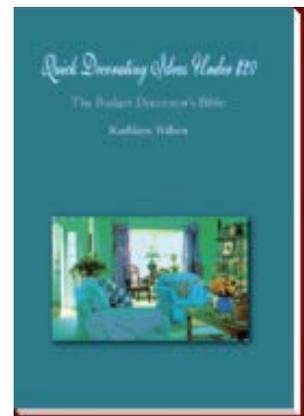


“50 Great Christmas Decorating Ideas on the Tightest Budget”

By Kathleen Wilson



Also available by Kathleen Wilson, “Quick Decorating Ideas Under \$20”. Available at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) or can be ordered by your local bookstore.

©2002 Kathleen Wilson All Rights Reserved

No part of this publication may be reproduced. However, you have the author's permission to freely distribute this ebook provided the ebook remains intact, and no changes are made to its contents.

Note: Please use good judgment when determining whether a project or idea in this book is appropriate for your situation. The author does not take responsibility for the results of any decorating project, and urges you always to keep safety a priority in your home, especially where children are concerned.

Welcome to “50 Great Christmas Decorating Ideas on the Tightest Budget!” My name is Kathy Wilson, and I am the author of “Quick Decorating Ideas Under \$20: The Budget Decorator’s Bible” and Editor of TheBudgetDecorator.com. This book is a free gift from me to introduce you to my book and website, and to help show you that decorating your home can be done even when your budget is tight, with Creativity, Not Cash!



I have been a stay at home Mom for almost 17 years now, and we have been raising children on a single income...my husband's. Now when I say we've been raising children, I'm not kidding around...my husband and I have two kids together, and we each have three from a previous marriage. That's right, you were not hallucinating, we have EIGHT children! So when you all tell me you don't have much to spend on decorating and homemaking, I definitely hear you! I have been there, and still deal with the daily challenges to our family budget. But I also have always lived by "If there's a will, there's a way!" so in early 1997, I started to look for ways I could start a business to help out my family finances, and also find ways to create a warm home for my husband and kids. The Budget Decorator was born! And that's what brings us here today.

The holidays are my favorite time to decorate, and if you celebrate Christmas on a budget, this is the place for you! Please enjoy this ebook with my compliments, pass it around to your friends and family, and invite them all to join us at the website at www.TheBudgetDecorator.com for year round free tips and projects. You can join our free online newsletter at the website, or send a blank email to thebudgetdecorator-subscribe@yahoogroups.com. Join us...it's free, it's fun, and it could change the way you look at your home, and your budget!

“50 Great Christmas Decorating Ideas on the Tightest Budget”



1. First things first. Set a plan or a theme for your Christmas decorating. It doesn't cost a thing to have a good plan, and when you are working with budget ideas, this is what pulls your ideas together, and makes everything you do look purposeful, and personal. Some theme ideas for Christmas? The rustic lodge xmas, a toyland xmas, countries around the world, Victorian, country, santa, snowmen, old fashioned, the list goes on and on!

2. Make foam core lighted shapes for indoors or out...cut two large stars and a smaller one to sandwich in middle, poke holes through all around the edges, then stick clear lights through each hole, tape extra lights to back...paint with metallic paint or cover with contact. It would be easier to cover or paint the shapes before adding the lights! This could be hung indoors in a window, or in a sheltered place outdoors such as a porch.



3. Wire ornaments: Craft wire can be bought very cheaply in spools, and can be formed into many shapes for unique ornaments. Bend it into angels, trees, or stars, and try adding some beads as you go along for a sparkling touch. (You have been saving those thrift and garage sale jewelry finds, haven't you?) Keep the beads in place with a touch of glue if you like.

4. One of the most wasteful expenses during the holidays is giftwrap. So this year, think a little more frugally! Buy a large roll of brown kraft wrap and stamp on your own designs! Kraft wrap is half the price of giftwrap, and it's so easy to make every gift more personal this way! Wrap your present first, (Be sure it's in a box that protects it) then choose a stamp that matches the gift or the recipient's personality. Now using just a dab of regular craft paint, brush some paint on the stamp, and go for it! Try combining a few different stamps, or making a picture on the front of the package with the stamps, such as a xmas

tree with gifts underneath. To be even more frugal, cut open brown paper grocery bags, and stamp on the inside, then use as wrap.

5. To dress up your holiday dining area, try taking a piece of scrap holiday fabric, wrap it around the back of your dining chairs, and hold in place with a rubber band, Now tie over the band with a little raffia, and tuck in some greens! Great holiday style in minutes, using scraps!

6. Make garlands out of felt scraps. Cut Xmas shapes out of felt in miniature, mini stockings, holly leaves, mittens, and string together with needle and floss or strong fishing line to hang all over the house. Remember when you string each shape, tie a knot on both sides of the shape to hold it in its place. You can add more dimension to the shapes by cutting two of each, stuffing them lightly, then sewing the two together. Glue would work also if you aren't a sewer. Saved used dryer sheets are perfect for this kind of stuffing, or even tiny fabric scraps that are too small for other uses.

7. Try your hand at making a gingerbread house from scratch, don't buy an expensive kit! It can be great fun, most "mistakes" can be hidden with frosting and candy, and you can personalize your design to represent your home, a barn (think Nativity) even make Santa's sleigh from gingerbread! Use it as a centerpiece surrounded with greens and bits of ribbon, and don't forget to have the kids help! Hint: The secret is in the frosting...royal frosting is the one to use, it has the consistency to give you good "cement"! Here are some good recipes for both!

Gingerbread:

6 C. Flour

1 Tbsp. Cinnamon

2 tsp. Ginger

1 tbsp. Ground cloves

1 tsp salt

$\frac{3}{4}$ C butter

$\frac{2}{3}$ C brown sugar

1 $\frac{1}{2}$ C molasses

1 egg

Cream butter and sugar, add molasses and egg. Blend in dry ingredients. Turn onto a floured board, knead until smooth, wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate overnight. To bake, roll out rather thick, at least $\frac{1}{4}$ inch. Bake on a cookie sheet covered with foil and sprayed lightly with cooking spray. Bake at 350F for 8-15 minutes, depending on the size of the pieces. Try to bake pieces with other pieces of the same general size. Cool on pans

15 minutes, then remove to finish cooling. You will probably need a double batch of this dough unless you are making a small house or a sleigh.

Royal icing:

The easiest way to make royal icing is probably to purchase mix in your craft store in the cake supply aisle. Is you want to make it yourself, here you go!

Beat 3 tbsp. Meringue powder (find it in the same place!), a 1 pound box of powdered sugar, and 6 tbsp water about 8-10 minutes, until stiff peaks form. You need the icing to be somewhat thick to hold the walls together. This icing will dry somewhat harder.

8. For a beautiful outdoor wreath (or indoor) without spending a fortune on craft supplies, try to remember you need not cover the wreath with decoration to make it special. Try just a few craft store "picks" in one corner, with a big bow. Or get some wire star garland (.69 cents at my store) and just wrap it loosely around the wreath. Hot glue some found pinecones to a corner, or try some old wooden ornaments. You also don't necessarily need to buy an expensive evergreen wreath to decorate, and inexpensive grapevine or straw wreath can be dressed up as well.

9. Drop a tealight candle in your cleaned out glass mayonnaise jars, tie a holiday ribbon around the neck, and you have a beautiful candle with xmas charm. You could nestle the candle in peppermints, nuts, or even sand if you wish. Try grouping several together for a dramatic evening effect.

10. Dress up your pillar candles with brass tacks bought in packages at the dollar store. Press the tacks into the side of the candle in a pattern of a star shape, or a simple angel, or whatever works with your theme. Remember you don't have to get detailed! When these candles are lit, the light just dances off the tacks, adding to the drama.

11. Spray paint clay pots and saucers a metallic gold for sparkling coasters and utensil or candle holders for the season.

12. Try your hand this year at making your family stockings. It's a lot easier than you might think, you don't have to know how to knit! Simply cut out two simple stocking shapes from felt, and add some personal decoration! You could add appliques made from felt, fabric paint, glue and glitter, colorful buttons, even jingle bells. Then add a loop of ribbon for hanging, and sew the two sides together! Use colored thread to add detail, and

then you don't have to worry about turning the stockings, just sew them flat as they are to be seen! Add names with fabric paint or iron on letters. Really easy, give it a shot.



13. Start a Christmas collection. This can be a great tradition to initiate in your home. My girls and I started collecting Santas 3 years ago, and it's something they look forward to, choosing our yearly Santa together. I know it will be a fond memory for them, and I plan to let each child choose a Santa to take with them when the day comes that they leave the nest and start their own home. By the way, this doesn't have to be expensive, or even store bought. Try sewing or crafting a new decoration each year together for even more memories! Or check out your dollar store...they have some really cute ceramic holiday decorations for a buck or two. Remember, it's the memories you're interested in here, not a collectable based on monetary value.



14. If you have extra lights after stringing the tree, wind some through your potted plants for a special way to bring the sparkle throughout the room.

15. For a simple but beautiful centerpiece, set three or five candles of different heights in the middle of the table on a tray, then surround the bases of the candles with seasonal items. Low cost ideas? Cuttings from your Christmas tree, or from evergreen trimmings in your yard are a great first layer. Then how about shiny apples, glass ornaments turned hanger side down, found pinecones, nuts, wire star garland, leftover ribbon... By the way,

the same idea can be used for Thanksgiving, just substitute fall leaves, squashes, mini pumpkins, etc...



16. Wrap small presents in paper lunch bags decorated with stamps, then use a paper paunch to punch holes all around the opening, and lace ribbon through the holes, then tie closed. What a creative way to wrap!

17. Buy those bags of cranberries when they go on sale for \$1, and fill bowls that hold pillar candles, or fill a simple glass of water with them to just a few inches below the top, and put a floating candle in. Nuts can work the same way, but they tend to be more expensive. However, if you have a nut tree in your yard...

18. Create a whole set of holiday dishes and glasses for a fraction of what you could pay! Buy a set of clear glass plates, wine glasses, or tumblers. Discount stores, thrift stores, or export stores can carry these, and they are very cheap compared to ceramic dishware. Cut a star shape out of a flat kitchen style sponge, and sponge stars on the OUTSIDE of the dishware with a glass paint in a frosted white. You can find glass paint that does NOT need to be fired or baked at any craft store. Now you have a set of beautiful dishware that can not only be used for xmas, but almost any holiday, making it even more cost effective!

19. Hollow out the center of an apple as a candleholder, and tuck a few tiny greens in between the candle and the apple. Just be sure the flame never comes near the twigs. A little lemon juice sprinkled on the cut part of the apple will help keep it from browning as much.

20. Make silverware pockets out of leftover holiday fabric to dress up your holiday table. If you don't want to sew, iron the pocket shape into the square of fabric, insert your silverware, then tie with a ribbon.

21. Have a lot of scrap Christmas fabric from years past? Use it to make a simple square patchwork quilt as a throw for the couch, and add a lot of holiday spirit to the room! (Hint: use old blankets as batting- if you don't have any, check your thrift stores. Just be sure to wash in hot water, and dry at least 20 minutes in your dryer. White flat twin sheets on sale make great backing fabric.)

22. Make traditional "bread dough ornaments", but use the cornstarch and soda recipe below. It gives a smoother dough that dries almost like porcelain, and best of all, it air dries!

- 1 1/4 cups water
- 1 cup cornstarch
- 2 cups baking soda

Cook on medium heat in a saucepan about 15 minutes, then turn out on a board dusted with cornstarch and knead until pliable and non sticky. Form into your shapes or beads, and allow to air dry. This can take 24 hours or more depending on the piece, so place it in an area that can be undisturbed. Now paint with craft paint, and enjoy! (Note: if you are making ornaments, be sure to poke a hanging hole with a straw or the like.)

23. Cut two of a simple holiday shape from felt, then sew or fuse them together, decorate with permanent markers or fabric paint (if you wish), and hang all over the house! Some very simple shapes could include stars, packages (glue or paint on some ribbon), mittens, snowmen, boots, Christmas trees, stockings, candy canes, gingerbread men (trace them from your cookie cutters) and the list goes on! If you have a rustic theme this year, it's not necessary to embellish them at all!

24. If you are looking to do a toyland theme for your Christmas decorating this year, try searching out teddy bears and dolls at your local thrift stores. Wash them in a pillowcase and put them in your dryer for at least 20 minutes, then dress them up with ribbons and holiday fabrics. Group them under your tree, on mantels, and on windowsills. Stack small squares of cardboard together and wrap as a tiny present, then tuck them under a teddy's arm, or wrap an empty box and use it as teddy's seat by the front door.

25. Place a few inexpensive glass balls in a bowl and embellish with a few sprigs of greenery or some leftover ribbon. If you don't have an extra bowl (it is the holidays, after all!) try decoupage a box with leftover Christmas wrap, or cover with a little fabric and glue.



26. Make photo ornaments of your loved ones. Make color copies of your pictures in the size desired for your ornament, decoupage onto tagboard by brushing the back with white glue, apply to tagboard, then brush a coat of glue over the top of the copy to seal. The white glue will dry clear. Now glue ribbon, garland, or other “accessories” to your ornament along the edges, add a ribbon loop for hanging. You could also use this method with images from giftwrap or printed from the internet.

27. Take down your pictures and wrap them like a gift, then hang them back on the wall for great holiday cheer! You don't have to do this all around the house, how about just in the entry, or maybe the dining room?

28. Don't underestimate those white paper snowflakes you used to make as a kid! Grouped together in a window, hung from a light fixture, or suspended from thread in archways or over mantels. Fold a square piece of white paper into fourths, then cut out your design, being careful not to cut the edge that connects all sides.

29. Place votive or pillar candles on a small mirror used as a tray. Tie sprigs of greens or cinnamon sticks on the candles with ribbon or raffia. Be sure the flame is far enough away from the embellishments!

30. Make paper trees out of a square of pretty paper, preferably use a paper that is a little stiff. Simply roll the paper into a cone, and glue the edge with a hot glue gun. Perhaps some gold glitter or squiggles of paint to dress them up, and they will be beautiful on your mantel or as a centerpiece with greens. Try experimenting with different colors and textures...this would be a great place to use leftover cardstock or handmade paper! You could also do this with a piece of stiffened fabric.

31. Tie greens or ornaments to the chandelier with a little Christmas ribbon, just make sure they don't hang low enough for any candles on the table to catch them on fire.

32. Don't have a fireplace for holiday cheer? Faux stone fireplace:
Mask off the entire area of the fireplace, and paint it a background color-this will be your grout color. Mask off an area that will be the firebox, paint it a matte black color. Take an ordinary household sponge and tear it into several different size irregular pieces, simulating pieces of rock or stone. In a paper plate, pour three earth tone colors of craft paint. Dab the sponge into the paint colors, don't worry about them mixing some, dab off the extra paint so it doesn't run, then "stamp" stones onto the fireplace background. Continue to alternate sponge sizes, leaving some space between stones for a natural masonry look. Alternatively, if you have access to many smaller stones, how about gluing the stones right to the painted background! Add a mantel; a simple pine shelf will do. Be sure to accessorize the mantle with personal photos, and most importantly, candles! Candles give the impression of fire, and the mantle and firebox complete the illusion. This would be a great choice for an informal rustic space.



33. You could also use this same technique to make a “tile” fireplace... simply sponge square tiles on, or tape off grout lines with 1/4 inch masking tape, and paint the tiles. 1/4 Inch masking tape can be found in the quilting section of your fabric store if you can't find it in the paint section. Remove the tape before the paint dries, and you have a fireplace! You could even trim it out with wood trim to add dimension.

34. Use old Christmas cards as décor, tuck in the branches of your tree, hang from the window sashes, cut out the front and make into place mats with clear contact paper.

35. Make snowmen families from white cotton tube socks and rice. Fill the tip of the sock with rice until the size desired for the snowman's head, tie closed with yarn or ribbon. Now continue to fill the sock until the middle “snowball” is formed, tie again. Now add rice until the bottom, largest snowball is formed, tie, and tuck underneath. Now use glue and felt scraps to add a carrot nose, coal eyes and mouth, and a little vest and hat. You can make the hat from the cuff of the sock, or a tube of scrap fabric. Just cut off the cuff, tie it closed at one end with thread or yarn, then roll up edges to fit. Make several to represent members of your family!

36. Sew simple patchwork placemats or a table runner from holiday fabric. You can even mix the holiday fabric with solids to save costs, and it actually adds interest! A simple turned under hem either sewn or fused will finish the job, and dress up your table!

37. Add charm to inexpensive glass ornaments by adding embellishments. Use glitter paint to add swirls or dots and stripes, glue on buttons, old potpourri, even coffee beans in simple patterns, or simply hang from a ribbon instead of a plain metal hanger. (By the way, paper clips make great hangers if you are in a pinch!)



38. Tie your cloth napkins with a touch of raffia and tuck in a sprig of evergreen for a great party accent, instead of using napkin rings. Or take your old xmas craft picks (you know, those little bunches of faux poinsettia and holly that have fallen off one ornament or another over the years) and glue them to a set of napkin rings for a more permanent solution that can be saved from year to year.

39. Decorate small wooden bird houses to make your own quaint Christmas village! Craft stores out the birdhouses on sale every couple of weeks, and you should be able to get the full sized unfinished variety for a couple of bucks a piece. Paint it like a gingerbread house, or decorate like a New England village, complete with wreath on the door! Use your imagination for making miniature decorations, bits of fabric, a sheet of craft foam for snow on the roof, a bit of wire and poster board make a great North Pole sign for the front yard of the Toyshop, add details such as address or family name plates, to snow in the yard. (Bits of batting work well). Try making a replica of your own neighborhood, or from your childhood! These make great gifts too, and can be personalized for the recipient.



40. Buy candy canes after Christmas at huge discounts... then use next year as holiday decorations! Tree ornaments, garlands, hung from curtain rods and light fixtures with ribbon, use your imagination!



41. Take the time to string popcorn this year! Use the popcorn garlands lavishly, because popcorn is REALLY cheap!!! Few other things can evoke the charm of an old fashioned Christmas, it's just a bonus that it will cost you almost nothing!

42. Glue small holiday findings to a little wire and tuck into your planters for a whimsical surprise! Small bread dough ornaments, wooden ornaments, and last years package bows are all good starter ideas. Use what you have!

43. Make your own gift tags out of leftover paper. Ok, this is not a new idea, but try punching it up a bit. Add details by layering shapes over the base paper, use paper punches and scalloped scrapbooking scissors to add style, use a gold calligraphy pen to add names. Or use the scalloped scissors to make old holiday cards into tags.

44. Sponge stars on your window with paint! No, I'm not nuts. Just add a teaspoon or so of liquid dish soap to acrylic craft paint, (I like white or gold metallic) and after the holidays you should be able to wash it off with window cleaner. Use a non scratching dish scrubber if you come across a stubborn spot.

45. Bake gingerbread men (or snowmen, boots, whatever cookie cutters you have) but before you bake, use a straw to poke a hole on each side of the cookie. After they bake and harden a bit, use ribbon to tie the cookies together into a garland, and use to hang in front of your fireplace or in a doorway.

46. Want wreaths to hang around the home? Here's a penny pinching way to go about it. Save cardboard from boxes, cereal boxes, or even the cardboard inserts in new sheets or dress shirts. Use a plate to trace a circle onto the cardboard, then use a smaller plate or cup to draw a smaller circle for the center. Cut the wreath circle out, then use a glue gun to dress the front of the wreath. You could use peppermint candies, xmas cookies, bits of greenery left over from your tree trimmings, buttons, felt cut outs, even small pine cones. Tie a ribbon around the top and use to hang!

47. Use Epsom salt to partially fill votive candle holders, then snug your candle into the "snow". The effect is sparkling when the candles are lit.

48. Don't forget that the front porch or entry area deserves some decorating too! Instead of buying expensive cedar garland, take trimmings from your Christmas tree, or even prunings from your yard, tie them into a swag with bright holiday ribbon, and hang off your railings or even on your front door.

49. Use paper mache paste made from flour, water, and torn up newspapers, and cover round balloons with several layers. After it is dry, remove the balloon, paint and decorate, and hang from your overhangs as giant ornaments! You may wish to spray it with a sealant, but still should keep it out of direct rain.

50. Make holiday yard signs from scrap wood. The scraps you can get for free at a construction site are perfect for this. Paint the signs a background color, then use permanent markers or paint to write cute sayings on the signs such as "Santa, Stop Here!", or "Reindeer Landing Zone!". Check out holiday gift magazines that carry such signs for big bucks, and you might get some good ideas for design and wording. Remember, involve the family, and you could make these signs any size, from little plant pokes, all the way up to large yard decorations that dominate the neighborhood!



I hope you have all gotten some great ideas to use in your own home to make it a personal and creative holiday!

If you haven't already signed up for my free newsletter, go to my home page at <http://www.TheBudgetDecorator.com> and do it now, or send a blank email to thebudgetdecorator-subscribe@yahogroups.com and you'll get great free ideas all year long!

If you enjoyed these ideas, you have to consider buying my book(if you haven't already!), "Quick Decorating Ideas Under \$20:The Budget Decorator's Bible" . It is available in softcover at Amazon.com and BarnesandNoble.com, or in ebook form at my website. For details, visit my site at http://www.TheBudgetDecorator.com/our_products.html

Finally, tell a friend about my site, and my book! They will appreciate it, and you, for caring enough to share it with them! And don't forget, you are free to share this free ebook with anyone you please, just make sure the content is not changed.

Remember, Creativity, Not Cash!

-Kathleen Wilson
Christmas 2003