

WEST COAST HOMES & DESIGN

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HOW TO LIVE IN COMFORT *and style*

From setting an inviting entrance to adding luxury to the bathroom or upgrading the closet, experts offer innovative ideas for giving your home a fresh appearance.

BY LESLIE PETERSON

Last year *Architectural Digest* magazine polled designers to pinpoint 10 essentials for living in comfort and style. The list included: a favourite chair with a good reading light, books and art, a private room, comfort, colour and the necessities at hand, a good sofa, dining chairs, beds, a sense of humour, lightheartedness and practicality.

We consulted our own experts to come up with a top 10 list, looking at design trends and preparations for fall, starting with the entryway, through to the garage, the patio and beyond.

1. Once through the front door, the **foyer** sets the tone for what lies within. Vancouver designer Dwaina Sprague, of Good Space, recently completed a skilful makeover of a large Shaughnessy home's entryway where she placed a lithe tree-branch-look gold lamp with a chaise lounge and a gold starburst mirror. An intimate yet highly effective grouping. Not all entrances are grand, but they can be made more welcoming with a few key pieces.

2. Onward to the **living room**, a focal point of any home. Big, bold and colourful recur as themes for 2009: ethnic prints, folk art and Old World European

chic all serve to enliven and energize. Include baroque-style printed wallpaper or vintage designs then for instant punch add pillows, the simplest way to change any room.

Throughout we find a general reuse, renew theme. "It's just amazing and cool that we're refurbishing and reusing pieces, making things that are old new again, freshening them up and mixing vintage finds with new," notes Sprague. The focus is clearly on nature, the eco-friendly trend exhibited in sisal and jute rugs, bamboo flooring and organic fabrics.

3. Plum and mustard are the top colour choices for 2009; also look for retro lamps and fixtures. In Europe, **kitchen** designers have run riot with colours; here at home there's a more dramatic black-and-white motif, according to Cantu Bathrooms & Hardware design/sales consultant Tabitha Jackson. "Even if it's a very traditional setting people want a clean look, so they tend to choose black and white." Shades of grey predominate in IKEA's modular kitchens, especially in high-gloss cabinets, through a range of textures. "It's a good, neutral colour to juxtapose against other colours," the company's Mick Lim points out.

Top: Designer Dwaina Sprague gives an entryway an effective grouping with a chaise lounge, lamp and starburst mirror.

Above: Key pieces provide a welcoming entrance, with pillows to add punch.



Centre: Plants soften a foyer and above, a carefully planned closet makes a homeowner's life easier.

Top: Minimalism with warmth marks today's bedroom style.

Top right: a home office is organized with style.

Photos courtesy of Good Space.



Renewable materials have become more and more a part of kitchen design, says Kelly Arthur, with Paradigm Kitchen Design. She points to two revolutionary new countertop products: Vertrazzo, which is 85 per cent recycled glass, and Eco by Cosentino, comprising 75 per cent recycled material – glass, mirror, porcelain and stone scraps. Integration of appliances with cabinets is another major trend, she says, with refrigerators, stoves and dishwasher panels coordinated with the rest of the cabinetry.

4. On to the home office, where IKEA, master of space and organization, offers more than a dozen permutations, from a small laptop workstation to complete home offices, including an attractive corner workstation.

Increasingly these offices have been incorporated into main living spaces such as living and dining rooms, second bedrooms and dens. "The trick," says Sprague, "is to have them not look like an office and concealing the clutter that naturally comes with an office is chal-

lenging. Fortunately some of the main furniture retailers are styling and scaling furniture for home-office use."

5. Into the room in which we spend close to one-third of our lives – the bedroom. Much of contemporary design emphasizes sleek, smooth minimalism but this doesn't preclude a little warmth and cosiness. Make small bedrooms feel bigger by using low pieces of furniture and dark colours to encourage intimacy. Bedroom sets are all very well, though more and more people are incorporating a broader mix of pieces and using natural materials such as green, non-toxic bedroom furniture finished with herbal oils and waxes rather than stains and lacquers.

Good Spaces often recommends storage beds for their obvious practicality. Also, Sprague suggests, "Most people want a bed that is quick to make so we suggest a duvet with a washable cover and a beautiful coverlet that hides all."

6. Bathrooms seem to be going every which way – grander, simpler, even split-

ting up (privatizing the toilet) – with luxury the dominant theme. Someone recently described the multi-jet shower extravaganza as looking more like a human car wash, yet that is where all the attention is focused these days.

“People are really looking for luxury now,” says Cantu’s Jackson. “They don’t want to go out to a spa for the day; they just want to come home to their own retreat, so we’re seeing them putting in as many rainheads and showerheads as possible, along with chromotherapy, speakers, saunas and steam.”

7. Always in short supply, **closet space** needs thoughtful consideration. With the help of Home Depot’s Rubbermaid Configuration system, we recently converted an old-fashioned, single hanging bar closet into a far more versatile system, with shelves, drawers, hanging bars and shoe shelves.

Good Space has designed numerous closet upgrades and advises clients, when space permits, to remove bifold doors and install regular interior doors. “Aside from looking better the inside of the doors become added storage by adding hooks,” says Sprague.

8. Next on the list of top 10 room-décor tips is the **garage**, a specialty of Dan and Scott Robbins and their company, Park Place Garage Co. “People realize that their garages are a valuable part of their real-estate property and are looking to use their space creatively, rather than a place to stash their junk,” Dan explains.

The interest in garage flooring, cabinets and overhead storage has really taken off, he says. “Canadians are starting to utilize their garages as living or office space, for workshops, as showrooms for car buffs, or to store seasonal items. A typical two-car garage, at 400 square feet or more, offers plenty of room for a personal gym, teen recreation room, media room or guest suite.”

9. As summer turns to fall, outdoor spaces such as **decks and patios** need attention. Vancouver landscape architect Elisabeth Whitelaw is busy with seasonal preparations at Fairview Farm Bed & Breakfast on Mayne Island. Her suggestions: “Make coming and going out of the house more pleasurable by washing down your doors and porches and repainting if required. This is a good time to evaluate pots by the door by coming up with some cold-hardy plant combinations.”

Experts advocate regular deck cleaning to maintain appearance and minimize deterioration. One of the best resources for information on repairing, cleaning and staining a deck is Home Depot’s online Small Projects, Do-it-Yourself site. Access equally valuable material on the Western Red Cedar Lumber Association’s website on how to remove dirt and debris and eliminate mildew.

10. Finally, the **garden**. As leaves begin to fall, gather up small leaves and spread them under shrubs, Whitelaw advises. “By spring the worms will have

broken them down, adding nutrients and organic material to the soil. Fall is the best time to plant evergreen shrubs and trees as rain and cool weather provide an excellent environment for new roots.

“Find a sunny little corner of the garden to develop a garlic patch and plant fall cool-weather crops such as kale, spinach, turnips, cabbage, carrots and leeks. Mulch beds with dormant vegetables such as rhubarb and artichokes with dried leaves to conserve heat and moisture.” ■



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