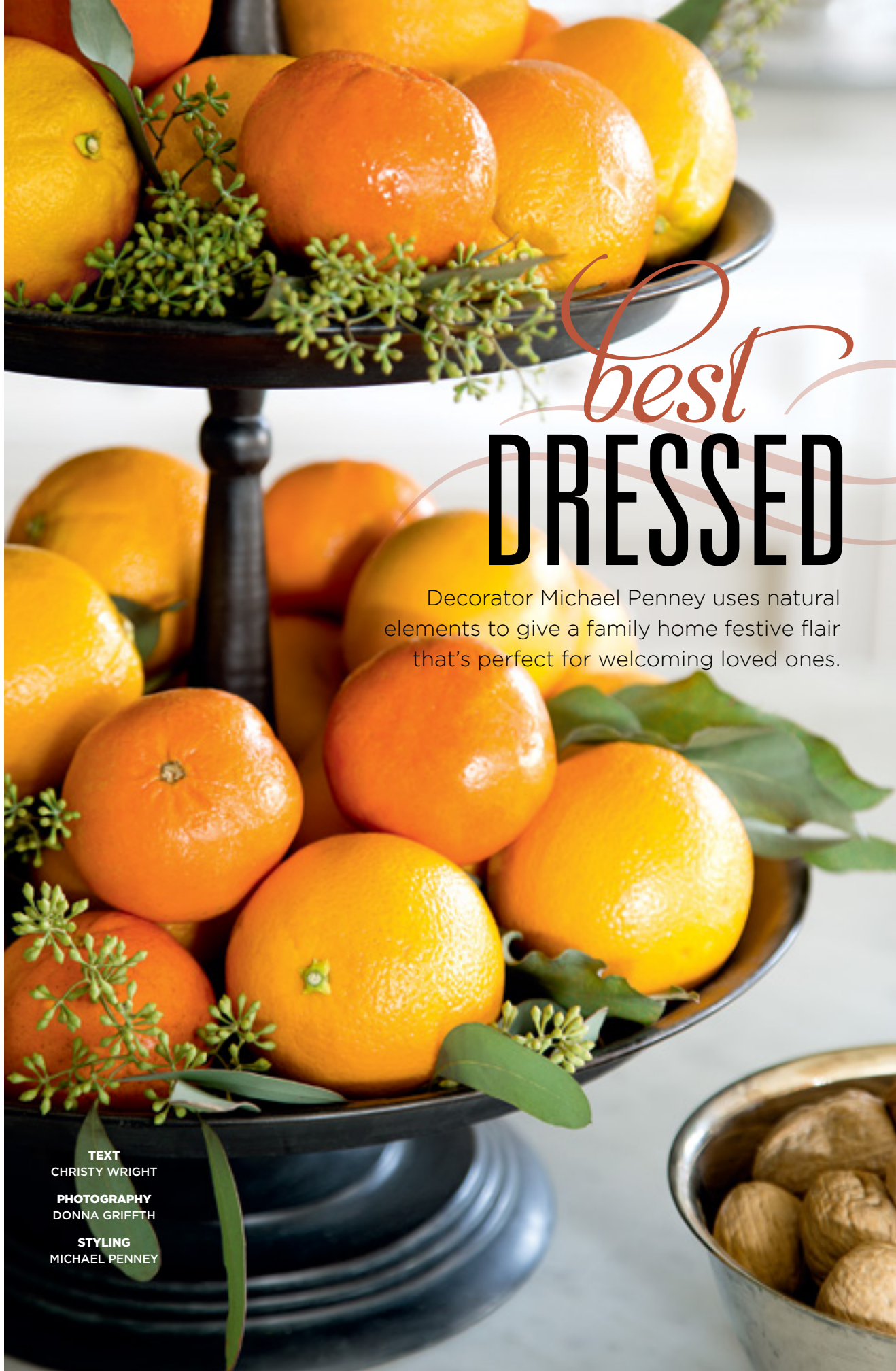


The deep tones of the hickory hardwood floors give the open-concept main level a warm feel. Decorator Michael Penney placed the Christmas tree between the living and dining areas "to anchor the living room and mark the transition between the two spaces."

CONTRACTING, Brumley Construction; Gossamer 32-26 **WALL PAINT** (through-out), Pratt & Lambert Paints; **CABINETRY, ISLAND PANELLING**, Crescent Cabinet Company; **STOOLS, CAKE STAND**, Penney & Company; **FLOORING**, Gaylord Hardwood Flooring; faux fir **CHRISTMAS TREE**, Sheridan Nurseries.





Best DRESSED

Decorator Michael Penney uses natural elements to give a family home festive flair that's perfect for welcoming loved ones.

TEXT
CHRISTY WRIGHT

PHOTOGRAPHY
DONNA GRIFFITH

STYLING
MICHAEL PENNEY



Decked out in boxwood, not even the back entrance was overlooked. "We can see this space from the kitchen," says homeowner Jennifer Brumley. "It was so thoughtful of Michael to decorate it."

CHAIRS, Penney & Company.

“To

me, Christmas means togetherness,” says homeowner Jennifer Brumley.

“Sixteen relatives from both sides of our family gather at our house for holiday dinner, and everyone pitches in. My mom’s on gravy duty, my sister makes the potatoes and we all keep an eye on the turkey – though my real love is laying a gorgeous table with festive place settings, loads of flowers and candles.”

Jennifer’s passion for holiday embellishment, however, extends beyond the tabletop and is on display throughout the 3,800-square-foot new-build house in Whitby, Ont., she shares with her husband, Jason (a builder and owner of Brumley Construction); their son, Jack, 7; and dog, Thomas.

It was Jason who started to rebuild their home in 2009, after the original 1950s design proved too small for their growing family. Jennifer says the roomy new house, which was finished in 2011 and lovingly built to look like a heritage home, is casually elegant, words that could equally describe her approach to holiday decor. “I lean toward a more natural, minimal look

BELOW In the open-concept dining area, Michael relied on symmetry and scale. “I flanked the bold hydrangea arrangement with poinsettia pots to help define this space and create a focal point,” he says. Seeded eucalyptus branches adorn the chandelier.

DINING CHAIRS, Penney & Company; **CHANDELIER**, Circa Lighting.



ABOVE A maple mantel fronts the range hood and makes a grand old-world gesture in the new-build kitchen. Wooden accents form a warm countertop to the marble countertop.

MANTEL, Crescent Cabinet Company.

LEFT Embellished with natural elements, the front foyer offers a warm welcome. “This is the space the family uses most to enter and exit their home, so we didn’t want to forget about it,” says Michael.

WALLPAPER, Brewster Home Fashions; antique **DRESSER**, **MIRROR**, Penney & Company.



*“Natural materials
highlight these
beautiful rooms
in a quiet yet
seasonal way.”*

In the living room, a pair of cream tufted armchairs shares the floor with a lavender one that lends a bit of colour to the space. “For Christmas dinner, we move these chairs to the dining area,” says Jennifer. “They provide extra seating and make everyone feel like a king at the table.”

Tufted **ARMCHAIRS**, HomeSense; **COFFEE TABLE**, Penney & Company.



A reproduction French Empire chandelier and an antique Russian rug set a luxurious tone in the master bedroom.

Comfortable Chinos P5223-34
WALL PAINT, Para Paints;
HEADBOARD, BENCH, Penney & Company; **CHANDELIER**, Restoration Hardware.

and am comfortable choosing colours and textures,” she says. “But spatially, I struggle to find the right balance.” She turned to decorator Michael Penney, owner of three Whitby decor stores, Penney & Company, Pineapple Street and Sweet Violet, for help. “Jennifer is a regular at my shops, and we quickly struck up a friendship,” says Michael. “She has a huge passion for design, so I let the style of her home set the tone, and we built up the scheme from there.”

Michael relied on an abundance of greenery, such as boxwood, seeded eucalyptus, tiny fir trees and moss, to bring Christmasy charm to the space. “I used natural materials, including branches and berries, to really highlight these beautiful rooms in a quiet yet seasonal way,” he says. His task was to merge Jennifer’s desired minimalism with full-on Christmas trimmings, something he claims is quite easy. “Minimal doesn’t have to mean sparse,” says Michael. “Limit the number of elements in the scheme – just a few key colours or materials, for example – then repeat them throughout for a look that’s full and festive but doesn’t assault the senses.”

Like all good decorators, Michael likes to add an unexpected touch to a room as a talking point. His choice of accent colours in the couple’s home, for example, livens up the mostly natural scheme. To many, the cool pale aqua and purple ornaments might seem out of place in an otherwise traditional palette. But not to Michael: “Don’t worry about being perfect, because in the end it will be boring and generic. Build on personal traditions and highlight what you love.” That’s something Jennifer’s family has done for many Christmases and will continue to do in the years to come.

FOR SOURCES, SEE OUR WORKBOOK

BELOW, LEFT “The guest bathroom is jaw-droppingly gorgeous, with lots of snowy marble, so it only needed a few wintry accents,” says Michael.
BELOW, CENTRE & RIGHT Candles of various heights are nestled into cedar boughs for a loose and glowing effect on a dresser in the master bedroom.
 “Hanging a wreath on a mirror creates an instant holiday look that’s easily repeated throughout the house,” says the decorator.

Carrara marble **TILES**, white glass **BACK WALL TILES**, Saltillo Imports; **BATHTUB, TOILET, SHOWER FIXTURES**, Ginger’s; **DRESSER, MIRROR**, Penney & Company; **SIDECHAIR**, Rousseau’s.

