

EVERYDAY FENG SHUI
Feng Shui by Maria
December Column for Benicia Herald

Joyous Holiday Gift Giving and Decorating with Feng Shui

The holiday season is upon us. This is a time when families get together to celebrate traditions passed down from generation to generation. It's also a time of decorating and selecting the right gifts; both of which can cause unneeded anxiety – but not if you let Feng Shui guide you.

Feng Shui, the ancient Chinese art of using your environment to help you create peace and harmony in your life is based on the concept of creating space for Ch'i, the positive energy to flow in. This energy is what you need to help you “breathe” through the holiday season. By using Feng Shui principles in your decorating and gift giving you can relax and enjoy this special time.

Feng Shui Holiday Gift Advice

If you're like me, you have so many people to shop for; not only family and friends but also for hostesses, teachers, hairdressers, dog groomers, colleagues, neighbors etc... One suggestion for the latter is to start early, pick a few signature gifts and buy in bulk. Wrap them and place them in a festive pile ready for you to grab one and go. Here are a few of my favorites which have positive meanings in Feng Shui and will help nourish the receiver with Feng Shui energy:

- 1) Healthy Plants – Round leaf ones represent prosperity. Potted Amaryllis bulbs represent transformation and growth and put on a spectacular show all winter.
- 2) Cocktail Napkins – Pretty cotton ones are associated with entertaining and caring for your guests
- 3) Home Fragrances - Scented candles are associated with fire and warmth, while room fresheners such as Thymes enhance the senses and help clear energy
- 4) Small Spoons, Forks or Cheese Spreaders – Associated with nourishment through food, family and friends
- 5) Wallet with Money – Tucking a bill in a wallet represents abundance
- 6) Wind Chimes -Hang by the front door to attract positive energy to any location
- 7) Purse Hanger - Use one to keep your purse off the floor and respect your wealth
- 8) Precious Stones - Select citrine to attract clients and increased income, or amethyst for balance
- 9) Books - Give the gift of reading to open up the world

For family and friends I try to keep notes of what they like or need throughout the year. Otherwise I focus on consumables, life gourmet food baskets or bath products. I've also loved having items personalized for them which in Feng Shui represents a special connection.

Gifts to Avoid:

- 1) Sharp Object - Represents cutting a friendship
- 2) Empty Wallet - Represents lack of prosperity
- 3) Thorny Flower or Plant - Represents piercing a relationship
- 4) Stunted Tree like Bonsai - Represents stunted growth
- 5) Clock or Timepiece - Represents stealing time
- 6) Handkerchief - Represents crying in the future

Whatever you give, give with love and gratitude. It will all come back to you!

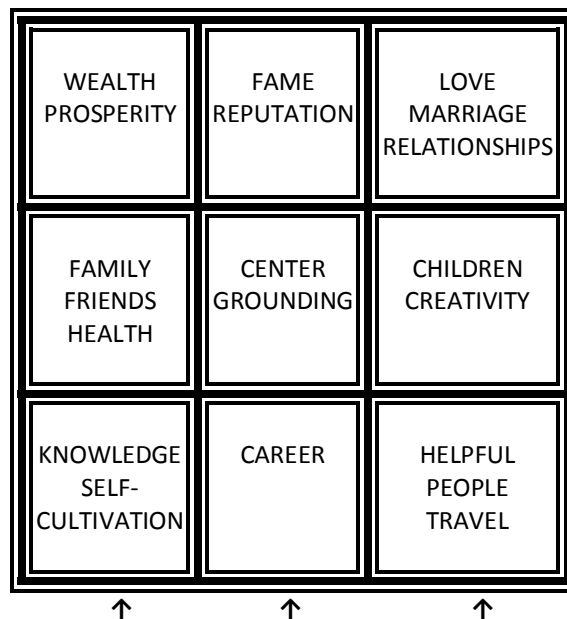
Holiday Decorating Enhances Your Space

Whether you decorate with a Menorah or Christmas Tree, the objects you bring in to your home for the holidays will represent energy. Menorahs add fire to any room, Christmas Trees represent growth, and all the bright colors, lights, garlands, and traditional objects make the home's energy flow easily and

create an environment for family gatherings. As you decorate think about using the Feng Shui Bagua to help guide you in placement. You can use the Bagua on the whole house, or for the main room where you will be entertaining. Place the Bagua over the entry of the room and use the attributes of each area to guide you in altering that room's energy by selecting the areas where you place your decorations: Green for family growth, red for action, pink for relationship, white or metal for intuition, purple for abundance, blue for knowledge and yellow for centering and good health.

The Bagua

The Feng Shui Bagua (Ba-gua) Map, is represented as a grid of nine sectors. The Bagua comes from the Chinese philosophy, "The I Ching," and literally means "eight trigrams", with the center being for centering and grounding.



ENTRANCE QUADRANT

Career Area (Water Element)

Items in items in black or very dark colors, glass/crystal items, water features

Knowledge and Self Cultivation Area (Wood Element)

Items in wood, the colors of blues, greens, plants (great location for Christmas tree)

Friends/Family/Health Area (Wood Element)

Floral arrangements or art depicting vibrant flowers, photos of family, friends health (gathering spot for family)

Wealth Area (Fire Element)

Opulent items in the purple color spectrum, Healthy, round leaf plants (great location for presents)

Fame Area (Fire Element)

The colors red, items representing the fire element with candles and lighting

Love and Marriage Area (Fire Element)

Pairs of items, art or photos depicting romance, reds, and pinks

Children and Creativity Area (Metal Element)

Items in metal, colors of white and pastels, whimsical art, pictures of children

Helpful People and Travel Area (Metal Element)

Art or figures pertaining to spiritual guides, angels, metal and colors of white, black or grey

Center Area

Ceramics, the colors yellow, earth tones, and rectangle shapes

As you can imagine, your holiday decorations can fit easily in all these areas. Christmas trees work well in Knowledge, Family and Health, but because of all the colors, lights, garland and ornaments can represent all of the elements and act as five element displays wherever placed. This is a win – win! Menorahs representing fire enhance any of the three fire areas, but like the Christmas tree, depending on the colors and what it is made of they can also hold all of the elements. You really can't go wrong with holiday decorations!

Important Feng Shui Tip

Clear the clutter from the room before you begin decorating, and keep it clutter free. This will help your calm, holiday energy flow and prevent your holiday communications from being "messy."

Feng Shui at Work

A client recently moved to a new home. The unpacking and sorting had become very stressful on her relationship and she asked me to help organize her space and give her ideas for improving the relationship. I immediately saw the problem. Her Love and Marriage area, which housed her beautiful dining room was filled with boxes, the table covered with papers, the shelf above the credenza had two ceramic Fu Dog figurines which were dusty and facing away from each other. She heeded my recommendations and cleared and organized the boxes, removed the papers from the table and placed two candles on it on a red placemat, she purchased a two stemmed pink orchid, washed the Fu dogs and placed them facing each other, and created a beautiful arrangement on the shelf with the orchid, Fu dogs and framed love letter from her grandfather to her grandmother. That night when she came home from work she could see the candles burning and a clear space. She and her mate took time to talk things over and reconnected. They are now planning on painting the room a shade of red.

A friend decorates for Christmas by bringing in a myriad of stuffed bears. She places most of them in her Knowledge and Self Cultivation area of the house where she has her Christmas tree and holiday decorations. Most of these bears are vintage and hold many wonderful family memories. She liked the look so much that she kept some out for the rest of the year. They add a familiar coziness to her home.

Affirmations:

Remember that in Feng Shui, intent plays a significant role in enhancing any area of your home or business. That's why all enhancements need to be made with intentionality; written or stated affirmations, expressed as if they are already happening are very important, *"I have many blessings this holiday season," "Our relationship is strong and will guide us through this experience."*

Questions, Questions, Questions:

I encourage you to email me with question, which I will respond in this column or by email.

Reader: "I heard that receiving sharp objects as gifts is bad Feng Shui. I received a beautiful set of knives from a friend. What do I do?"

Dear Reader,

In Feng Shui, giving a knife as a gift represents "cutting the friendship." There is a traditional practice in many countries throughout Europe and Asia of giving a coin in return for receiving a sharp object to keep the friendship intact. My Italian mother taught me this practice when I was young. Whenever I received a sharp object I would

give the giver a penny with a big smile of gratitude. Give your friend a coin and enjoy your knives and your friendship!

Feng Shui on a Shoestring:

Feng Shui enhancements do not have to cost a great deal. Using your old holiday decorations brings back memories and good energy. When I was traveling to see my daughter and she didn't have a tree, I packed a small artificial tree with lights in my suitcase and plugged it in for us wherever we were. It shifted the energy immediately.

I wish you a holiday filled with family, friends, harmony, happiness, food and festivity.

For questions or home consultations email at mtmccull@aol.com and put "Feng Shui" on the subject line, or visit my website at www.fengshuibymaria.com, (where you can read past columns), or Facebook "Feng Shui by Maria", where I post pictures as examples to enhancements.

* **Check out my BLOG** – Just go to the website and click on "Blog": You can view many pictures and, I will respond to your questions quickly.

Until then...Blessings!

Maria McCullough - Bio

Maria McCullough, a Benicia resident, is the owner / founder of *Feng Shui by Maria* (www.fengshuibymaria.com) and is a speaker and educator with over 15 years of experience. She specializes in residential, landscape and business consultations. She is a graduate of the Western School of Feng Shui and has personally trained with Terah Kathryn Collins, founder of the Western School of Feng Shui, specializing in Essential Feng Shui® and author of numerous books including "The Western Guide to Feng Shui."