



HOME AT LAST

AN AUSTIN, TEXAS, FAMILY DISCOVERS THE MAGIC OF SLOWING DOWN AND SPREADING OUT FOR THE HOLIDAYS

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DEN

KEEP THE MAN CAVE FREE OF FRILLS

Homeowner Greg Gish's favorite room was made decidedly simpler than the rest of the home—no patterned wallpaper or drapery. Rusty colors and plaid accents add a masculine touch. "I'm totally outnumbered by women in our household. This is my refuge!" he jokes.

In the living room, even the elk antlers above the mantel get festive attention.



After 13 years of exhausting Christmas treks from their tiny New York City apartment to visit family in Dallas and Chicago, Kristin and Greg Gish were ready to get out of the Big Apple, buy a home, and host their own holidays.

Other cities were in the running, but when the Gishes discovered a quaint street in the Austin suburb of Tarrytown, they were ready to put down roots for themselves and their two daughters, 4-year-old Teddie and 3-year-old Cecily. "We love the lifestyle and the energy of Austin. It feels like a small town, even though it's one of the fastest growing cities in the country," says Kristin. "The schools are great. The restaurants are phenomenal. We wear shorts in November and February. Our neighborhood is a great place for kids. There are movie nights in the park, and Halloween is insane—bouncy houses, margaritas, and a DJ."

After the couple found their perfect home in Austin, Kristin called on New York friends Anne Maxwell Foster and Suysel dePedro Cunningham of the design firm Tilton Fenwick to help her create a fun, pattern-packed home that matches the family's energetic lifestyle.

All moved in, the couple quickly put on their holiday hosting hats—literally. "Last year was our first Christmas in the house. Our parents came and stayed. I made all the big family recipes, and we all sat around the table wearing paper crowns and laughing," says Kristin. "I have such clear memories of big Christmas Eve parties with family, and I want those same memories for my girls."

Of course, new traditions come with the new house—like strolling as a family two blocks to their church for Christmas Eve service before dinner, and enjoying Kristin's egg soufflé Christmas morning. Later on Christmas Day, neighbors come over for a glass of wine on the porch while the kids play in the yard.

"I love having the space for everyone to be together, and I'm expecting even more family this year," says Kristin. She means it in more ways than one—Kristin and Greg are welcoming a third baby girl in November. Good thing there's plenty of room.



CHRISTMAS CHEER, AUSTIN STYLE

No. 1

Off-kilter Garlands

Sprigs of seeded eucalyptus and magnolia inserted casually into the premade bay laurel and cedar garland add zip to ordinary fireplace decor.

No. 2

Star Light, Star Bright

Texas stars embellish the tree, a playful nod to the Lone Star State; air plants take a turn as ornaments. Larger light-bulbs burn brighter than mini bulbs.

No. 3

Paper Trails

Newly house proud, Kristin wraps her gifts with papers that match her living room's color scheme. Sprigs of fresh greenery add life and aroma.

No. 4

Horseshoe Wreath

Taking only about 1½ hours to create, this wreath is easy: Sketch the shape in plastic foam, cut it out, attach bay leaves with wire, and tie on ribbons.



LIVING ROOM

TACKLE AN OVERSIZE LIVING ROOM

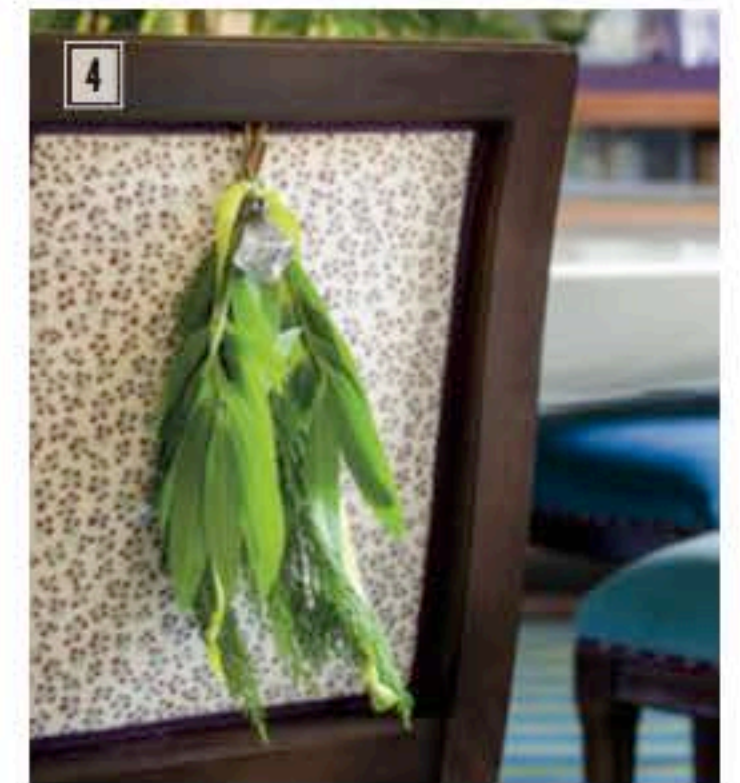
To make this large-scale room feel more intimate, the designers broke it up into two separate sitting areas with back-to-back sofas. They also paired the strong, straight-lined sofas with rounded coffee tables and skirted settees. "It's important to have a mix of lines and curves in your furniture choices," says Cunningham.



DINING ROOM

PILE ON THE PRINTS

There's a method to successfully mixing and matching patterns: "We always start with a large-scale statement print, like the curtain fabric here (Sissy in Lapis; duraalee.com), before choosing smaller supporting patterns," explains Foster. "We choose patterns within the same color palette and then vary scales and motifs. Different textures—wovens, velvets, stripes—make a room feel lived-in, rather than flat."



MORE CHRISTMAS CHEER, AUSTIN STYLE

No. 1

Relaxed Centerpiece

Instead of a potted poinsettia, try a loose arrangement of assorted greenery, like cedar and begonia leaves, with blushing bride and a few amaryllis.

No. 2

Succulent Toppers

Replace the traditional candles with local warm-weather succulents atop brass candlesticks for an edgy but also feminine little arrangement.

No. 3

Chandelier Decor

A halo of cedar placed around the light fixture adds a loose and romantic atmosphere for dinner parties and emits a woody scent in the air.

No. 4

Chairback Clusters

A ribbon and mini ornament tie together bunches of cedar and bay clippings. Straight pins attach foliage to chairbacks without damaging fabric.



KITCHEN

EMBRACE THE KITCHEN CROWDS

"It's so comfortable to sit here; we totally live around this table," says Kristin. Predicting that this might happen, Tilton Fenwick laminated the banquetta's fabric (custom laminations.com) to protect it from spills. Two optional table leaves extend the surface space for entertaining.



TEDDIE'S BEDROOM

TRY A TRIO OF PATTERNS

In daughter Teddie's room, a gingham carpet, ticking-stripe twin beds, and striped hydrangea wallpaper feel soft and sweet, thanks to the lavender-and-pastel green palette. "I think it's safe to say this is just about everyone's favorite room," says Cunningham. Teddie's little sister, Cicely, agrees—she sleeps in here more often than in her own bedroom.



MASTER BEDROOM

THROW IN A FEW SURPRISES

Without the Bohemian headboard fabric and whimsical wooden mirror, the balloon shades and wallpaper in an iconic Sister Parish pattern (Kinnicutt in Brown) would have made the bedroom feel too traditional. "Mixing modern and classic elements keeps a room from leaning too heavily toward a certain style," explains Cunningham. The design duo also added red piping around the shades for contrast from the walls and chose crisp white bedding to brighten up the dark room. ☛