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Have yourself a merry little Canadian Christmas

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Special to QMI Agency

If you're a Canadian celebrating Christmas, there's more than one reason to be happy about hot holiday trends this year. For one, birch bark, bright red and all things natural are right on point. But more than that, a hint of country pride is also seeping in, a move interior designer Jane Lockhart embraces wholeheartedly.

"We are seeing a trend towards things that have a real relationship to Canada and Canadian culture ... a real return to patriotism," says Lockhart, host of W Network's Colour Confidential. "Finally the great Canadian north blends with the trends."

Presenting at Toronto's Royal Agricultural Winter Fair new Food & Lifestyle stage on Monday, Lockhart will share ideas for "taking your home from frumpy to fabulous" this holiday season. Among her favourites are tips for repurposing old items as opposed to throwing them away.

If your napkins seem drab after years of washing, add a bright detail in the corner with fabric paint. Before purging old jewellery, consider pins and brooches as unusual napkin rings and odd earrings

(who doesn't lose one from time to time?) as fabulous wine glass markers.

"I personally hate the idea that people have to go out and buy a whole bunch of new stuff every year," says Lockhart. "It's not in tune with the ecology of what most people are trying to do today."

Want to get in on one of the hottest trends for 2014? Look for ornaments made from natural materials such as wicker, woven grass, craft paper — even food. Lockhart suggests adding colour to your table with a colourful macaroon tree or spelling out words like 'Joyeux Noel' using solid chocolate letters. Want to make your table setting pop? Place a standard white dinner plate on the bottom, layer it with a brightly coloured snowflake cut from craft paper and place a smaller, clear glass plate on top.

One tip Lockhart has used for 20 years or more is to spray paint fresh apples, pears and other fruit in silver and gold, then use it as a centerpiece. She swears there's no rotten smell, even after a month.

"Decorating doesn't have to be expensive," says Lockhart. "It's about trying to find that balance that gives you a personal feel, but also a unique feel."

Building on the "selfie" trend, holiday decorating for 2014 is all about personalization, she adds. You might buy a set of decorations, but then add your family initial to each one. Or maybe you're an avid golfer so it makes sense to incorporate actual golf balls into your decorating.

Lockhart herself is a huge Elvis fan. "I have all sorts of versions of Elvis things hanging which no one notices initially," she shares. "Then they come closer to the tree and it's 'Hey! Where did you get that wiggling Elvis?' I don't know why they ask, but they all want one," she laughs.

If you find yourself feeling more grateful than usual this year, in light of the recent attacks on Canadian soldiers, then go with it, she adds. "I would have no problem at all with a Canadian themed tree," says Lockhart. "It's all about thankfulness. I don't think anybody forgets about that when it comes down to it."

Lockhart presents on the Food & Lifestyle stage on Monday, November 10, at 11 a.m., 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. The Royal Agriculture Winter Fair runs from November 7-16 at Toronto Exhibition Place. For more information, go to www.royalfair.org.

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