporary, candles add a wonderfully warm, inviting glow to everything – and think of the electricity you'll be saving! I found some great eco-friendly candles made from beeswax and natural plant wax at soorganic.com (£18), as well as cinnamon and clove ones at truegrace.co.uk (£18). Remember to be candle safe – never leave them unattended or within reach of a child.

For me, the best thing about Christmas is the build-up to the



Make the most of your fireplace and mantelpiece

big day – that's why an Advent calendar is essential. Reusable organic cotton ones (above left) are great (biomelifestyle.com, £25). Instead of your children opening a door on the calendar each day, they look in a variety of numbered pockets – where you can leave them a little chocolate or even messages. You can also buy Fairtrade chocolate calendars (naturalcollection.com, from £3.95).

Oh, and don't forget to hang up stockings for Santa! Keep the kids happy with colourful ones from tattybumpkin.com (£12). They're all Fairtrade and include a small Santa and a Christmas hat.

## Setting your table night...

Recycled paper name tags on napkins, 30p each, greenandstone.com; Cristaleria recycled glass wine goblets, £35 for a set of six; Black recycled glass serving plate, £12; Chato recycled glass tea light holders, £4 each; Felt place mats, £39 for a set of four, all from ecocentric.co.uk; Vintage glass baubles, £1 each, Snooper's Paradise Flea Market, Brighton; Antique cutlery from Portobello Market, London



## YOUR TABLE

A few well-placed finishing touches will make your table look amazing. A table runner on top of the cloth will add a bit of glamour – but keep the tone neutral, so you can add a splash of colour with centrepieces and other items (try Oxon cotton Fairtrade table runners, £15, from thenaturalstore.co.uk). Continue the natural theme by securing your rolled-up napkins with natural raffia or old ribbon, and finish off the look with a sprig of holly. Why not add herbs or lavender for a touch of scent? Try Oxon cotton Fairtrade napkins (thenaturalstore.co.uk, just £5 each).

Dot tea light holders around the table for a nice glow – ecocentric.co.uk has some lovely ones (£6 each). And vintage baubles will add to the Christmas atmosphere.

Give your table a real wow factor with a colourful centrepiece. *Natural Ideas for Christmas* by Josie Cameron-Ashcroft and Carol Cox (£29.82) has some great ideas. Red berries and holly always give that classic Christmas look (left), but you don't have to stick with tradition. I'm planning a glass bowl filled with dried oranges and studded with cloves (above). Add in cardamom pips, juniper or lavender and it'll smell fantastic. Dress the table with pine cones and ivy to finish off. If you want a contemporary look, real flowers to compliment the colours of your tablewear look stunning.

And, of course, Christmas lunch isn't complete without a cracker or two. I like ones made from recycled paper or with eco gifts inside (biomelifestyle.com, £25 for six).



Oranges studded with cloves add colour and fragrance

## THE WRAPPING

I'm trying to avoid waste when wrapping presents this year. You can get some great recycled paper from biomelifestyle.com (£1.50 for two sheets) or oxfam.org.uk (£2.99 per roll). Brown recycled paper looks fabulously rustic and has less toxins, as it's not been dyed. Jazz it up by using Christmas stamps from henandhammock.com, £8 (right). Another idea is to use leftover bits of fabric or wallpaper – a great pattern will look perfect under the tree. And if you want to go totally

.....  
"If you want to go totally eco, then try string, beads or old ribbon instead of sticky tape"  
.....

eco, then try string, beads or old ribbon instead of sticky tape, which isn't biodegradable.

Just one last thing... after you've unwrapped your presents this Christmas, please remember to always pop the discarded wrapping paper in the recycling bin! Thank you.



Just some of the materials that can be used to wrap Christmas presents