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Spring consumer guide

Spring fling

Rebirth & rejuvenation

Derek Kwan

Spring is most certainly here, with its balmy breezes and much craved doses of sunshine. But returning home can be a downer if your space is still bundled up for those long winter nights. As the days grow longer and your thoughts turn to trading in bulky overcoats for T-shirts, take some time to rejuvenate your home as well.

There are loads of simple, inexpensive ways to brighten up your living space, whether it needs a miraculous makeover or just a feverishly good spring-cleaning.

Fabrics are a great place to start. Relatively cheap and easy to work with, a change of textiles can give a room an instant facelift or a punch of colour. Lynelle Madison of Design Invision and a regular designer on W Network's The Decorating Challenge, suggests replacing heavier winter fabrics like chenilles and velvets with lightweight cottons and silks.

Anita Wiklém of Wiklém Design is a big fan of changing window treatments. They need neither be expensive nor expansive, especially during warmer months.

"Keep the same rod and just put a different treatment on it," suggests Wiklém. "There are many great translucent fabrics out there: light neutrals, new weaves, interesting textures. And it's so nice when the breeze blows through them. It really helps to make the room airy and light."

And there's nothing like feisty sheets to rouse a hibernating libido. "Mix and match," says Bert Deveau, visual presentation guru at Sears. "Buy a yellow sheet



Wiklém Design

LET THE SUNSHINE IN. Toronto designer Anita Wiklém is all about window treatments, in this case orange and yellow sheers under an upholstered valance box.

simple. "Simplicity and bold statements work best," says Wiklém. One carefully chosen pillow or meaningful object may be enough to accent the entire room.

For the trend-conscious, the key is colour. From aqua, turquoise and sea-grass to saffron yellow, mustard and brick, popular colours are currently divided into two main palettes: cool blue-greens and vivid tropical hues.

Another popular trend takes its inspiration



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And there's nothing like feisty sheets to rouse a hibernating libido. "Mix and match," says Bert Deveau, visual presentation guru at Sears. "Buy a yellow sheet with fuchsia pillowcases and a bright green duvet cover. Avoid the standard patterns and just have fun."

And what is spring without greenery? Potted plants, cut flowers or a full-blown garden all add life to dull, dark spaces.

Wiklém says the size or amount of flowers doesn't matter — just the scent itself will enliven your home. An herb garden offers multiple pleasures: the vibrant presence of living plants, pleasant fragrances and culinary accessories.

Mirrors can also help to revamp a stale space, although Wiklém cautions that mirrors should only be used with purpose. An ill-placed mirror can do more harm than good when it reflects and magnifies a defect. Glass is in. For example, having an assortment of brightly hued vases will create a light airy atmosphere — or if you have clear vases, just add some food colouring to the water. Madison adds that transparent furniture made of Lucite is also popular as it keeps things "clear and clean."

Chuck the junk and keep your space

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Another popular trend takes its inspiration from the ancient eastern spice route. Deveau points to growing interest in design from India, Egypt, Morocco and Spain. Moroccan tea glasses with votive candles and creatively applied Indian saris are great ways to infuse colour and character into an otherwise bland interior.

An even stronger force, however, is eclecticism. All three designers agree that the individual touches you bring to a room are what make it a great space.

"Don't be scared," says Deveau. "Experiment, combine, look for bargains, play and go wild." Madison notes this is an anti-trend, where people are surrounding themselves with things they love and it's not just designer beige on beige anymore. Wiklém sees multiculturalism as the basis of eclecticism. "You take one object from your own culture, one thing from your travels, something inherited and something contemporary and you've already got a huge diversity."

Whatever your style, spring is a time to refresh and rejuvenate. Hop to it.

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