

'Little touches' help brighten home



Photo by Dave Lawton

Pam Onchi holds some of the items that can spruce up your home for spring.

by LORI CALLISTER
of The Outlook staff

Most homeowners turn their attention to their yards in the spring. But with very little money, a fresh, new look can be created inside the house too.

"People need to realize what a little bit of change in their home can do for them," says Pam Onchi, co-owner of House Gift Store in Gresham and the Country Willow in Yamhill Market Place in Portland. Onchi is also a decorator and consultant for homeowners who want to furnish their homes.

And Barbara Davis, a Troutdale interior decorator, suggests simple tricks can make a home feel spring-fresh without refurbishing an entire room.

New paint, the two women say, always makes a room look fresh and clean, "but can make your furniture look old and terrible," laughs Davis.

Here then, are their suggestions, room by room, to bring spring indoors.

Livingroom

- Put slipcovers on your upholstered furniture, suggests Davis. She recommends a complementary print, denim stripe or a small geometric print for a spring and summer look.

- Take down the winter snowscene pictures on the wall and put up a floral photo or painting, suggests Onchi.

"I really wouldn't want to look at a snow scene in the summer," she says. "So maybe a floral painting will make you feel more like spring."

- "Put away the baskets of pinecones and rotate in pots in those baskets of marigolds or geraniums from your yard," Onchi says. "Probably the best decorating tool in spring and summer is fresh flowers."

- Onchi suggests putting away the heavy decorative pieces and invest in some brass items like dolphins or ducks or light airy vases or ceramic pieces.

- Use one large, live, green plant as a focal point in the living room, says Davis. Maybe remove a piece of furniture to make room for the plant to open up some space and make things seem cooler.

Kitchen

- A new set of colorful canisters always makes the kitchen look fresh, suggests Onchi.

- Change the window treatment, recommends Davis, by making new curtains or perhaps taking the curtains down altogether in spring and summer for a cooler effect.

- Onchi says it's best to keep the background colors in the kitchen neutral so the complementary colors can be changed at whim.

"In my kitchen my countertops are white and my refrigerator is white and my floor is oak. I can bring in any color I want and change it at any time," she says.

- Put away the tablecloths and the heavy woven placements and get out your white linens, Onchi says. "Some people even have a different set of dishes for warmer weather."

- Or Davis advises skirting the kitchen table to the floor with a fresh cotton, "unless you have children who eat peanut butter sandwiches."

- Davis also recommends getting rid of the clutter.

"Nothing looks more fresh than clean countertops. People generally have too much stuff on their counters," Davis says.

Bathroom

- Bring in a light floral potporri in the bathroom or in any room, says Onchi.

- Invest in one set of solid colored towels in the dark accent shade in your bathroom, recommends Onchi. Put them on a towel rack or roll them up in a basket on the floor. "It will make the room feel cooler."

- If you really want to splurge, says Davis, put a skylight in the bathroom.

Does spring bring a cleaning urge?

by SHARON NESBIT
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So it's spring and your Christmas wreath is still hanging by the door.

For some folks, spring cleaning means taking down the Christmas decorations. For others, the onslaught of green and growing things brings an insatiable urge to live in tidy, sparkling surroundings.

Local experts have several good ideas on spring cleaning.

Start from the ground up, advises Ken Prickett, Troutdale building inspector, who points out that now is the time to open up those circulation vents in the foundation of your house. It's fine to close the vents during the cold months, January, February and March, says Prickett, but air needs to circulate under your house the rest of the year to prevent dry rot.

There's not much point in having a clean house if it caves in.

If you've been keeping warm with a woodstove all winter, the fabric and carpets in your house are apt to have a dull film of smoke and grime. This is the best time to

clean carpets, draperies and upholstery, experts say.

"If oily winter dirt has been tracked in on your carpet," says Dick Paulson of Paulson's Floor Coverings, 590 NE Burnside, "then this is the time to clean it."

Paulson warns that too much cleaning can weaken the soil retardants the factory puts in new carpeting. And, he adds, a heavy detergent cleaner, if not properly rinsed out of carpeting, serves to attract more dirt.

"The time to clean a carpet is when it starts to look soiled. But the best preventative is to vacuum heavy traffic areas every day," says Paulson. For professional cleaning, he recommends either a dry chemical cleaning process or hot water extraction if care is taken not to saturate the carpet. Draperies should be cleaned at least yearly, says Julin Rydell of Homestead Fabrics, 33 NW First St. Wood heating calls for even more frequent cleaning.

Of course, once the draperies are down, the windows look grimy.

"Windows need to be done in the spring. A house doesn't seem clean unless the win-

dows are clean," says professional house cleaner Debbie Wilson of Debbie's Country Cleaning in Troutdale.

Wilson says the spring cleaning she does for her clients consists of taking down draperies, moving all the furniture and vacuuming thoroughly, cleaning furnace grills and light fixtures, washing walls and scrubbing (not just mopping) floors.

"And I do windows," Wilson says, laughing. "It's amazing how many people don't know that their storm windows can come out to be cleaned."

People who do their own cleaning could take a tip from Wilson on how to push a vacuum cleaner and avoid an aching back: "Stand upright and use your arms to push the cleaner, not your back. If it's a canister with a wand, keep the wand high enough to avoid bending into the vacuum cleaner."

Having someone do your cleaning for you is not necessarily a luxury in the case of the elderly, adds Wilson. "Some older people just can't push a vacuum or wash windows anymore and they can't afford to hire it

done. A thorough cleaning is a great gift for a child to give to an elderly parent."

Sometimes all the spring cleaning in the world won't help if painting is necessary, points out Bea Carriere of Gresham Decor Center, 1455 E. Burnside Rd.

"Generally, walls need washing before you paint because the paint won't stick to an unclean surface," advises Carriere. "If walls are just gray or dingy, you might get away without washing. But film from smokers or wood stoves and grease film in kitchens calls for washing."

She advises a light sanding or etching old surfaces with a strong detergent to assure that paint will stick on slippery enamel.

You can fix the nail holes with pre-mixed spackle or, if you plan to hang pictures in the same places, mark the nail holes with a large pin.

Carriere doesn't like using masking tape at paint edges. For trim work she prefers using an angled brush or one of the new sponge pad painters which allows you to paint closely along and edge.