

HOME AND GARDEN

Rejuvenate with decorator ideas

The rite of spring cleaning is probably as old as spring itself. After a long, hard winter, the first warm breeze of the year casts our surroundings in a fresh light, and stirs out instincts to rejuvenate and improve our nests, to plant and make new starts.

The familiar environment we usually take for granted, its dust and dirt, suddenly become as intolerable as the thick wool sweaters we hibernated in all winter. If you are considering redecorating one or all of the rooms in your house, it's helpful to make some mental notes before making any purchases or hiring contractors. Remember that every room has a

focal point. In the living room, it may be the fireplace. In another, visitors might be drawn to the window. Always identify the strong visual elements in a room and be sure to complement them - with mirrors or matching or contrasting colors, for example - rather than crowd them or detract from their effects. Often minor, inexpensive decorations can revitalize a room you thought needed a major overhaul. Here are some inexpensive, yet versatile decorating elements to consider:

Lighting

Not all light bulbs need to be soft white, which, contrary to their name are rather harsh. Yellow or golden light is not as blinding and uses less wattage. Golden light even makes an ice substitute for candlelight since it provides a similar warm glow. Rooms that are meant for relaxation rather than work should not have overhead for fluorescent lighting. Both tire the eyes. Track lights are a nice addition to any room, especially the living room, where the lights can be pointed in different directions to illuminate artwork, photographs, or a bouquet of fresh flowers.

Borders and trompe l'oeil

Decorative borders that run along the top of the walls can be pasted on in a short time. They come in a variety of motifs such as Ionic columns, floral pat-

terns and trompe l'oeil, and are in an inexpensive way to add character to a room.

Fabrics, glass, and mirrors

If all new furniture is out of the question financially, recovering or simply covering tables and armchairs with a fabric that matches carpeting and drapes might do the trick. Wooden tables become elegant when covered with a fitted piece of glass.

Glass shelves are a light, airy, unobtrusive addition.

And, why not get more use out of your crystal bowls by filling each with potpourri and leaving them permanently throughout the house?

If one room or your entire apartment is just too small or too dark, mirrored tiles can be a solution.

They come in a variety of sizes and colors and can cover as much or as little wall space as desired.

Or, to make a room seem double

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its actual size, place a standing mirror in a corner from floor to ceiling.

Pros can help with gardening

With professional assistance from your favorite retailer of lawn and garden goods, you can enjoy the benefits of a custom-designed garden, advises the Garden Council.

The organization of firms and professionals representing the lawn and garden industry notes that the right combination of grass, ground covers, large plantings, and hard surfaces can be created to suit your particular lifestyle and your area's water supply.

Base your design guidelines on your family's needs and requirements.

You'll want to establish a grassy area for gatherings and games. Select an appropriate size for your needs because you'll regret having an oversized lawn that won't be used as much as you'd like (though it will still require more of your time.)


Put the lawn where family members spend the most time. With youngsters, this usually means the backyard.

A plain shape for the lawn will reduce water use and mowing time.

Add accents for interest and other benefits. A trellis can shade the sitting area; in one corner, an herb and vegetable garden will bring activity to the backyard; and a colorful stone path through the flower garden will encourage browsers.

When the children have grown and moved away, there will be more time to entertain. In such cases, a raised deck and several brightly-colored container plants may be more effective. Invite guests into the home by placing borders of color-rich flowers and interesting trees along the walkway leading to the front door. Enjoy a semi-private area of your backyard by using a fence and shrubs to screen it from the street.

Use your space efficiently. Surround a brick patio with herbs and dwarf fruit trees. For more shade, cover the trellis with grape vines. In the front, be decorative and display your individual style while saving water and maintenance efforts. This is a perfect spot to show off lush fruit-bearing shrubs, ground covers, and ornamental plants.



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