



http://www.hauntedhotsauce.com/haunted/Free_Top_Tips_Halloween_decorating.html

13 Top Tips for creating a believable, creepy Halloween atmosphere!

Some of them may seem rather simple but hear me out. My explanations follow each tip.

TIP #1: Don't mow your grass.

I'm serious, don't mow your grass! As simple as that sounds, it's a detail that often gets overlooked. If you can get away with it, let that grass grow from mid-September on. Nothing is scarier than a creepy old "unkept" cemetery on Halloween night. I don't know how many times I've seen the most amazing, professionally weathered, homemade tombstones sitting on a freshly manicured lawn. It would be soooo much creepier if those same tombstones were sitting in abandoned, unkept grass...don't you think?

Obtained from

TIP #2: Dead roses. Omarshauntedtrail.com

Dried, dead roses add realism to your cemetery or Halloween display. Stick them in an old weathered urn at the foot of a tombstone. It adds "age" to your cemetery or haunted display after all...nothing can be haunted without a history and there's no history without age.

See what your local grocery store or florist does with the flowers that they don't sell. Maybe they'll give you all you need. Hang them upside down in a dry spot until they get crispy and decorate away.

TIP #3:

Tell a story.

One way to add realism to your display is to tell a story with the props. A shovel, a pile of dirt and a hole in your front yard cemetery tells the story that somebody was digging. (no kidding) Add a busted coffin door and more mystery is added to the story. Scratch fingernail marks into the coffin door and add an overturned lantern and even more tension is added to the scene. Maybe toss a bloody shoe or flannel shirt into the mix and with these few simple props...you've told the story of someone being horribly ripped to shreds by the contents of the coffin that they dug up. Where is this zombie now...?

TIP #4:

A doll by the tombstone.

One creepy and easy detail you can add to your cemetery is to put an old, tattered doll next to one of the tombstones...maybe being clutched by a dead withered hand. Maybe this doll was the deceased's favorite toy...she rose from the dead to reclaim it. It tells a story.

TIP #5:

Hide your car.

Zombies, ghouls and creatures of the night seldom drive 2004 Hondas. Park your car somewhere out of sight. It's further evidence that the house is totally abandoned and as a trick-or-treater, you're hopelessly alone.

TIP #6:

Drag leaves and brush INTO your yard.

Creepy abandoned houses don't have gardeners tending to the yard. Drag old, dead branches and lay them across driveways, etc. Keep a few bags of leaves that you've raked to scatter all across your yard, driveway, walkways and porches. It's further proof that, only ghosts and ghouls live there. (Be careful that you don't place branches and leaves in areas where trick-or-treaters could trip and get injured.)

TIP #7:

No white lights.

Typical white lights are comforting reminders of home. We don't want that! I usually use blue lighting outside and red lighting inside. Blue lights illuminate the cemetery nicely and the red light streaming through the boarded up windows just screams "EVIL"! I try and hide the outside blue bulbs if I can. I

f something outside needs to be lit a little brighter, I use oil lanterns (careful, fire hazard), Jack-O-lanterns (cut a hole in the back of your pumpkin too so the candle light shines on the tombstone behind it) or even those tall bamboo torches (painted black and weathered with rust colored paint). As always...KEEP OPEN FLAMES AWAY FROM ANYWHERE PEOPLE ARE WALKING!

Costumes burn and masks make it hard for people to see where they are going. Use the branches described above to block people from dangerous areas. And of course, keep stairs well lit, even if it detracts from the effect.

TIP #8:

Make 'em walk through the cemetery.

If you've spent weeks making a creepy front yard cemetery, you don't want people running through the middle of it barely feeling the effects of your handiwork. Space out the tombstones a bit and with the branches and brush described above, section off a clear, winding path through your cemetery. Make sure it's safe and free from open flames, etc. Hang fore-head level lengths of black thread over paths to emulate the creepy feeling of walking through spider webs (surprisingly effective, especially on squeamish adults!) It's helps to have an exit path from the cemetery different than the entrance path so trick-or-treaters won't bump head-on into each other.

TIP #9:

Use life-size props.

Even the scariest monster isn't so scary if he's only 2 feet tall. When possible, use life-sized props. It adds realism to your display. Don't buy tiny skulls and undersized hanging ghosts and goblins. They're just not realistic or scary. It's better to have fewer, life sized (or bigger in the case of spiders) props than tons of undersized props that were obviously purchased at K-mart or Walmart the week before. Which brings me to my next tip...

Obtained from
Omarshantedtrail.com

TIP #10:

Make it yourself.

No matter how scary it is, people just aren't scared by a prop that they saw at K-mart or Walmart the week before. "Oh look...it's that bat they had at K-mart!" Not exactly the shriek of terror you were shooting for when you bought it huh. The solution...make stuff yourself. It's really not that hard to make believable, creepy props and decorations that leave people wondering what's going to happen next.

TIP #11:

Gore isn't scary.

A lot of Halloween decorators might disagree with me but I just don't think that blatant, bloody decapitations and gore is...well, scary. It's too graphic, shocking and intense to be real and believable. It's just too easy to get a bunch of heads and body part props and splatter blood all over them. It's much more creepy and effective to be more subtle. (Of course I have seen some gory displays that were scary but it wasn't because of the blatant gore, it was because the gore was an indispensable part of the story being told.)

TIP #12:

Movement.

Things that move unexpectedly are scary. Any way that you can add unexpected movement to your display will make it just that much scarier. Tie fishing line to a doorknob if it'll make something move when the door is opened. Put an oscillating fan behind a curtain if it'll periodically make the curtains move. Put things outside that will blow in the breeze. (Make creepy tattered curtains out of cheesecloth stained with coffee.) I don't use expensive animatronics in my displays but if you're inclined to do so...go for it!

Obtained from
Omarshauntedtrail.com

TIP #13:

Have fun!

This is the most important tip of them all. Have fun. If you're anything like me, you can get totally consumed by the details of creating that perfect Halloween haunt! Things don't always go as planned. You'll seldom have the time to do everything that you've dreamed up...so take it in stride...be safe and have fun!