



# CHRIS H. OLSEN

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### Freshen up fall

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Think **fall** decorating, and one thinks of pumpkins gathered on a doorstep. A wreath, shot with artificial **fall** leaves, adorning a door. Scarecrows grinning from beside (or perched atop) bales of hay in the yard. Croton plants and **fall**-hued linens adorning dining room, kitchen and bathroom. And pots of mums and more scarecrows and more hay and more fake colored leaves. Perhaps even a bit of burlap. But there are many other ways of capturing the ambience of autumn, something more people

## Tweets by @ChrisHOlsen1



**Chris H Olsen**  
@ChrisHOlsen1

The Edgemont House was thrilled to host Municipal League Spouses Event! Great friends, great food, great fun!



21h



**Chris H Olsen**  
@ChrisHOlsen1

Fresh Orchids of all colors only at Botanica Gardens! The pink flamingo watering cans are a must have as well!



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seem to realize these days, say decorating experts. Are more people dressing their homes for **fall**? "Yes, because it is joyful," says Elizabeth Scokin, Blytheville-born entertaining expert and event planner. **Chris H. Olsen**, designer and home and garden expert based in Little Rock, also sees evidence of an increased interest in **fall** decorating ... a trend he attributes to all the **fall** festivals afoot. "[People are] not just buying one ... pumpkin anymore," he says. "They buy an average of probably three to seven. That's because people are decorating more."



They're not all going the same route, however. Like everything else, **fall** home-decor looks can run the gamut. "**Fall** decorating can be real cutesy ... or it can be a little bit more sophisticated and elegant," **Olsen** says. "You might want to go the old country way - with a bale of hay and pumpkins and all that," says J. Michael Jackson of J. Michael Jackson Designs in Little Rock. "But I kind of steer away from that." So what are some new trends in do-it-yourself **fall** decor? Looking at those pumpkins in new ways, for one. PUMPKINS OF ANOTHER COLOR "People are making it a little more simple ... color-coding their pumpkins together and that type of thing," says **Olsen**, who also owns Botanica Gardens in Little Rock and Plantopia nursery in North Little Rock. "The trend is going a little bit more towards ... a more contemporary look." For instance? Going for green or white pumpkins, rather than orange. Ditching the scarecrows and the corn stalks and making things "just a little bit ... cleaner," **Olsen** continues, recalling that he once did his master bedroom fireplace in all white and green **fall** decor. And recently, at a downtown restaurant, he decorated with white pumpkins, grapevine wreaths and contemporary plantings inside pots. "It still looks festive, but just has a nicer, organic, contemporary feel." "I have glued pumpkins to mirrors," **Olsen** continues. These are, mind you, artificial, lightweight pumpkins. They can be taken from cheap to elegant, he says, by taking walnut stain or glaze, dipping a rag in it and wiping it all over the pumpkin. "I've done pumpkins where I attached them to the walls, [and] even floated them in my pool. I'm always doing things very different." This year, **Olsen** has also done pumpkin pedestals. "I've taken metal fence posts, painted [them] black and created a black wood top and put them at different heights in my garden in my landscape ... and I cover them in green moss and lay specimen pumpkins on them. And I have these great pedestal pumpkins throughout my yard." Jackson suggests stacking pumpkins on top of one another, a large one at the bottom, with three smaller ones on top. The large pumpkin, he says, can be carved out and a candle placed inside. This arrangement can go by the front door, patio or courtyard. Those off-the-beaten-path pumpkins can get quite glam. Trending right now, Scokin says, are hand-painted chinoiserie (stylized Chinese images) pumpkin figurines in blue and white.



NO MONEY DOWN There's no need to spend big bucks on decorations. You can use what you already have. "I like natural [decor]. I love to go cut stuff myself," Jackson says. "There's all types of things in this state that you can make a beautiful natural Arkansas arrangement out of. ... You might want to do a grapevine arbor over the threshold of your door." You might even do some honeysuckle vine that's dried. And then you can just intermingle, you can do dried lotus pods, and all different types of other ... dried things of that nature. "Milo [a sorghum plant] is beautiful when it's dry. You'd be surprised at what you can find around. There are different types of grasses with big plumes that can be used." And, Jackson adds, you can go find some buckeyes and mix branches of them into a wreath. You might even incorporate some cotton bolls. Jackson also suggests using pumpkins and other varieties of squash - as well as huge gourds - to make arrangements. Dried okra pods, dried thistles, holly and magnolia leaves and, for fragrance, rosemary and sage can also be incorporated. For non-natural accents, he suggests heading to a craft store for decorative mesh that has become so popular for wreaths. These meshes are available in bright, vivid colors as well as the "standby" fall colors of black, orange, rust and brown. Scokin, too, loves to decorate with various squashes, as well as candles. "I'm all about candles on the mantel - different heights and sizes ... oodles and oodles," she says. "I like when they get drippy." WHAT OF HALLOWEEN? It's no surprise that more people are blending autumn and Halloween

decor."Here's **fall**, here's Halloween, here's Thanksgiving. And basically, Thanksgiving gets bypassed because it goes straight from **fall** to Christmas - because it's so close," Jackson says. In a tossup between whether to do **fall** decorating in general or Halloween, the experts suggest favoring the former."You get more bang for the buck, if you decorate ... for **fall** and autumn instead of Halloween," **Olsen** says. "If you blend the two together, you can take the spooky things down, but leave the **fall** decor **up** through Thanksgiving." Then, Scokin suggests, "add branches of bittersweet and other **fall** berries." Although it's best to keep things simple in decorating, simple doesn't mean sparse."What's **fall**? It's a celebration of harvest," **Olsen** says. "One, two pumpkins is not going to work. You have to make it look like a harvest."



Caption: Arkansas Democrat-Gazette/JOHN SYKES JR. An ordinary element of **fall** decor, done in an out-of-the-box way: pumpkins in the pool. Homeowner **Chris**

**Olsen** also has attached fake pumpkins to walls and mirrors. Skeletons and jack-o'-lanterns add a Halloween element to **Chris Olsen's fall** yard decor. "People like to buy some cutesy stuff [for Halloween], but not as much as before," he says. "You get more bang for the buck" if you get general **fall** decor, add the Halloween touches, then take those touches down after Halloween, he says. Pumpkins help dress **up** the table during a dinner party hosted by Blytheville-born event planner Elizabeth Scokin. J. Michael Jackson, who does event and holiday decorating via his company, J. Michael Jackson Designs, shows off wreaths and other **fall**-decor elements at an Oct. 3 **fall** festival. Jackson suggests using natural elements, along with decorative meshes. Arkansas Democrat-Gazette/JOHN SYKES JR. A touch of Halloween livens **up** the **fall** decor in the yard of Little Rock-based home and garden expert **Chris H. Olsen**. "I do it for the kid in me," he says. "And then I share it with the people in the neighborhood, because it's more fun." Arkansas Democrat-Gazette/JOHN SYKES JR. Pumpkins dominate the hedges in the **fall** decor at **Chris Olsen's** Little Rock home. Home and garden "guru" **Chris H. Olsen** stands outside his home, surrounded by a bounty of **fall** decorations.

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