



NO 1

RETRO REDUX Classic mid-century vases go cosmopolitan with engaging colourful orchids. The splashy, bright shades of these fluttery blooms provide contrast to the creamy white of two of these diminutive vases, while dogwood branches, curly spider mums and traditional foliage offset the simple, angled lines of the other vessel.

centre of attraction Does holiday decor leave you longing for alternatives to pine cones and poinsettias? Using a traditional red and green colour palette, contributing design editor Lara McGraw proves it's possible to break with tradition—well, maybe just bend it a little—with a whimsical, innovative approach to holiday that still pays homage to the season's more timeless touches. Try one of Lara's inspired floral arrangements to create your own easy holiday centrepieces.

SIMPLY SINGULAR Transform the ordinary with a clean-lined arrangement that presents a common flower in an unexpected way. Though amaryllis is a ubiquitous cold-season selection, display it to maximum effect in a striking bouquet as a cut flower rather than as a potted plant. Here, Lara used a clear vase to showcase the blooms' stems, adding river rocks to anchor the heavy stalks while keeping a clean, earthy appeal that speaks to the centrepiece's Urban Country roots.



NO 2



OLD FAVOURITES A single ironstone terrine forms a classic low centre-piece with an array of spider mums, chartreuse skimmia and assorted greenery. The addition of bright red roses furthers the festive colour scheme. We love that it's a bloom not often used in holiday arrangements, so not only do the roses ensure the display has added visual punch, but the unexpected summery fragrance will help subvert winter's chill. For a more traditional touch, replace the roses with holly berries.

The more the merrier Do small multiples of this arrangement to run down the length of your table

making arrangements

Contributing design editor **LARA MCGRAW** is quick to point out that it doesn't take a master gardener—or a fortune—to create arrangements with an original twist on tradition.

Here are some tips to elevate your displays from dull to daring.



When selecting a vessel, “don't be worried about the object's traditional role—almost anything goes,” advises Lara, who loves the challenge of transforming conventional objects into unconventional centrepieces.



The most appealing arrangements are those »



ELEGANCE IN THE UNEXPECTED

In another inventive turn, Lara tucked a miniature cypress into a mercury glass-look candle holder and edged the display with red dogwood branches to create a sophisticated centrepiece with modern appeal. A layer of moss conceals the potting soil. For those living in cramped quarters, these diminutive cypress trees make a size-sensitive substitute for a more typical Christmas tree.

TABLE CENTREPIECES

that contrast textures and shapes and combine the ordinary with the unexpected.



Think about where you're going to site the arrangement. Tall displays work for entranceways or side tables, while lower ones are perfect for table talk ("It's easier to converse when people can see one another," says Lara).



Don't break the bank. All of the blooms Lara used are inexpensive and are available at most corner and grocery stores, as well as your local florist.



NO 5

PASTORAL PUNCH Don't dismiss the drama just because you're going for a centerpiece with rustic appeal. An antique pewter jug like this one evokes a quiet country feel, but Lara added sass to its subdued style with lush, soft euonymus foliage and a few stems of fuzzy pine needles. The addition of a few unexpected red lilies placed among the crimson berries lends an unstructured softness that highlights the refinement of the arrangement.

Lara favours form over flower. "I let the container lead the way," she explains. "Its shape tells me which flowers to use"



NO 6

NATURAL NOEL For a fresh take on the natural look, invite the outdoors in by gathering the essentials from a nature walk. Create this arrangement by wrapping a length of birch bark around a nondescript vase and securing it tightly with twine or raffia. Add tall red gladiolas, a flower that usually stands alone, and mix in a selection of your favourite feathery spruce or cedar boughs.

Tree talk

Look for fallen pieces of birch bark on the ground—stripping the trunk can kill a living tree