

THE PEOPLE WHO LOVE CHRISTMAS.. BUT YULE NEVER CATCH



LONG LIST Amber

My helper has a gift for buying just right

SHOPPING

Amanda Brown is a single mum running her own business and struggles to find the time to fit in all the Christmas shopping she needs to do.

She called on the help of Glasgow-based personal shopper and stylist Amber Macintosh – and says the help she gives is priceless.

Amanda, 31, of Ayrshire, said: "I love that Amber does all the research and hard work into finding really thoughtful gifts for people and I get all the credit.

"I've got friends and family all over the world, including people who are incredibly hard to buy for, and she finds them wonderful gifts that match their interests – like a vintage limited-edition comic for someone close to me who loves comics and games.

"I still do all the Christmas shopping for my little boy myself and for my family and friends who live close by but she sources such wonderful gifts for the others."

Amber, who runs her own personal shopping and styling company, The Stylist's Stamp, said: "A large number of the people I shop for are business executives or people who work freelance and who just don't have the time to go Christmas shopping.

"I do feel like a real-life Secret Santa. The people I'm shopping for never know that the gifts they have been given haven't been chosen by their loved one, who I encourage to write the card or gift tag attached.

"It's always great hearing the lovely feedback about how much someone loved a gift I've found. Everyone is happy."

For some people, Christmas shopping, wrapping presents and decorating the tree are all part of the fun of the festive season.

For others, they represent little more than a perennial pain in the bottom as the year comes to a close.

But now a growing band of people have come up with new solution – they've decided to outsource their worst Christmas bugbears.

Here, three women tell JENNY MORRISON that while Santa Claus may be coming to town, they've decided to splash out on their own little helpers.

DECORATING

Helena Simpson loves everything about Christmas – except the family rows that erupted over putting up the decorations.

So this year she spent thousands of pounds on a professional decorator to do everything, from putting up three Christmas trees to covering the front of her house with stylish lights and two giant 2m-high candy canes.

Helena, 46, of Coatbridge, said: "Usually we go on holiday over Christmas. But this year we're staying at home and we've used the money to decorate the house for the festive season instead.

"I love Christmas and love any excuse to put up decorations, celebrate and have a party.

"As a family, we always start out with the best of intentions about what decorations should go where and what needs to be done but it always ended with everyone falling out.

"I've always loved the beautiful Christmas displays in hotels and other commercial premises, so I decided to look in to whether you could hire professionals to decorate your home in the same way."

Helena, who lives with husband Kenneth, 45, and sons Riley, 16, and Harris, 13, contacted Janis Wilson Bloom of The Christmas Decorators.

She visited Helena to chat over everything from colour schemes to favourite Christmas themes.

Helena said: "She wanted to know what was important to me about Christmas. She came up with a mood

CHRISTMAS STAIR Helena with her son Harris **Pics** by Paul Chappells



TINSEL TOWN Janis at work

board for me to look at and even put together graphic design pictures of how my choices would look."

Helena opted for three different Christmas trees for her detached five-bed home – in her sitting room, TV lounge and sons' games room.

Two of the trees have a silver and white theme, while the third has a more Scandinavian look.

She has also had the inside of

her home filled with beautifully lit festive garlands – across mantelpieces and along the banisters of her stairs.

Outside her house, Christmas lights lead the way to her front door, which is surrounded by a garland and decorated with a Christmas wreath.

Lights line the roofline and apex of her home, while the stonework above her bay window features a large wreath with a bright red bow. A garland

NATIONAL

THEM DECORATING A TREE OR WRAPPING A PRESSIE



TREE-MENDOUS Helena and Harris and, top, the exterior



FESTIVE PLAY Harris in the Simpson family's TV room



ALL PRESENT AND CORRECT Laura with finished presents

I don't hate it.. but I just run out of time

WRAPPING

As the boss of one of Scotland's biggest lighting specialists, Laura Pagan knows all about filling other people's festive season with sparkle.

But when it comes to getting ready for Christmas, she's called in the help of professional gift wrapper Emma Chirven to beautifully wrap all her presents.

Laura, 60, who runs Pagazzi Lighting, said: "There are some people who love wrapping Christmas presents and others who hate it."

"My issue has always been finding the time to get everything wrapped."

"There have been millions of occasions in the past where I have been up until some silly hour on Christmas Eve trying to get everything wrapped in time."

"In the past, I've even seen myself taking two days away from work just to wrap everything, which isn't a good use of my time."

"I decided, 'Why not just pay someone to wrap my gifts?' I found Emma, who does it much better than me."

"I still wrap the presents for my two daughters but I drop off all my other gifts with Emma and she gets them back to me so beautifully wrapped and covered in such lovely ribbon and bows."

Emma, who runs Gifted Girl



THAT'S A WRAP Emma

Glasgow, said: "If someone has gone to the trouble of getting something gorgeous to give as a gift, then it should be as beautifully wrapped on the outside as what's hidden inside."

"I adore the festive season – it's never too early for me to hear Wham! and Michael Buble playing in the shops – and I love the idea of being able to contribute just a little to make other people's Christmas magical."

"Prices include paper and decorations range from £2 to £4 per gift, depending on size and amount of decoration. For example, some gifts just have a little ribbon but others literally are decorated with bells and whistles."

"I always ask clients what colour of wrapping paper they would like me to use but most don't mind and leave it to me to choose."

also decorates the decking in her back garden.

Helena said: "It maybe does sound decadent getting someone to come in and decorate your home for Christmas but it has been worth every penny."

"It has taken the stress away. And once Christmas is over, the team will come back and take all the decorations down and even store

them away until next year. My house looks magical – and it even started to snow when the team were here putting all the decorations up."

Janis, who has clients spending anything from a few hundred pounds to £11,000, said: "Being able to decorate someone's home for Christmas is the most amazing job in the world."

"More and more people are looking

for help in preparing their home for Christmas, either because they want their house to look really beautiful and can't achieve the looks they want themselves or because they have no time to do it themselves."

"We can hire out the decorations we provide or people can buy them. And we not only put them up but come back and take them all down again and store them away for next year."

ELF SERVICE