

https://www.decaturdaily.com/news/morgan_county/decaturn/the-best-christmas-lights-and-decorations-this-season/article_8b63a54e-9418-51e0-97f2-c7346ba10d07.html

The best Christmas lights and decorations this season

By Erica Smith Staff Writer

Dec 21, 2022



Thomas Terry says he has about 25,000 lights decorating his home at 2220 Harrison St. S.E. in Decatur. [JERONIMO NISA/DECATUR DAILY]

JERONIMO NISA

Every Christmas season for the past 14 years, Thomas Terry has decorated his home and front lawn with 25,000 lights that dance to music for his own enjoyment and for the enjoyment of every passerby who is in the holiday spirit.

“I started it cause I kind of wanted to learn how to do it, but then it kind of caught on,” he said. “It’s nice to hear people outside laughing and rolling their windows down and saying thank you.”

Terry, 55, and his wife Tonya, 46, live at 2220 Harrison St. S.E. in Decatur. He said he was the first one in Decatur to decorate with animated lights. Terry said it varies year to year, but he usually has between 21,000 and 25,000 lights.



“I try to have 25,000 since that’s what Clark Griswold had in the 'Christmas Vacation' movie,” he said. “I have LED strands which don’t take as much electricity. ... The electric bill used to be sky high; it’s still a little high, but nothing like it used be.”

The Terrys are among many residents of Decatur and surrounding communities who share Christmas joy with others through outdoor decorations. Displays locally range from traditional decorations in historic districts to lights choreographed to holiday music.

At 2220 Harrison, there are snowflakes on the roof, windows and house, 3-foot trees, 10-foot trees and a 20-foot tree. The large tree has animation that changes with the music.

“For example, 'All I Want for Christmas is You' by Mariah Carey, you might see a fireplace and a chimney with a fire going in it,” Terry said. “My wife did the I want a hippopotamus song, and it’ll have a hippo on it and I’ll show a little girl coming downstairs.”

Terry said he turns on his lights around 5 p.m. daily, turns them off around 10:30 p.m. during the week, and turns them off even later on Fridays and Saturdays. Between 40 and 55 songs are programmed to go along with the light show, he said.

"I just play it in certain parts, like I have all the Disney movie songs and the old 'Frosty the Snowman,' those kind of songs, grouped together," Terry said. "Then I mix in non-Christmas songs in there. ... That way there's something in there for everybody."

Motorists park near his house to view the show, Terry said, and tune their radios to 107.1 FM to hear the music.



"I always have a steady one or two or three at a time. ... I've had 23 cars lined up at one time outside," he said. "Some drive by, watch a couple songs then leave. I've had people come by in their pajamas and bring their ice cream and sit there and watch them for an hour."

Terry said it brings him pleasure to know people are getting joy out of his display.

"It makes it feel worth it when you hear everybody having fun with their families," he said.

"Sometimes it's hard to make myself get out and put them all up. But then there's so many people expecting it so you keep doing it."

Terry said he starts setting up his display in October, but it takes three or four weekends to complete. He said he starts taking down the display after new year begins.

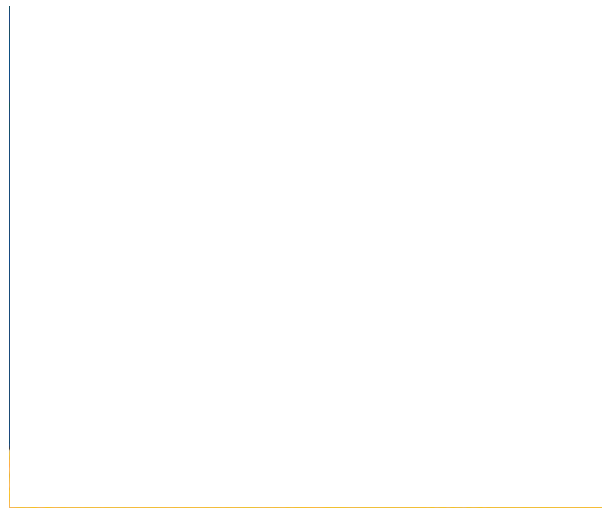
"This is something people can do with their families for free without having to get out of their car," Terry said.

Touch of France

Lauren Riehl was inspired by France, which she had visited, when it came to decorating her home. Riehl lives with her husband, Dr. John Randall Riehl, at 504 Line St. N.E. in historic Old Decatur.

“We went to Paris for our anniversary during the summer and I loved the macaron shop Laduree. They’re all about pinks and mint and gold; the whole color combination is just beautiful,” she said.

Riehl has decorated her home’s exterior the last two Christmases after moving there. There are pastel-colored, large, round ornaments around the front door frame, two planters with chandeliers inside and live floral displays, and 9,000 lights in a tree and in bushes along the front walkway. There are also wreaths on all the windows and garland on the second-floor balcony.



“Part of what I loved in Paris, their cafes that just have these beautiful entryways decorated and they’re just magnificent,” Riehl said. “I kind of wanted to bring something like that here to have the doorway that’s just beautiful and enchanting.”

Riehl’s home won the platinum overall excellence award for decorations in Old Decatur. She said she had the house decorated the weekend before Thanksgiving and will take everything down at the beginning of January.

“People do ride around Old Decatur and Albany to look at the lights because I did that growing up here,” Riehl said. “Now that I live down there, I really wanted it to be extra special for people to enjoy because I know they’re looking.”

--

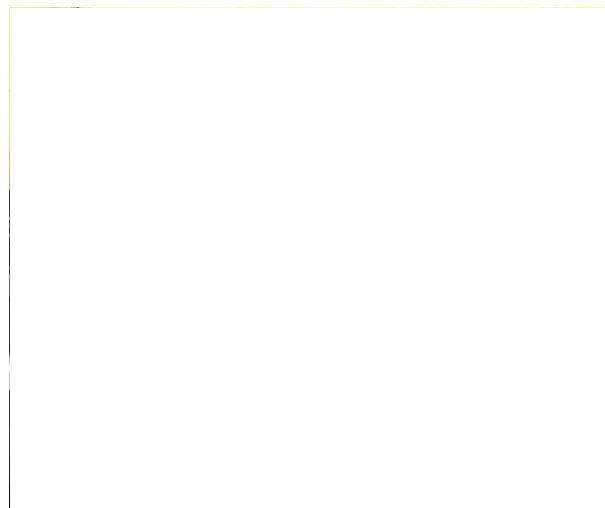
Inflatables and lights

Porfirio Aguinaga, 62, lives with his wife Juana, 53, on about three acres at 1415 Danville Road in Decatur. Aguinaga has decorated the exterior of his home since he moved there four years ago.

Their property on the busy street is lined with a 1,400-foot fence that is decorated with 4,000 lights, Aguinaga said. There is a 20-foot-tall tree made of 1,000 flashing, colored lights in the front yard, he said. Aguinaga said there are 200 feet worth of lights on the house and 150 feet of blue lights in three trees.

Aguinaga has six inflatables in his front yard including Mickey Mouse, Minnie Mouse, the Grinch, penguins, Santa Clause and a snowman.

Aguinaga said he enjoys decorating and people are welcome to pull in his driveway to look at his decorations. He said he feels good when he sees people slow down as they drive by to see his yard.



Aguinaga said he put his decorations and lights up in November and will take them down in January. He said each year he wants to add more to the display.

Antonio, 35, is Aguinaga's son and helped put up the lights and decorations. He said his father decorates for people to enjoy because not a lot of people decorate anymore.

"If he could, he'd have the whole yard filled up," Antonio said.

--

Other decorations

Drive down almost any block in Decatur this week and you'll find houses with artful outdoor decorations, but here are a couple other homes of note.

- 1402 Sweetbriar Place S.W. — With a corner lot at Sweetbriar Place and Sweetbriar Road, this home has space for an impressive number of inflatable Christmas figures that become more numerous each year. Be sure to roll down your windows to enjoy the music that accompanies the flashing lights that also decorate the yard.
- On Moulton and Coffey streets in Moulton, flashing lights, inflatables and Christmas music span three blocks. Expect to see a Ferris wheel, see-saw, Santa piloting an airplane and helicopter and a larger-than-life Scooby-Doo, Mickey Mouse, Big Al and Frosty.
- 3556 Barkley Bridge Road, Hartselle — Located about 2.5 miles from either end of the road, this house includes lights that dance along with music. There are lights on the house and in the yard, including small Christmas trees made of lights and one large one. Don't forget to look for all the Mickey Mouse heads lit up and scattered around the home's light display.

—erica.smith@decaturdaily.com or 256-340-2460.

2022 FORD EXPLORE

2.9% APR_F
FORD C