

Inside this section: comics, Dear Abby, movie times, TV times. Puzzles are in Classified section



Neighbors Dave Severns and Andy Pease created this elaborate display along Tangerine Way in Sunnyvale.

SUNNYVALE

manger scenes.

Name: Neighbors Dave Severns and Andy Pease
Address: 1164 and 1168 Tangerine Way, Sunnyvale, 94087

Inspiration: We enjoy doing it for the community. We receive great e-mails from people, some of which can make a person a little misty. Sneaking outside and mingling with the crowd gives us inspiration (and sometimes constructive criticism). There is no better feeling than hearing a hard-to-impress 8-year-old say, "Whoa!" And finally, we do it for the food drive, which raises over \$25,000 each year to help feed the hungry in the South Bay.

When did you get the bug? What started out as two wrapped magnolia trees in 1995 has grown every year since.

How many lights? More than 60,000 for 2007. This is the most ever, but we never turn all the lights on at the same time. Tune your radio to 104.1 FM so you can hear the synchronized music. The Severns house is solar-powered, by the way.

How many hours of setup? We have no idea. A lot. We are kind of scared to keep track. Actually, we start working in March. That's when we start throwing ideas around.

Anything else? Whenever we come up with an idea, it has to be approved by the "Tacky Committee," which is comprised of our wives. Sometimes, a prototype of the idea has to be constructed to demonstrate the idea. Other times, we get an immediate thumbs down. So far, the Tacky Committee has done an admirable job of keeping us in line. Except for the year that I (Severns) sneaked in a fog machine. And then there was the laser. ... More information at www.severex.com/xmas.html.



STEFAN ARNAUDO

MONTE SERENO

Name: The Arnaudos

Address: 17843 Andrews St., Monte Sereno, 95030

Inspiration: To enjoy Christmas and share it with others.

When did you get the bug? We have been decorating on this scale for about 10 years.

How many lights? About 10,000 lights with many stand-alone figures.

How many hours of setup? The setup is truly a family affair and takes about two weeks.

Anything else? Full-size Santa with sleigh and train. We also have a musical light show and two

Let it glow ... let it glow ... let it glow ...

READERS TAKE A SHINE TO HOLIDAY LIGHTS DISPLAYS

By the Mercury News

For many of us, Christmas just wouldn't be Christmas without the lights. Some like to create elaborate displays. Planning them, hanging them, flipping that switch for the first time and enjoying the joy they bring to neighbors are all part of the annual ritual.

For others, evening drives to see the lights are an essential part of the holiday. This year for the first time, we set out to help readers in both groups to find each other through our Web site. And more than 150 of them responded, going to our interactive map at www.mercurynews.com/holidayguide and posting their own and their neighbors' displays. If you like lights, too, we hope you'll take a look.

Meanwhile, here are a few snapshots from folks who have put themselves on the map with their delightful decorations.



Online Extra

Go to www.mercurynews.com/holidayguide to create downloadable maps to the neighborhoods with the best holiday lights, last-minute gift ideas and sites to post your holiday photos.



BOB HOUGHTTELLING

SAN LORENZO

Name: The Houghttelling family

Address: 17048 Via Media, San Lorenzo, 94580

Inspiration: Christmas is our favorite time of year. Our friends, family and neighbors look forward to it, start asking us about the display early in the year and can't wait to see it.

When did you get the bug? We started 20 years ago when our daughters were small and it has increased over time. It started to get pretty big about 10 years ago. We have won first place for most colorful decorations in San Lorenzo starting eight years ago.

How many lights? We have about 2,500 lights hooked up to a musical display on the front lawn and driveway. There are about 15,000 lights on the rest of the house and yard.

How many hours of setup? We started the week-end before Thanksgiving and didn't finish until Dec. 8.

Anything else? It is fun to have people drive by and comment on the lights. Lots of people thank us for making their holiday a little brighter.



SIMON PUTTICK

DUBLIN

Name: Simon and Yanira Puttick

Address: 11263 Rolling Hills Drive, Dublin, 94568

Inspiration: We actually enjoy setting it up and looking at it once it is done. However, the biggest reward comes from the "oohs" and "aahs" of the children (of all ages) who are looking at it.

When did you get the bug? Seven or eight years ago. It changes a little every year. This year we added some animation and music. Next year? Well, just wait and see.

How many lights? I don't count them until I take them down. Last year there were about 18,000.

How many hours of setup? At least eight days this year.

Anything else? Where our display differs from most is that we have our little themes — "bear world," "Santa's reindeer farm," "snowman world" and the trains. More information at www.simon-photo.net.



TOM CHAVEZ

SANTA CLARA

Name: Tom and Peggy Chavez

Address: 345 Sloat Court, Santa Clara, 95051

Inspiration: My wife loves to create the custom plywood figures in our display, from Christmas trees, Santa and elves to penguins and cartoon characters such as Sponge Bob and My Little Pony. Our goal is to appeal to our kids and our ever-growing group of visitors.

When did you get the bug? We started very small in 1999, and then in 2001 most of what we had was stolen three days before Christmas. In a rush visit to local stores to restock, we found everything already on sale and went crazy. We won an award from the city of Santa Clara in 2002 for best-decorated house and have been building on that display ever since. Two years ago, we added computer control to sequence the lights to music.

How many lights? About 24,000 so far, with maybe 1,000 more to put up.

How many hours of setup? We start in the first weekend after Halloween by taking down the pumpkins and starting to hang lights. We probably asked us to be in their "What's With That Crazy Christmas House" special, but our fifth child was due just after the early October filming so we weren't able to set up in September to get in the show.

SEE MORE LIGHTS ON PAGE 2E

MORE INSIDE

Web site has extensive list of holiday displays in Northern California. PAGE 2E

Contest honors best holiday-lights layouts in the city of Santa Clara. PAGE 2E

One boy's best A San Jose eighth-grader builds on a family tradition. PAGE 2E