

Cost-friendly ways to perk up your abode

By Sharon Williams
Copley News Service

High fashion and high style once carried a hefty price tag, and the best rooms were achieved only when the sky was the limit.

Things are considerably more down to earth in the lean '90s, but nobody is suffering on the home front.

Instead, home designers, owners, renters and decorators have gone back to the basics. They've stretched their budgets and their imaginations, lightened their purse strings and shopped until they've dropped for the bargains. Their efforts have resulted in some spectacular rooms — rooms that put an end to the myth that good decorating requires gobs of money, massive amounts of manpower and months of renovation. You can achieve the same marvelous, money-saving results if you plan to tackle a decorating project in the coming months.

Following are some suggestions for getting the most for your refurbishing finances.

GO WITH A PRO

Employing an interior designer might seem an indulgent expense for someone who's counting every penny. But a modest budget doesn't mean you should shy away from consulting a home decorating professional.

In fact, an interior decorator might help you save money — or at the very least enough to cover his or her design fee.

Typically, he or she will begin the job by establishing a budget with you. Once that's accomplished, he or she can advise you on design trends, new materials and products, offer a variety of affordable suggestions without compromising quality and suggest features that can boost your home's resale value.

Design professionals also have a knack for making everything old new again through artful rearranging and the reintroduction of forgotten objects and furnishings that were relegated to the closet or back room.

In most cases they have insiders' access to merchandise, labor and materials sources that are out of reach for the average consumer.

RENTER'S RIGHTS

So you've rented a drab pad. You don't have to spend a fortune on furnishings to compensate for the obvious lack of aesthetic appeal. And you don't have to just live with it, either.

Instead, say design pros, why not focus on simple, inexpensive, adaptable pieces that you can take with you once you're ready to move on?

Some examples: Cover dull, worn carpet with area rugs; replace unsightly window treatments with inexpensive mini-blinds, lace panels or balloon shades; and pull slipcovers over couches and chairs.

Throw pillows can add splashes of color, ugly drawer pulls and cabinet knobs can be replaced with prettier versions from a nearby do-it-yourself emporium, and makeshift furnishings — such as a table made from a wooden crate and circular piece of plywood — can be camouflaged with patterned sheets or fabric.

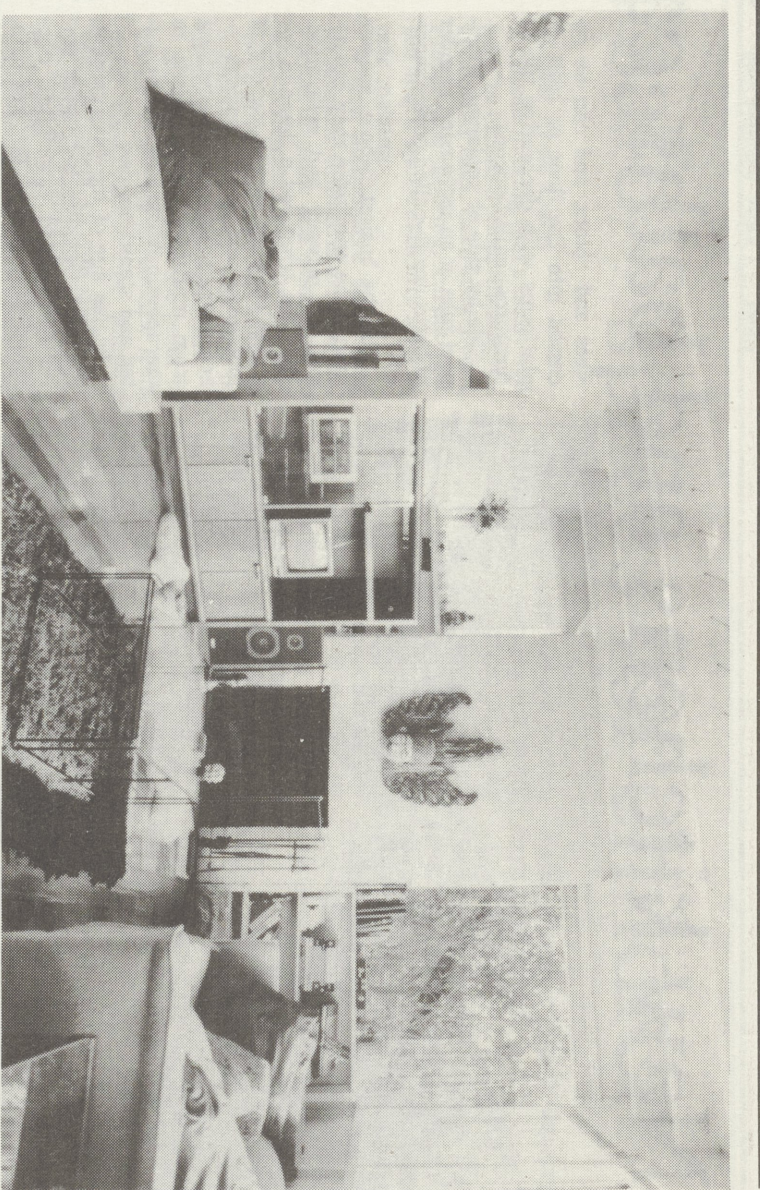
Another thought: If your landlord won't allow paint or wallpaper, rent furniture that works with the apartment's existing scheme. When you're ready to move, you can leave the furniture behind.

DO-IT-YOURSELF

From wonderful window dressings to fabulous floor coverings, many home accessories are just a hammer, scissors or a few yards of fabric away.

Home projects abound for do-it-yourself decorators. You can, for instance, find patterns galore in a range of skill levels for converting designer sheets or decorator fabrics into folding screens, dining room appointments, decorator pillows, cushions, bedroom essentials, window treatments and slipcovers.

Ditto for patterns and explanations in magazines, books and on



video that offer instruction on subjects such as how to construct a lampshade, drape a valance, stencil an unfinished bench or sponge-paint a wall.

CREATE YOUR OWN ART
When culled from an uptown gallery, art can take a big bite out of your budget.

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Home improvement help

By Jennifer Planter
Copley News Service

A growing number of cable television shows, books and even computer programs offer advice for those preparing to tackle any kind of home project or even just fishing for ideas.

● "This Old House" (PBS). A crew of experts transforms a post-war ranch house over the course of a 26 show season. Watch for a whole host of tips on construction, remodeling and renovating older homes.

● "The New Yankee Workshop" (PBS). A unique wood-working project is crafted from start to finish in each episode. Learn to build a new piece of furniture for your own home.

● "Bob Vila's Home Again" (Syndicated). This program's focus on workable face lifts inspires viewers to see their own home in a new light. Vila plans and executes stylish home renovations from start to finish.

● "Remodeling and Decorating Today" (The Nashville Network). A duo of enthusiastic hosts provide remodeling help for more skilled home improvers.

● "Decorating With Mary Gilliat" (PBS). A wealth of advice on furniture, wall coverings, window dressings and more is revealed as Mary attempts to revamp real houses in need of her services.

● "COMPUTERS Use a modern to hook into Home-

elne, an electronic bulletin board full of computer files on many home-improvement subjects. Purchase a file on kitchen projects or communicate with others taking on similar endeavors. Dial (410) 745-2047 to get on-line.

● "Ortha's Home Improvement Encyclopedia — Problem Solving from A to Z" (Ortha Books). A volume chock full of fix-it projects from lighting to landscaping.

● "Basic Plumbing Illustrated" (Sunset Books). Discover how to plug your own leaks or install your own appliances.

● "Ideas for Great Wall Systems" (Sunset Books). Design and build a beautiful and incredibly efficient wall system for a library, entertainment room or garage.

● "Basic Wiring Techniques" (Ortha Books). Keep this guide to electrical repairs handy.

● "Elsie de Wolfe — A Decorative Life" by Nina Campbell & Caroline Seebom (Potter Publishers). Pick up basic decorating principles by studying the work of the profession's most famous, innovative and influential interior decorator.

● "Master Strokes" by Jennifer Bennell (North Light Books). This guide to decorative paint finishes promises ideas and instruction on decorative painting techniques. Try your hand at marbling, wall-glazing, gilding, crackle finish or crackle.

thermometer in specific areas will do the trick.

● Block the sun. Put your existing window treatments to work, or invest in new ones that will shield your rooms from the sun's rays during the hottest times of the day. Shades, blinds and drapes that open and shut are effective barriers that please the eye.

● Cool through landscaping. A strategically placed tree here and a land berm there can help bring the temperature down Mother Nature's way. Consult a landscaping professional on ways to change your landscaping for ultimate cool.

Cooling tips

By Sharon Williams
Copley News Service

The temperature's rising, and your tolerance level is falling. To beat the heat, consider the following.

● Install a fan. From ceiling fans that provide both a breeze and light, to miniature fans that can be clipped to a desk or counter, fans cool and comfort in a variety of shapes and sizes.

● Invest in an air conditioner. Sky-high temperatures may have convinced you that now's the time to invest in a total system. Or perhaps a swamp cooler or portable air conditioner that will lower the

Patios, decks

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Large-scale options include full-blown pools and bubbling Jacuzzis — many aesthetic wonders in themselves.

Lap pools, ponds filled with water lilies and koi, streamlets, waterfalls, birdbaths and fountains, meanwhile, are smaller, less-expensive ways to bring a little splash into your space.

ALL THE EXTRAS
No room would be complete without accessories, and an open-air space is no exception. Consider:

● Lighting: Japanese lanterns, sparkling miniature lights and ground lighting are just a few of the ways to illuminate an outdoor space when the sun goes down.

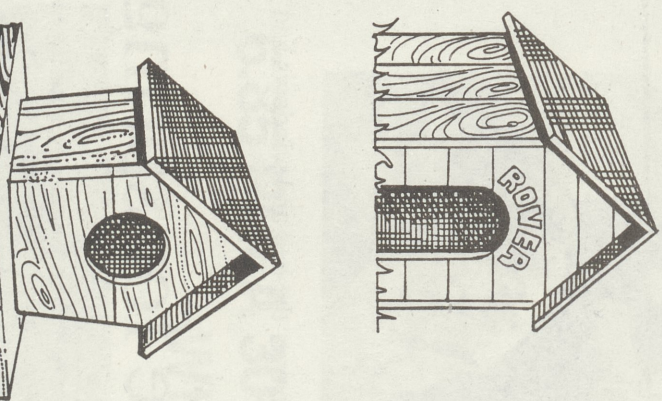
● Fabrics: Fabric for cushions, throw pillows, upholstery and outdoor table appointments should be fresh and light. Consider durable outdoor fabrics in floral prints, bright colors or quintessential white.

If you plan to cover windows looking onto your deck, patio or

porch, think about airy lace panels or fabrics such as linen or muslin that flow as freely and gently as the morning breeze.

● Plants: Hanging plants, container plants and cut flowers add touches of color and life to an outdoor living space and can brighten adjoining indoor spaces as well.

● Extras: Birdhouses, statuary, blossoming dinnerware patterns, sundials, terra-cotta suns and planters, wind chimes and wind socks are a few of the many ways to give an outdoor living area personality and style.



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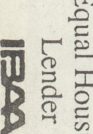
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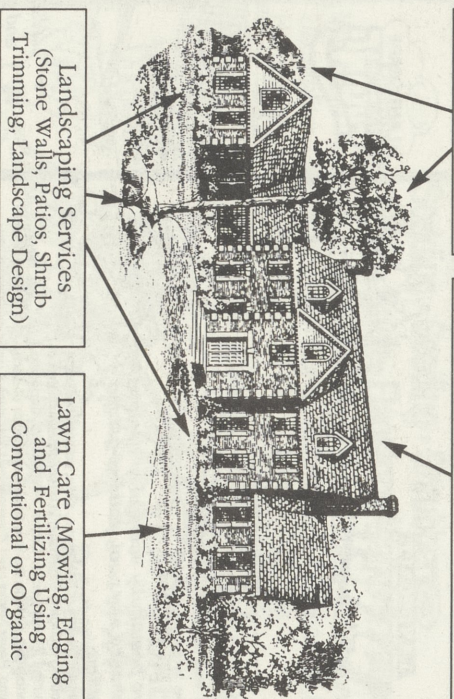


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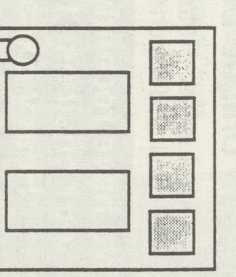
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