

Deck the halls and the sunroom too



(ARA) - Temperatures are finally starting to cool off and the first flakes have already taken flight in some northern cities. If you haven't started putting up your holiday decorations yet, now's the time to come up with a

plan. A good place to start is by deciding where to set up the tree this year. If you want to follow tradition, choose the most popular room in the house. For Kathleen Matthews of Ambler, Pa., a suburb of

Philadelphia, that's not the living room, family room, or kitchen but the sunroom.

We have a small house and about five years ago, we decided to turn our deck into a sunroom we could use all year round.

Now we spend more time there than any other room in the house so it only made sense to start setting up our holiday displays in there, she says.

That first year, they rearranged the furniture so the tree would be the focal point when someone walked into the sunroom or drove up to the house — the sunroom is next to the driveway. Our display has been growing by leaps and bounds ever since, she says.

This year Matthews has transformed her 12-foot-by-20-foot sunroom into a Winter Wonderland. The windows are covered from top to bottom with press-on snowflakes; white twinkle lights hang from the gables on the roof; the bookshelves are covered with snowmen and angels she has collected over the years. Not only does the display light up the Matthews' house, because it's in an all-glass room, it spreads the joy of the season through the entire

neighborhood.

The sunroom is right off the kitchen so it's easy for us to do our holiday entertaining in there, she says, and because it's so decked out, all of our friends and family really enjoy spending time in there.

According to a recent survey, nearly 70 percent of homeowners who currently have a sunroom consider it an extremely important living space. Of homeowners who do not have a sunroom, 64 percent say they'd like to have one.

Not only do they provide an affordable way to add to your living space, they make it possible for you to enjoy the outdoors any time you want, says Matt Manfred, president of Betterliving of the Delaware Valley, the company that built the Matthews' sunroom. With a glass enclosure on your patio or deck, it doesn't matter if it's raining or snowing — or a beautiful autumn day — you can

enjoy the glory of all of the seasons in comfort.

Glass-enclosed sunrooms can be built from scratch, or if you don't have a lot of extra space, on top of an existing deck or even as a replacement for an existing screened in patio. If you'd like some information about what's involved in adding a sunroom to your home, log on to the Betterliving Sunrooms Web site, www.betterlivingsunrooms.com, to request a catalog, tape or DVD.

Courtesy of ARA Content

EDITOR'S NOTE: According to the National Retail Federation (NRF), last year more than 60 percent of Americans spent at least \$55 on decorations for Christmas, Hanukkah and Kwanzaa. The predictions aren't out for 2005 yet, but if past years are any indication, the numbers will be significantly higher this year.