

Getting Ahead of the Holiday Season

By Nan Hayes for Caring Transitions

As autumn moves in the store shelves begin to fill up with the latest trends in seasonal home décor, most of us are struck by an impulse to shop. Yet, before you decide to buy another centerpiece, table runner or ceramic pumpkin, it may be wise to take a complete inventory of the seasonal items you already own. At [Caring Transitions](#), we believe October is an ideal month to pull all of your storage bags and boxes out of the basement or attic and sort through decorations in preparation for upcoming holidays. Set aside a few hours or entire weekend to really get organized. Chances are, if you have lived in your home for a number of years this sorting process may turn up a number of items to throw out or donate. Who knows, you may even find some trinkets to sell and offset the cost of new purchases!

Sort by Season

It is helpful if your decorations are always stored separately according to [holiday](#). Once you pull everything from storage, begin to create piles of items and label them by festivity. Have enough bags, boxes, labels and markers on hand so you can clearly label and eventually store all items you decide to keep. This way, on October 1st, you can simply pull out the boxes marked “Halloween” and get started on your decorating without having to rummage through turkey-shaped candle holders and tangled strands of holiday lighting.

As you sort, carefully consider what you really use for each holiday. If you are thinking about moving or downsizing over the following year, be sure to eliminate large and bulky items. Smaller homes mean less storage space and fewer rooms and surfaces to decorate.

Halloween Costumes

According to a 2012 survey, Americans spend around \$6.86 billion on Halloween items which includes gifts, décor, mask and costumes. And the funny thing is, we buy more and more every year without getting rid of old or outdated items. In our vast experience with organizing, [downsizing and decluttering](#) homes, we have come across many families that no longer have young children, but still have boxes full of “kiddie” costumes they are holding onto “just in case.”

Most likely, those costumes can be sold in an [Estate Sale](#) or through [Online Auction](#). Unless you have a costume that is original or truly unique, like the latex mask of accused murderess, [Casey Anthony](#), which garnered a bid of a million dollars on eBay, you may not get a bundle of cash for your items, but perhaps enough to make it worth your while. If you’d rather donate the items you no longer need, many charitable organizations can put the costumes to good use and underfunded schools may be able to use them for skits and plays.

In the auction industry, Halloween ranks fifth out of all seasonal décor auction sales. The most collectible holiday, of course, is Christmas.

Christmas

As you sort through your many Christmas items, consider that the 2012 surveys showed a total of 2.1 million Christmas collectibles sold at auction last year. That is about four times the next seasonal celebration, weddings.

The most expensive Christmas item auctioned was a handcrafted Polish glass Christmas ornament called, “Scerry Christmas by Slavic Treasures,” created in 2002 which sold in 2007 for \$19.8 million. Of course, in reality, most ornaments and collectibles sell for only a few dollars, yet even these can add up if you have a large stockpile. Vintage items may generate higher prices on the open market where competing buyers can help drive the prices up.

In 2001, an original Christmas card sold at auction for about \$40,000, the highest paid for a holiday card so far. Sending any type of card started in the Victorian era and many of those cards still sell today at about \$8 for a trade card to \$300 for 3-D die-cut cards. Of course, most of us don’t have these valuable items on hand, but even run-of-the-mill boxed cards and stationary will sell below retail to the right buyer.

Holiday Tablescapes

As you look through your holiday table linens, try and eliminate those that are so stained or worn they may be of no use other than as dust cloths. If you choose to donate items that you no longer care for, but are in better condition, many women’s shelters seek basic linens for their clients. Some seasonal items may also be welcome.

Count your napkins and napkin holders and eliminate uneven sets, unless you are trying to achieve a more eclectic look with your table settings. Pure linen damask and double damask are the most valuable types of linen. Current listings for antique Irish linen range from \$50 to \$600. If you have fine linens but either have too many, no longer entertain or are moving to a place where you will not use a full-size dining table, these items make good candidates for sale and auction. Some collectors may even purchase odd numbers sets, for instance 3 or 5 napkins.

Collectors are also often seeking fine china. Sometimes even full sets of china may be offered as pieces, especially if they are highly collectible. Buyers may be willing to pay more for single items they need to build or complete their own sets. Glassware is similar, with sets of Waterford crystal glassware at auction \$100 to \$700 depending on the style, condition and size of the sets.

There are also still a number of folks who buy and sell “Collector’s Plates,” such as those made by Franklin Mint and Currier and Ives. With few exceptions for rare plates or complete sets, these types of items typically sell for few dollars, but again, profit at auction can add up if you have several on hand and combine sales with other items.

Kitchen Baking and Decor

Holiday kitchen items are often difficult to let go, particularly for those who associate a particular platter, or cookie cutter or casserole dish with a traditional family meal or family custom. For Caring Transitions clients who truly need to downsize, we often recommend gifting those items, along with the traditional recipe, to another family member so their holiday legacy may be continued.

In other instances, folks just have more kitchen and bakeware than they actually use. Again, these items may be very useful to family shelters and other charitable organizations. If you are looking to sell items, consider that very traditional items such as copper molds, 19th century Griswold cast iron skillets, tea kettles, enameled cookware, antique metal cookie cutters and original mason jars are all highly valued by collectors.

Other Décor

As you downsize larger items, keep in mind that household furnishings and home décor items are always on demand through [Online Auction](#) or [Estate Sale](#). The more unique the items, the more money they are likely to fetch. Home décor items can include anything from antique furnishings, decorative vases, mirrors, centerpieces, large plastics, lamps, lamp shades, cushions, wall décor, tapestries, picture frames and wall sculpture.

We understand that any downsizing or decluttering project can be overwhelming. As the nation's largest professional resource for downsizing, decluttering and household liquidation, your Caring Transitions office provides a total solution for sorting, organizing, donations, shipments, packing, Estate Sale and Online Auction.

Visit us online at www.CaringTransitions.com.

Call Caring Transitions for a Consultation – (800) 647-0766
Christopher Seman, President of Caring Transitions
10700 Montgomery Road, Suite 300
Cincinnati, Ohio 45242