

The

ENGLISH HOME



Celebrating the essence of English style

November 2024 | Issue 237 | £6.50 | UK Edition

TOWN & CITY LIVING

Design inspiration and clever ideas for period properties

HENRIETTA
SPENCER-
CHURCHILL
*300 years of life
at Blenheim
Palace*

*Smart
solutions*
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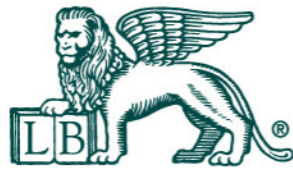
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CONTENTS

NOVEMBER 2024



46

Notebook

- 15 NEWS** Our edit of noteworthy people, places and products this month.
- 22 DESIGN DISCOVERIES** Innovative ideas and contemporary updates with the hallmarks of traditional craftsmanship.
- 28 AUTUMN MOOD** Infuse interiors with rich hues for a cosy ambience.
- 30 GUEST RETREAT** Thoughtful details to make family and friends feel welcome.
- 32 FIRESIDE COMPANIONS** Stylish accessories to add colour and comfort.
- 34 THE EDIT** Lean into autumn with our selection of elegant interior ideas..
- 72 SUBSCRIBE** Never miss an issue with a subscription to *The English Home*.

English Homes

- 38 COMFORTABLE GRANDEUR** Interior designer Joanna Wood returns a London apartment to its former beauty.
- 46 BOLD CHARACTER** This colourful Edwardian home in west London pays homage to the lives of its owners.
- 56 HISTORY LESSON** A former student rental house now combines period charm with a modern outlook.
- 64 FLUENT IN DESIGN** Filled with art and antiques, this home is designed with informal entertaining in mind.
- 74 INSIDE BLENHEIM** Lady Henrietta Spencer-Churchill reveals the intriguing history of 300 years of life at Blenheim Palace.

Style Inspiration

- 85 UPDATE A FOCAL POINT** Create a striking fire surround with a mix of tiles.
- 86 SNUG & WARM** Create a cosy, informal sitting room to relax in with family and friends as the nights draw in.
- 95 FLOOR AS CANVAS** Choosing the perfect rug to add instant colour and texture to a scheme.
- 104 TAKE A SOFT APPROACH** Interior designers and experts explain the creative potential of fabric walling.
- 113 SMALL BUT PERFECTLY FORMED** From inventive storage to exploiting unusual angles, we look at creative solutions to make the most of compact spaces.



74



95



138

Living The Season

- 123 POACHED PEARS FOR WINTER** Charlie Bingham's robust and unctuous recipe.
- 126 AUTUMN BEAUTY** Embrace the colours and textures of the changing season to maximise the last chances to dine outside.
- 132 WHAT TO DO IN NOVEMBER** Create a rustic display with autumn leaves and seasonal squash, and more.
- 138 STANDING TALL** Choosing trees to bring year-round interest, grandeur and longevity to a town or city garden.
- 146 ONE FINAL THING** Update interiors with a paint palette inspired by female Renaissance artists.



104



113

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It's in the detail...

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A letter from home

Here at *The English Home*, we are always exploring the latest design solutions and ideas for bringing period homes and interiors to life. In this issue, we focus our attention on the art of town and city living and adapting homes with history for life today.

Sometimes more compact or diminutive in proportion than country dwellings, townhouses often need a different approach in order to maximise their potential while retaining character and original features. Our article on unlocking the potential of smaller-scale rooms and maximising atypical spaces is brimming with ideas from interior designers. As acoustics can also be challenging, we also explore the sound-proofing qualities and decorative softness that fabric walling can offer. Elsewhere, you'll also find an informative feature on planting trees to bring year-round interest and privacy to every scale of town or city garden, as well as inspiration for new buys for interiors to layer a touch of the new season to all you currently own.

Finally, on a different scale entirely, I was delighted to interview the renowned interior designer and author Lady Henrietta Spencer-Churchill this issue on her latest book, *Blenheim: 300 Years of Life in a Palace*. She brings a fascinating insight into the design of Britain's most visited stately home, its treasures and her colourful ancestors. Having overseen many elements of restoration work and projects personally, she skilfully combines her vocation and her heritage and brings a fascinating insight into both the past and future of her family's grand ancestral seat. We hope you enjoy her rare insights as well as reading all our November edition has to offer.

Samantha

Samantha Scott-Jeffries, Editor

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Printing Walstead Roche Ltd

THE ENGLISH HOME (UK EDITION) ISSN 1468-0238 (PRINT)
THE ENGLISH HOME (UK EDITION) ISSN 2397-7086 (ONLINE)

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subscription.co.uk
(UK and Rest of World)

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

(12 issues) UK £72
Europe £92; €108
ROW £102; USD \$129; AUD \$198

NEWS DISTRIBUTION

Seymour Distribution Ltd
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Tel 020 7429 3667



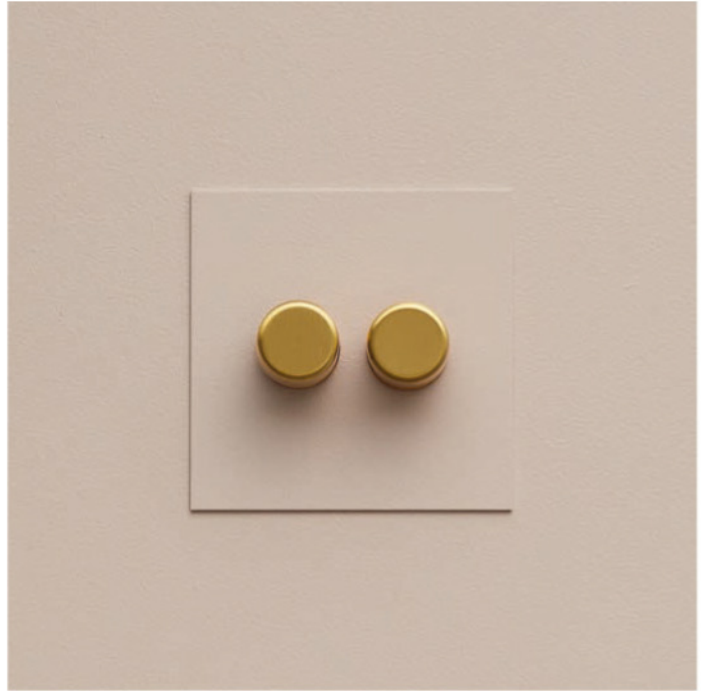
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**NEXT ISSUE
ON SALE
30 OCTOBER 2024**

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NOTEBOOK

Insider news, people to watch, objects of desire and unmissable events ►

SPOTLIGHT ON...

Rose Uniacke's latest paint collection

Rose Uniacke has expanded her paint range with 20 new hues, bringing the total to over 60 considered colours. Rose has designed her paint palette to work harmoniously with her range of fabrics, and all the paints are chemical-free, made using the highest quality natural and sustainable ingredients. The latest additions include joyful Buttercup, warm Flower Pot, rich Moleskin, deep Seaweed, moody Blueberry and earthy Pine. An architectural and interior designer, antique dealer and furniture designer, Rose has earned a world-class reputation for her quietly sophisticated signature aesthetic.

roseuniacke.com



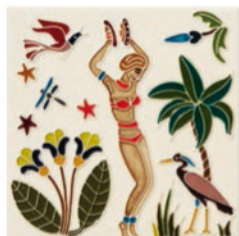
Timeless Romance

Rita König launches fabric and wallpaper collection

Quintessentially English and irresistibly romantic, the debut collection of fabrics and wallpapers by interior designer Rita König with Schumacher was inspired by her keen eye for antique textiles and traditional motifs. Pattern-rich, pretty and painstakingly crafted, these 10 detailed designs encompass florals, botanicals, stripes and paisley, designed to intermingle charmingly. Highlights include romantic floral stripe Elizabeth Chintz (pictured right on sofa), timeless Serena Garland and floriferous Sibyl. Traditional production methods used include hand-block-printed textiles and gravure-printed wallpapers.

Rita says: “The designs were inspired by a collection of antique textiles that I’ve bought over a number of years. It was a process of going through these, editing them to create a cohesive collection, sometimes amalgamating patterns and then working on palettes to curate them into a collection that works well together.”

One of Rita’s favourite patterns from the collection is Terry in navy and red, with its paisley motif and intricate border drawn from an antique document. “I bought this document a long time ago and have wanted to replicate it since then,” she says. “I’m a big fan of vintage paisley prints, so to work on one of my own was something I was keen to do. I’m particularly fond of this colour combination. It’s the one that I’ve used for the wall in my study at home – with the walls upholstered in this paisley, it feels like an Indian tent. Serena Garland in ochre is another firm favourite, which I’ve used in my bedroom. It’s a beautiful floral but it’s not too ‘girly’ thanks to the colour palette.” schumacher.co.uk



Ancient Wonders

New tiles by Balineum with Louis Barthélemy

Powerful women of Ancient Egypt were the inspiration for Balineum’s latest tile collection with French artist Louis Barthélemy. Cleopatra, Verdi’s Aida and book *The Romance of the Mummy* by Théophile Gautier influenced Louis’ joyful illustrations of women dancing, playing instruments and marvelling at their beauty.

He says: “These inspirations serve as a thematic foundation, exploring the intricate dynamics of leadership and femininity in ancient Egypt while infusing each handcrafted tile with a playful and lustrous spirit. This results in a mosaic of profound artistic and cultural significance, resonating in every piece of the collection.”

His intricate and colourful designs are hand-painted onto traditionally made earthenware tile bases in Stoke-on-Trent, utilising historical techniques originally used on Victorian fireplace tiles.

Louis became entranced by the British Museum’s Egyptian collection as a French teenager growing up in London.

Balineum founder Sarah Watson says: “Each tile is a unique piece of art that brings Barthélemy’s subjects to life. Use them on repeat to create a decorative border with our plain Hanley field tiles, or take a cue from Barthélemy’s textiles and use them to create a decorative tiled tapestry.”

balineum.co.uk; louisbarthelemy.com ▶





In the colourway Slipper Orchid, Rosalind Indienne is named after the 9th Countess of Carlisle who amassed Castle Howard's treasure-trove archive.



Goose in the new colourway Aperol.

The Art of Legacy

Watts 1874's 150th anniversary launches

Celebrating its landmark anniversary in style, Watts 1874 is launching a collection of timeless wallpapers inspired by the archive at Castle Howard.

Specialising in textiles, wallcoverings, tableaux scéniques and passementerie – and formerly known as Watts of Westminster – the company was founded in 1874 by architects George Gilbert Scott Junior, George Frederick Bodley and Thomas Garner. Commissioned to design the London School Board's new offices, they were also asked to provide furnishings. What started as an 'on-the-side' enterprise blossomed into a design house offering a full decoration service. The trio trained under leading architect George Gilbert Scott Senior – and today Watts 1874's managing director, Marie-Séverine de Caraman Chimay, is the fifth generation of the Gilbert Scott dynasty to run the company.

Long linked to many of England's finest historic country houses, Watts 1874 is currently collaborating on a collection with Eastnor Castle's next-generation chatelaine Imogen Hervey-Bathurst, who is leading her family home into a vibrant new era.

Another notable collaboration the company has is with Castle Howard near York, famously featured in the 1980s television adaption of *Brideshead Revisited*. The Honourable Nick Howard and his wife Vicky entrusted Watts 1874 creative director Fiona Flint to reproduce patterns found in the stately home's archives to redecorate its key rooms. Rosalind, 9th Countess of Carlisle, amassed an extraordinary collection of textiles and wallpapers during her ambitious project to redecorate the castle when she came to live there in 1880. Vicky, determined to bring this remarkable archive back to life, sowed the seeds for The Indienne Collection, a curation of fabrics and wallpapers meticulously recreated from original 19th-century Castle Howard patterns.

Last year we featured the initial release, which primarily focused on textiles. Now, Fiona has delicately translated the colours from printed cottons onto wallpaper, grasscloth and paper-backed linen, restoring the original richness that had faded over time. She says: "The joy of living with colour and pattern is the essence of my design philosophy and it is the inspiration for this collection of exquisite wallcoverings. Colour and pattern, coupled with a sustained sense of tradition and an inexhaustible curiosity for the new, are emotional decorating tools." watts1874.co.uk ▶

Garden House
Chintz wallpaper in
Cyclamen Bloom.





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Diary



Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo and Raphael are among over 80 artists featured in the UK's largest exhibition of Italian Renaissance drawings at The King's Gallery at Buckingham Palace from 1 November to 9 March. rct.uk



William Morris was deeply influenced by Islamic art, and from 9 November to 9 March, the William Morris Gallery in London will host the first exhibition to explore this inspirational link. wmgallery.org.uk



The Royal School of Needlework, pivotal to royal occasions for over a century, has a new exhibition that spotlights treasures from its archive and collection. *Tales of Textiles: The RSN Collection In Focus* is at Hampton Court Palace until June. royal-needlework.org.uk

Perfect Casting

Monumental Pottery by Felicity Aylieff

Architectural-scale porcelain vessels by Felicity Aylieff, many of which are taller than the ceramic artist herself, will be showcased in an exhibition at Kew Gardens in London. *Expressions in Blue: Monumental Porcelain* will run from 26 October to 23 March in the Shirley Sherwood Gallery of Botanical Art.

This landmark exhibition will feature works inspired by botanical illustrations from Kew's archive as well as by monumental ceramics created in Jingdezhen, China – known as the porcelain capital of the world.

"Having once lived just across the river from Kew Gardens, I've always sought inspiration from its historic glasshouses and its world-renowned plant collection," Felicity says. "This new exhibition is by far the most challenging project I've worked on, exploring the limits of what can be achieved with the 'magical' Jingdezhen porcelain. As part of this process, it's been wonderful to have the opportunity to study the botanical illustrations in Kew's archive, and I'm thrilled to be presenting a selection of new works which draw on the rich traditions of the past in all aspects of their creation." kew.org

Immersive Emporium

Susie Watson Design's new showroom

"The best way to plan a new home is to see finished rooms that inspire you," says Susie Watson. "Paint colours, wallpapers, curtain fabrics and rugs are all much easier to envisage in your home if seen somewhere else in use."

This is the reason why the new Susie Watson Designs showroom in an elegant double-fronted townhouse on the High Street in Marlborough is presented in room sets across two floors, with each element considered and co-ordinating. "Our new shop in Marlborough feels very much like a lovely townhouse that you'd love to move into," says Susie. "It's both elegant and cosy, which is the look that we always strive for. Do come and see us in our new home. I do hope you find it inspiring."

Famous for her handmade collections for home and garden, Susie believes that art and design should be part of everyday life for us all to enjoy. She founded Susie Watson Designs in 1999 and now has 11 showrooms across the country. susiewatsondesigns.co.uk





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DESIGN DISCOVERIES

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BRIGHT DAMASKS

Marlborough fabric is one of two new launches from Fermoie. Based on early damasks the design is enlarged and printed in modern colourways for a lighter feel. Ruffle (not shown) meanwhile brings a sense of movement to interiors with its check-like repeat. Chair, Marlborough MARL-005; cushion, Marlborough MARL-007, £170 a metre, Fermoie. Munro chair, £2,795 (excluding fabric), David Seyfried

GUIDING LIGHT

With its subtle floral shape and adjustable neck, this design makes an elegant bedside light or wall light for a reading nook or child's bedroom. One of 20 new styles from lighting specialist Heathfield, the collection echoes simple lines inspired by nature. Fleur wall light, £495, Heathfield



HANDCRAFTED TABLE

Albion Nord is expanding its in-house design collection Made by Albion Nord, which presents handcrafted items with characterful patinas that will age over time. This table's eye-catching base is sculpted entirely from solid brass. The honed Calacatta Viola or unfilled travertine stone tops are cut and finished by stone artisans in south London and the frames are finished by hand in the East Sussex countryside. The Hare side table, £1,950, Albion Nord

CLASSIC CARPET

Offering not one but two timeless patterns, this carpet combines a heritage stripe and smart herringbone design. Made from tactile wool, the material is especially suited to rooms which require a soft floor. The carpet can also be made into a rug or a bespoke runner for stairs.

Wool Iconic Herringstripe Laine carpet, from £87 a square metre, Alternative Flooring ▶



FRINGE BENEFITS

Design a bespoke tablecloth to cover a table in a reception room. This example can be made with a customer's own fabric or a print from the in-house edit. To make the cloth stand out, and to create a feature, the fringe comes in six colourways which can complement or contrast the colours in the fabric. *Tablecloth with bullion fringe, £981, The Dormy House*



MODERN WASHSTAND

Catchpole & Rye's latest washstand is a departure from its usual traditional style. Inspired by Charleston, the country home of the Bloomsbury Group's Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant, it is available with single or double basins, and four marble and eight metal finishes. The splashback height can also be varied. Treading the line between contemporary and classic, the washstand has a luxurious mood to suit both city and country homes. *Charleston washstand, from £5,950, Catchpole & Rye*



LINES IN THE SHADE

Based in the Cotswolds, illustrator, printmaker and designer Sam Wilson is known for her nature-inspired motifs in gentle hues. Retaining the same colour palette, her new linen lampshades have a hand-drawn stripe print, also available as cushions and fabric by the metre. *Pink Stripe retro shade, from £55, Sam Wilson* ▶

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Candle holders, from £35; Everyday mug, £18; XL bottle vase, £160, Monoware

ICONIC CHAIRS

The Chairmaker's chair and rocking chair by Ercol were part of Lucian Ercolani's original Windsor range, which is instantly recognisable for its innovative and timeless style. Today, Ercol is relaunching both designs in a new Vintage stain that nods to the chair's heritage while also suiting today's interiors.

Chairmakers chair, Vintage OG finish, £899, Ercol



A QUILT FOR POSTERITY

This Heirloom quilt with a reversible print offers versatility for interiors updates. This handmade style comes in two complementary Liberty fabrics. To add to the heirloom notion, the quilt can be personalised with up to eight letters. The filling is anti-allergenic and the design comes in five sizes.

Heirloom Reversible Liberty Fabric quilt, £399 for a double, Coco & Wolf ■



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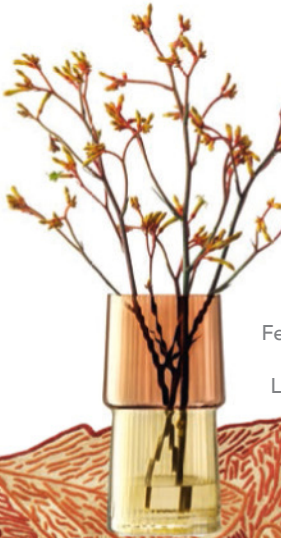
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Ochre Candy Stripe Ruffle cushion, £69, Idyll Home

Beacon, Taupe, candle holder/vase (right); Gems, Amber, vase/lantern (below), both £65, LSA International



Feuillage rug, £1,414, Ligne Roset



Faux Autumn Eucalyptus, £12, Fauxquet



Matches, Milk Chocolate, wide-width wallpaper, £99.22 a metre, Sarah Vanrenen

Reed, Brass, rechargeable table lamp, £110; Extreme Empire shade, £49, both Pooky

Russet, £45 for 2.5l Chalky Emulsion, Craig & Rose,

AUTUMN MOOD

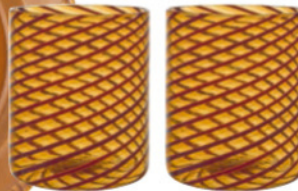
Infuse interiors with mellow burnt orange, rich brown and golden amber hues in an array of comforting textures for a cosy ambience

Maple 100% linen, £170 a metre, Fermoie



Nuwara, Mustard, dinner plate, £22.50, Nkuku

Murano whisky glasses, Amber/Chocolate, £160 for two, Rebecca Udall



Amber ribbed glass carafe, £12.95, Rex London



Cushion vase, Amber, £35, Dartington Crystal



Morris large two-seater sofa in Mustard matt velvet, £1,749, The Cotswold Company



Harlequin jute rug, from £149, The Braided Rug Company



Loving Orange, £28 for 1l Matt Emulsion, YesColours



Heritage Holywell copper-effect freestanding acrylic single-ended bath, £2,335.68, Sanctuary Bathrooms

FEATURE KATY MCLEAN

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Tilley table lamp, £185; Amisha lampshade, £125, Oka

Cherry blossom hook, €17.50, Doing Goods



Lily of the Valley bedding collection (right), from £130 for an Oxford pillowcase, Memo Press x Gingerlily



HB small flower vase, £145, Summerill & Bishop



Tama jewellery box, £40, Nkuku



Blakely long rectangular cushion, £180, Anboise



Ashby oak tray, £78, Rowen & Wren

GUEST RETREAT

Thoughtful details to create an inviting bedroom for friends and family to stay in



Shearer sheepskin rug, £495, Loaf

Coco chair upholstered in Poquelin Colette Aqua and piped in Poquelin Colette Ivory, £2,570, Nina Campbell



Green ceramic bowl with gold glaze, £48.50, Summerill & Bishop



Joséphine room spray, £195, Trudon



Nocturnal Garden lycell sleep mask, £28, Fable England



George wall light with fabric shade, £941.24, Balineum

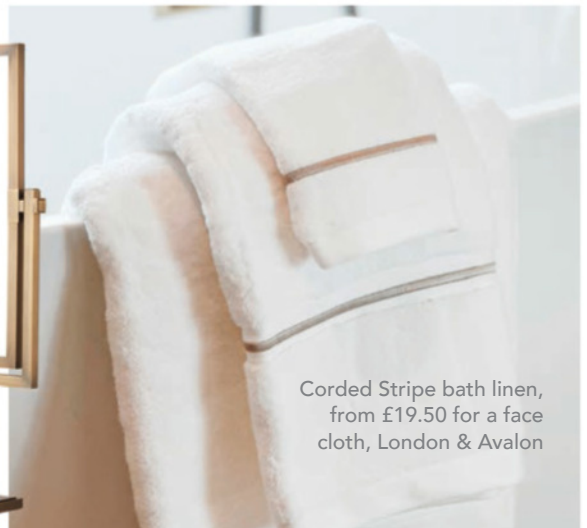


Venus dressing table, £1,998, Brownlow Furniture

Mawar wallpaper, Chestnut, £480 a metre, Charlotte Johnstone for Soane Britain



Claremont dressing table mirror, £995, Sophie Paterson for Armac Martin



Corded Stripe bath linen, from £19.50 for a face cloth, London & Avalon

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SHOPPING



Arts and Crafts Tile Print matches, £8, Heavenly Homes and Gardens



Temple Jar, Monochrome Ceramic, £595, Besselink & Jones

Sadra rattan log basket, £125, Nkuku



Elmsett/Portland fire tongs, Matt Black, £52.30, Jim Lawrence

Luxury leather handle log holder, Copper, £99.99, Ivyline



Hathaway fire screen, £1,670, Arteriors



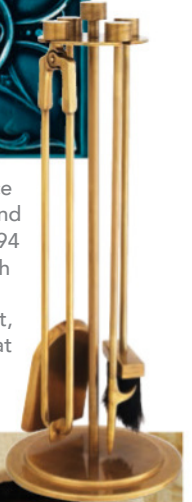
George Bouclé swivel armchair, £1,495, and all other furniture, Oka

Esse 105 Ecodesign wood-burning stove, £1,767, Direct Stoves



Empress Beatrice tiles, Malachite and Tourmaline, £18.94 each, Fired Earth

Lara fire tools set, £695, Eichholtz at Sweetpea & Willow



FIRESIDE COMPANIONS

Make long winter nights as chic as they are cosy with stylish accessories to add colour and comfort

Diptyque Ambre scented candle, £168, John Lewis



Reeve alpaca throw, Navy, £500, Laura Hammett Living



Double Sheepskin rug, £149, Hyde & Hare

Baby signature buttoned stool, True Aniline Dark Olive, from £1,128, George Smith



Midhurst armchair in V&A Drawn From Nature Bird & Rabbit, £2,582, Sofas & Stuff

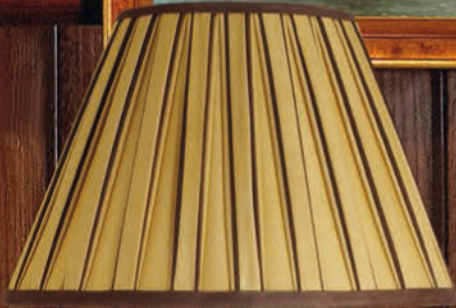


FEATURE KATY MCLEAN



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THE EDIT

As the nights draw in, lean into autumn with these elegant interior ideas

ART AT HOME

For many of us, autumn is a time to reset and review our homes. If on doing so it feels like a space is lacking in atmosphere or personality, choosing some art is a successful way to rectify this.

At Quote & Curate, founder Angela Murray MA, a Royal College of Art-trained curator who has worked within designed interiors for over 20 years, can offer fine-art consultancy to help clients create their own private art collections and add individuality to their homes.

Angela is an artist herself, painting on linen, often gilded with 24-carat gold leaf using natural mineral paint, and for a truly original and bespoke piece, she is open to commissions.

quoteandcurate.com



PERIOD DRAMA

Susi Bellamy's latest collection, influenced by the rich tapestry of historic English homes and layers of ancient wallpapers, is a reimagination of the past for today's interiors and will take the sting out of having to spend more time indoors over the coming months.

Interior designer Susi is a former fashion editor and spent time living and working in Florence. Her keen eye for resplendent colour, her penchant for layered patterns, and her signature hand-marbling designs all blend beautifully in the Country House Collection.

As well as the opulent velvet cushions seen above, this richly hued and layered collection includes lampshades, fabric, scented candles and more. We can easily imagine relaxing by the fire with a classic novel among these sumptuous pieces. susi-bellamy.com ▶



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ALL BUTTONED UP

Autumn's shorter days and longer evenings are the perfect excuse for completing all those half-done textiles projects, or perhaps starting new ones, and these cute buttons from Stockwell Ceramics – a small Cornwall-based crafts company with a studio overlooking the Tamar Valley – are the final detail that has been missing.

Taking inspiration from the natural beauty of the area, where rugged beaches meet smugglers' coves, and green countryside is a haven for wildlife, these buttons will add a delightful dose of English elegance to cushions, curtains or quilts just in time for snuggling down for the season.

Meanwhile, hanging birds, bears, and squirrels bring



nature in for a period of hibernation, with the new set of eight heritage birds, adapted from an early 19th-century book, offering a particularly pleasingly vintage appearance. Also available are brooches, pendant necklaces, earrings, and cufflinks.

stockwellceramics.com

SOFTLY GLOWING

Whether spending a quiet evening at home or hosting friends and family, autumn is all about starting to create a cosy atmosphere in the home.

Dominic Mills, director of The Oxford Lighting Company, recommends opting for lighting that offers a softer tone at this time of year.

"Our large green vino bottle lamps radiate a calm but warm glow reflecting gentle light from our impressive statement bulbs, just massaging a country or

contemporary interior into a warming, cosy and welcoming atmosphere," he says.

Dominic says autumn is also the perfect time to bring natural elements into the home, including wood, fabrics and coloured glass, which connect the interior with the changing season outside.

"It's all about bringing that cosy, earthy feel into your home. Simple but stylish," he adds.

theoxfordlightingcompany.com



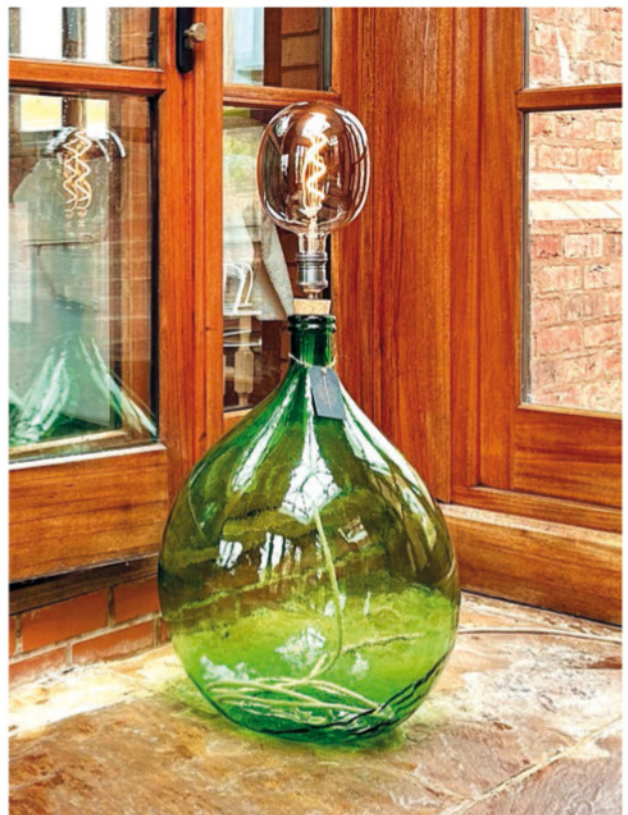
A TOUCH OF BRASS

For a timeless addition to a front door that will look good even when speckled with snow or rain, look to Beardmore, a traditional ironmonger established in London's Fitzrovia in 1860.

Having handcrafted the door furniture of some of Britain's finest homes and grandest buildings for the past 160 years, Beardmore now also offers a bespoke service with an in-house design team and a foundry in Hastings.

With an extensive library of period, classic and contemporary patterns plus a skilled team of artisans able to create one-of-a-kind designs from a client's brief, Beardmore crafts products that are bound to give visitors a fine first impression.

beardmore.co.uk ■



FEATURE SALLY COFFEY PHOTOGRAPH (SUSI BELLAMY) © JAMES BALSTON



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The drawing room is ideal for formal entertaining, with two facing sofas from Dreweatts in Palma Damask and a Syon sofa from Lawson Wood in Cunard, both by Claremont. The pair of Directoire-style armchairs from Adam Calvert Bentley are upholstered in Mini Weave Burnt Orange by Susan Deliss. A large Margaux rug from Stark anchors the space.

Comfortable GRANDEUR

Tasked to create a home suitable for grand gatherings and intimate occasions alike, interior designer Joanna Wood has returned this London apartment to its former beauty with a refreshed layout and interior schemes

FEATURE CHARLOTTE DUNFORD PHOTOGRAPHY JAMES MCDONALD STYLING CAROLINE BROWN





‘The wonderful period details provided a lot of the guidance for the schemes’

The white stucco townhouses of master builder Thomas Cubitt, three-times great-grandfather to Queen Camilla, are an integral part of London’s architectural heritage. Built in the early 19th century, these Greek and Italianate-style buildings changed the face of Belgravia, Bloomsbury and Pimlico, and it is in one of these iconic townhouses that the apartment of Caroline and James Winter, designed by Joanna Wood and her team, sits, spread over the ground and garden floors. “We had long admired this garden square and we wanted a home that was in a central location and suitable for both formal and informal entertaining,” explains Caroline. The apartment, a world away from the couple’s other house in the home counties, fitted the brief and they acquired it in 2022.

Prior to the Winters owning it, the apartment had remained untouched for 30 years and required a complete overhaul. “We had known Joanna for a few years and liked her style and work,” Caroline says. “Her team are very efficient and took the load of running the construction contract on board as well as the fitting out and furnishing from top to toe.”

An initial assessment of the internal workings threw up some urgent concerns, as Joanna recalls: “The electrics were falling to pieces and completely illegal, the plumbing was 19th century with lead pipework that had to be totally replaced, and we found asbestos throughout so we had to hand over the entire site to men who looked as if they were going to the moon.”

This setback added an extra three months to the contract period, so when the project was finally back in their hands, Joanna and her team were raring to go. “We started with a space-planning exercise which included taking down walls and altering the staircase to provide a double flight and a more open, grander relationship between the two floors,” explains Joanna. “We had the oak balusters and handrail meticulously copied and polished so the additions felt authentic.”

The bedrooms and bathrooms were rearranged to provide three suites and new flooring was installed ▶



ABOVE LEFT A statement chandelier from Christie’s lends an elegant ambience to the dining room. The circular table, chairs and rug were all already owned by the Winters.

LEFT Adding a touch of comfort to the library by Tim Gosling, is a softly curved armchair and footstool covered in Guy Goodfellow’s Fez Weave in Indigo. The table lamp and shade on the desk are from Joanna Wood.



Four unusual, matching artworks from Tuscany are the focal point in the smaller sitting room, known as 'The Green Room'. Joanna selected the grasscloth wallcovering specifically to complement them, along with specially commissioned picture lights by TM Lighting.



‘The brief was to provide modern-day services hidden within a classic shell and the proposed alterations had to be carried out with great care’

ABOVE LEFT
Decorative touches elevate the refurbished entrance hall, including a Lorford’s mirror and an umbrella stand from Joanna’s shop.

ABOVE RIGHT
Cabinets in Farrow & Ball’s Slipper Satin and walls in Argile’s Celadon create a serene atmosphere in the en-suite bathroom. The Double Swan Neck wall light in Antique Brass is from Besselink & Jones.

throughout, with Celine Jumaili, associate director at Joanna Wood, leading the on-site management. The couple were apprehensive about these major alterations initially. “However, the new layouts totally renewed and refreshed the spaces,” says Caroline.

From small details, such as the replica balusters and handrail, to larger alterations, a deep respect for the historic fabric of the Grade II listed building was prioritised throughout the project. “Our brief was to provide modern-day services hidden within a classic shell and the proposed alterations had to be carried out with great care,” says Joanna.

With its intricate period details and elegant foundations, the drawing room required special attention. Original mouldings were copied and the wall panels, pilasters, skirtings and architraves were carefully repaired and poulticed to remove many decades – “perhaps centuries” – of old paint, before being prepared and painted with a specialist stipple-

and-drag finish by decorator Terry Shrimpton. “There was a scary moment when I was up a scaffold tower with Terry in the drawing room and we were scraping back the gilded highlights on the cornice to see if the gilding could be saved,” remembers Joanna. “Luckily it was salvageable and it looks marvellous all buffed up.” Equally, the pine-panelled entrance hall had turned an unappealing orange shade with age, so it was stripped, bleached and re-waxed to produce a soft antique finish by Andy Stonebridge of The French Polishing Company, returning it to its former glory.

Nowhere required closer attention than one particular hidden gem in the apartment: an existing interior by renowned British furniture designer Tim Gosling. “We had been bequeathed this marvellous library, which was to be preserved at all costs,” says Joanna, who worked closely with Tim to restore the custom-built interior. Perfectly symmetrical and crafted from English walnut, chosen for its warm tone, the ▶



The principal bedroom has a quintessentially English feel, with Colefax and Fowler's Leaf Trellis wallpaper in Ivory/Green and Jean Monro's Lilac & Rose Chintz fabric on the headboard, canopy, curtains and cushions.



'We wanted a home that was in a central location and suitable for both formal and informal entertaining'

scheme features 21 carved and gilded Corinthian capitals and inlays in the top frieze of the bookshelves which impart wisdoms such as 'The best book is knowledge itself' and 'Art is power' in Latin. With attention to the most minute detail and exquisite craftsmanship, the room had originally taken nearly a year to make by hand.

When it came to redecorating the rest of the apartment, Caroline and James had a strong vision in mind. Keen to create warm and welcoming interiors to accommodate their love of entertaining, the couple leant towards English country house style, a look known for its relaxed atmosphere and inherent feeling of comfort. Upon a muted colour palette, antique and contemporary furnishings have been mixed and textiles, accessories and art layered with an effortlessness that comes from Joanna's extensive experience, knowledge and talented eye.

"The wonderful period details provided a lot of the guidance for the schemes and we had inherited and collected antiques which needed to be incorporated, along with some pieces specifically bought for the new layouts," explains Caroline. Several artworks were sourced to fit specific spaces in the apartment, with Italy being the chosen subject to create a cohesive look throughout. "Some pieces of art came from as far away as Rome," remarks Joanna. Other antiques and accessories were sourced nearer to home from Dreweatts auction rooms, Blanchards Collective, Lorfords and, of course, Joanna's own shop.

While many of the antiques undoubtedly hold long and intriguing stories, one of the most poignant pieces in the flat is hidden in plain sight in the dining room. The backdrop for many an elegant soirée, the de Gournay hand-painted silk wallpaper lends a graceful air to the room. A bespoke design, it is personalised with flora and fauna from Caroline and James's many travels together, infusing the space with a certain warmth and nostalgia. ■



ABOVE LEFT The white stucco townhouse's ornate facade and pillared entrance speaks to the elegant and grand style found inside.

LEFT The interior courtyard was important to the Winters as an add-on space for entertaining and relaxing. A small table and chairs, dressed for dining, offers the perfect spot for an intimate gathering.

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THIS PAGE The table and chairs in the dining room were a lucky online find. James sanded the table back and re-oiled it, and painted the chairs in Vermillion by Benjamin Moore before upholstering them in GP & J Baker's Nympeus fabric. A refurbished Edwardian rise and fall ceiling light and graphic rug work to zone the space.

OPPOSITE James has given life back to the Edwardian house with bold colours and personal touches.



BOLD CHARACTER

The colourful interiors of this Edwardian home, filled with treasured pieces and personal touches, pay homage to the lives of its owners

FEATURE CHARLOTTE DUNFORD PHOTOGRAPHY CHRISTOPHER HORWOOD

‘I wanted it to be a representation of where we are in our lives right now, so it was about creating an identity in the house’

When James Arkoulis and his husband Stuart Spice moved into their new home down a leafy west London street, they found the property to be in fine condition. Yet, there was a crucial element that was lacking. “The house had been really nicely taken care of by the previous owners, and the original fireplaces and floor in the hallway were there, but apart from that everything was painted white,” recalls James. With his creative eye, irrefutable knack for colour and a lot of patience, he has transformed the property into the vibrant and enchanting home it is today. “They had very few belongings, so it was different to how it is now, packed to the rafters with every single thing that we love!”

Having lived previously in a flat in a big Victorian conversion, where period details had been removed and everything had been modernised, the couple were keen to move onto something with a different feel. “We were specifically looking for an older property that had the original features and some character to work with,” explains James, and it was this two-storey Edwardian house that caught their eye.

“Our original plan was to do a big extension at the rear and reconfigure the ground floor to make a bigger kitchen and a separate utility and pantry,” says James. However, after moving into the house in 2021, the couple spent some time getting to know it and when deciding to start the renovation a year and a half later, they had had a change of heart. “We became really attached to the house the way it was. We loved that ▶

RIGHT A bespoke coffee table crafted by Petrel Furniture came with the couple from their previous house and, despite its contemporary feel, sits handsomely among the more traditional elements in the sitting room. The custom-made yellow Recoire sofa makes the most of the window alcove, while a grey sofa, also from the last house, has been updated with new seat cushions. Layered rugs from Etsy and La Redoute add texture and warmth to the scheme.







LEFT A black, curved console table in the hallway displays several accessories and *objets*, creating a warm welcome for visitors. The walls are in Henderson Buff by Benjamin Moore.



‘It’s a traditional English property with a Greek influence, which I think you can see in the kitchen and the artwork we’ve collected’

no one had changed the original Edwardian layout in all this time and we realised that for two people the house is a very generous size,” James explains. The idea of extending was dismissed and the new focus became working within the confines of the existing layout. The kitchen and bathroom were reworked, windows and doors were replaced at the back of the house and a cloakroom was installed under the stairs.

When the time came to redecorate, James was faced with a blank canvas. While some may have found this intimidating, his experience stood him in good stead. He co-founded Howark Design with Saskia Howard in 2017, an interior design studio known for confident use of colour and creating schemes that feel individual

and inviting. Rather than taking influence from a particular style, James focused on the feeling he wanted to create throughout the interiors. “I wanted it to be a representation of where we are in our lives right now, so it was about creating an identity in the house and the look comes out of those things.” One notable source he drew from were his and Stuart’s heritages. “Stuart is full English and I’m half English-half Greek. From a design point of view, those two cultures have strong influences, so I wanted the house to feel like you could sense that connection. It’s a traditional English property but it feels like it has a Greek influence, which I think you can see in the kitchen and in some of the artwork we’ve collected,” he says. ▶

ABOVE James used a bright white to paint the decorative window feature, which contrasts against the walls in a warm ochre by Dulux to bring a joyful, sunny feel to the space.

The kitchen has a distinctly Mediterranean feel, with its earthy yellow walls and handmade Turkish ceramic tiles from Otto Tiles and an artwork by Alekos Fassianos. Above the small vintage table and chairs hangs a plate rack, made by James and Stuart.



Dulux's Dune Grass provides a calm atmosphere in the principal bedroom. On the bed frame is a vibrant washi paper Koi fish which was a gift to James from Stuart. The artwork above the bed was painted by James and the two smaller pieces were found at a car boot sale.





‘I wanted to try and choose colours that had a natural palette to them and to push myself to use those that I love in an unashamed way’

The schemes were also steered by Stuart’s passion for nature, which led to his career as a professional garden designer. Botanical and organic motifs weave through the house, from the block-printed floral pattern on the sitting room curtains to the headboard upholstered in William Morris’s iconic Willow Bough in the bedroom. “I also wanted to try and choose colours that had a natural palette to them, whether that was greens or the more autumnal tones like the yellow in the kitchen. Saskia was a brilliant sounding board because she’s amazing at working with colour,” says James.

While the more contemporary style of their previous flat had limited the colour palette, James was determined to introduce bolder hues into the new house. “I wanted to try and push myself to use the colours I love in a really unashamed way.”

Patience was a virtue when it came to finding the perfect shade for each room. While the search for a not-too-pink peach for the guest bedroom was solved by colour matching an aftershave box in an attractive mix of peach, terracotta and pink, the olive green for the sitting room proved particularly tricky. “We must ▶

ABOVE The hand-painted bath is the focal point of the bathroom. Walls in Chester Square by Mylands are the perfect foil for more characterful artworks and a candle sconce. The blind is in Nicky Haslam’s playful Shutter Stripe fabric.



‘The lovely thing about your own home is you can just get stuck in yourself. I love that, really getting involved in every part of the house’

have gone through 30 different olives. Turns out a lot have quite a grey base to them, so they look great on a sunny day but in London a lot of the time it’s not like that. We eventually found this colour made by a guy called Color Makes People Happy in Sussex. The colours are all handmade with natural pigments; the only drawback was it took about seven coats to get it on the wall, which Stuart did. He’s just about forgiven me,” laughs James.

Among the bold walls decorated with the couple’s art collection and curated mix of antique and contemporary furniture lies an array of hand-painted details which lend a relaxed playfulness to the interiors. One such example is the stylised frame around the kitchen window which was inspired by a trip to Barcelona. “I wanted to make the sink a really nice area because it was particularly grim before,” James explains. “And no one ever really wants to do the washing up. I mulled it over for a while and then I remembered we’d gone to Park Güell and there were buildings there where they had these amazing painted details around the windows.”

Similarly, the turquoise bath in the bathroom has been covered in a painted lotus flower motif. James’s inspiration? A hippopotamus he bought from The British Museum when he was 11 years old. “The lovely thing about your own home is some things you can just get stuck in yourself. I love that, really getting involved in every part of the house. It’s nice to have that connection.” ■



ABOVE “The cosiest kind of room that I could imagine,” was James’s brief for the guest bedroom, which he has achieved with elegantly layered patterns, warm colours and thoughtful touches. The cushions are from Cushions & Creations, while the throw came from Etsy.

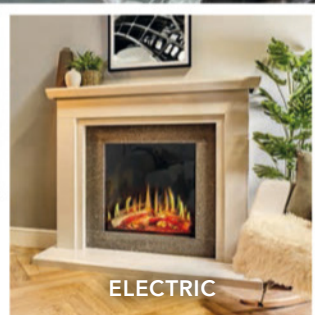
LEFT Formerly the third bedroom, this space has been converted into a dressing room. A salvaged pediment above the window lends a classical Greek feel to the scheme. The walls are in Zoffany’s Venetian Red and the chest of drawers is from Vinterior.



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History LESSON

Louise and Patrick White turned a former student rental house into a warm family home that combines period charm with a modern outlook

FEATURE JO LEEVERS PHOTOGRAPHY KASIA FISZER

ABOVE Louise and Patrick in their kitchen extension, which has given their late Victorian home a fresh outlook.

RIGHT The kitchen combines practicality with handsome detailing. The bespoke cabinets are by Monkeywood for G & Co, painted in Ditch The Tie by Coat, with aged-brass handles by Armac Martin. Visit gandcointeriors.com to see more of interior designer Georgie Cowell's work.





‘The plan was to reinstate character while also upgrading the entire house and creating a better sense of flow’

When Louise and Patrick White decided to renovate this late-Victorian house, their journey began in the local library, where they set about researching the house’s architectural past. In recent decades, this semi-detached townhouse in Gloucestershire had been rented out to students who prioritised partying over preserving its character, so it was down to Louise and Patrick to comb through historical records for clues as to how it had once looked. They even reached out to the former owner who had since moved to Australia – but then they discovered a rich seam of design inspiration far closer to home.

“Clearly, the house next door had been built at around the same time and shared similar period features,” says Patrick. “The owners were very generous and allowed us to photograph the beautiful little details that our house had lost along the way, from ironwork to ceiling roses, fireplaces to skirting boards,” adds Louise. At that point, “This house felt like the unloved twin to its smarter neighbour,” says Patrick. But since then, Louise, who works in marketing, and Patrick, a director of a distribution company, have lavished it with love and care to create a warm and lively family home.

For the couple, taking on such an ambitious renovation was, in part, a response to the frustrations

ABOVE LEFT The late-Victorian house has been extended to create flowing, family-friendly rooms. **ABOVE** Cabinetry by Monkeywood for G & Co and painted in Banca by Farrow & Ball lends a library feel to the sitting room. An Exton mirror from Vaughan and a Timothy Oulton coffee table featuring butterflies add a playful mood.



of living through the lockdowns of 2020. “Like everyone, we’d spent far too long cooped up inside and the idea of being able to get going on a big project to create a new home for us and our future family filled us with enthusiasm,” says Louise. In fact, they spotted the house’s For Sale board during one of their daily Covid walks. “I must have driven or walked past this house countless times, but had never paused long enough to appreciate its features,” says Patrick. On that walk, they were able to take a closer look and, when they walked around to the rear of the house, they realised that the plot included not only a long garden but also a coach house at far the end. “At that point, we realised the house had a lot of potential and we swiftly arranged a viewing,” Louise remembers.

She and Patrick had previously lived in an apartment conversion in a Victorian school and then in a more modern house. “So taking on a period home represented fresh territory for both of us,” she ▶

RIGHT The sitting room provides a traditional space for entertaining. Antiques such as this walnut chest of drawers from Collinge Antiques were a key part of the house’s redesign, while a print of a 19th century watercolour of the Udaipur’s City Palace, attributed to Ghasi, is a reminder of the couple’s love of travel. The sofa is from Love Your Home and the lamp is from Birdie Fortescue.





ABOVE A seating area links the dining room to the kitchen, with favourite finds displayed on a bespoke cabinetry unit. The Rochester chairs by David Seyfried are covered in York Stripe L-331 by Fermoie, while the cushions are in Winchelsea by GP & J Baker.

LEFT With walls painted in Hague Blue by Farrow & Ball, the dining room has an enveloping feel. Try Pamono for a similar vintage wall map.

*Fabrics, paint colours,
lighting and bespoke joinery
bring the house's revived
architecture to life*

says. Their plan was to reinstate character while also upgrading the entire house and creating a better sense of flow, particularly on the ground floor.

At the front of the house, the sitting room remains a more traditionally separate space. As Patrick says, "The Victorians were very good at creating rooms with the right proportions that feel private and elegant." But the rear of the house has been extended to usher in a slightly more modern feel. There is a generous kitchen, which flows into a light-filled seating area and then the dining room which, in turn, links to the hallway via double doors. Crucially, these double doors can be closed when the couple hold dinner parties so that it feels more intimate and the room's moody, dark aesthetic comes to the fore.

A stroke of luck was discovering that many of the house's original doors had been put in storage in the coach house, most likely removed when rental regulations required the landlord to fit ones that complied with fire regulations. The reconditioned 19th-century originals have now been rehung on the first floor, while seamless reproductions have been fitted on the ground floor. "They are virtually indistinguishable, thanks to having authentic reference points," says Patrick.

As with most renovations, the process did meet challenges along the way. "Inevitably, it's only once you start taking plaster off the walls or sanding floorboards that you discover the full extent of the work needed," says Louise. "But, if one of us was getting frustrated by the lack of progress or the rising cost of materials, the other would act as the positive and encouraging influence. We worked as a team and balanced each other out."

However, the building stage had left the couple exhausted, so by the time it came to considering the interior design, they decided the house would benefit from a fresh pair of eyes and this was when they brought in Georgina Cowell of G & Co. "We immediately hit it off and her enthusiasm and creativity gave the project the final burst of energy it needed," says Louise.

Early on in the process, Georgina took the couple to visit vintage and antiques markets and some of the unique finds they bought helped set the house's interiors style. "We love antiques and Georgina reassured us we could find them for reasonable prices – as long as we didn't mind getting up at 5am," smiles Louise. They hired a van and the three of them set off on early morning trips to Ardingly and Newark ▶



ABOVE Classic chequerboard tiles and a vintage barrister's cabinet make the bathroom a characterful space. The basin is Burlington and the blind is in Chara Paisley in Ivory/Gold by Mahala Textiles.

RIGHT Bespoke joinery painted in Inchyra Blue by Farrow & Ball, and a vintage armchair create a gentleman's club feel for Patrick's study.





Antique Fairs. As Patrick has spent a lot of time in India and Louise grew up in Dubai, they made a nod to this international outlook with finds such as vintage maps, which mingle with the couple's own treasures bought on trips to South America and Asia, creating a true travellers' haven.

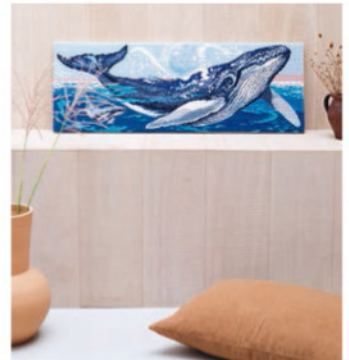
They also benefited from Georgina's expertise when it came to selecting the fabrics, paint colours, lighting and bespoke joinery that would bring the house's revived architecture to life. The result is a warm, evocative home where a sense of heritage prevails but a strong sense of the owners' personalities is also threaded through each space. "This once-neglected house has been nurtured back to life and is ready for a new chapter," says Patrick. ■

ABOVE The main bedroom is a generous, airy space with a cohesive colour scheme. Lamps by Oka echo the tones of the small Soho Home sofa and the headboard fabric, Tendril Vine in Walnut and Sage by Soane, made by Cheltenham Upholstery. The bed is flanked by Trove chests of drawers.

LEFT In Louise's dressing room, modern meets vintage with a Trove table paired with a reupholstered vintage tub chair. The curtains are in Carnival in Blueberry by Michael Szell at Christopher Farr Cloth and the lamp is Pooky.



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Surrounded by art and antiques, life for an Anglo-Italian family centres around a London home designed with informal entertaining in mind

FEATURE AMANDA HARLING PHOTOGRAPHY ANDREAS VON EINSIEDEL



Architect Annabella Nasseti redesigned the kitchen to maximise the view of the garden. The large-format tiles from Iris Ceramica are juxtaposed with Italian onyx worktops.



LEFT Simona relaxes with the family's spaniel Coco on the steps between the sitting room and the kitchen.

BELOW Protected by glass, Cole & Son's bold Hollywood Palm wallpaper forms the splashback behind the hob and provides a decorative contrast to the minimal style of the flat-fronted kitchen units.





Situated on a leafy backwater off New King’s Road, the house Simona Barbieri and Joe Bunting bought after their marriage in 2001 has stood them in good stead. “We are rooted here,” laughs Simona. “The house had been owned by the same family for decades, and while we have made some fairly major alterations over the years, it is still recognisably a late-Victorian family house. Just one that has evolved to accommodate the needs of busy family life in the 21st century.”

With three children, Alex, Alice and Allegra, aged 21, 18 and 15 respectively, based at home, the house is never quiet for long. Simona runs her business Hub Dot from home, and since lockdown, Joe, who works in the financial sector, has seen the advantages of working from home, too.

Both Simona and Joe are intensely interested in their domestic surroundings and had many discussions concerning the initial refurbishment of the house. “The display unit that replaced the wall between the hall and sitting room was a design we came up with together,” recalls Simona. “Joe’s father, John Bunting,

was a sculptor and some of his smaller maquettes are placed there, along with books and other artworks.”

They originally transformed and enlarged the existing kitchen and scullery by expanding into the side return and adding a Gothicised extension leading onto the garden. “Our three children came along and we certainly needed the extra space,” Simona explains. “Then, about 10 years ago, we dug out the basement, adding a bedroom and bathroom for guests, with a living area and a small kitchen with access to street level. Alex, our eldest is a music student and he’s pretty much colonised the bedroom, and the living area is filled with his music equipment. But it works well for us all and is much in use – for business meetings, exercise sessions, and, importantly, parties. I’m a jazz singer in my spare time, so we rarely have a party where everyone doesn’t end up downstairs making music.”

The catalyst for giving the kitchen a new facelift was the death of Joe’s mother, Romola, in 2022. “We decided that using her bequest to provide something we could all enjoy would be the thing to do,” says Simona. “This is very much our family home and ▶

ABOVE The retro chrome Habitat dining chairs are covered in green velvet as is the seating unit made by JDH Soft Furnishings, who undertook all the upholstery. The five handblown glass lampshades symbolising the five members of the family are by Rothschild & Bickers. The prints of tulips and the pair of graphic designs were sourced from Trowbridge Gallery.



ABOVE Walls throughout are hung with a wide-ranging collection of drawings, prints and paintings which the couple have acquired over the years. The ottoman is in a flamboyant Christian Lacroix design.

while the existing kitchen had served us well, we wanted it to be more in keeping with how we live now, rather than 20 years ago. We felt it was important that the backdrop to our family life should reflect how our tastes have evolved.”

To advise on planning the new kitchen, Simona called upon close friend Annabella Nassetti, a London-based Italian architect. “Annabella insisted each member of the family have their say. She sent me lots of images on every aspect of kitchen design which got us talking about what we liked or didn’t like.”

Joe also took a strong interest in the project, which he insisted had to incorporate a clear view from the blue sitting room sofa through the kitchen to the garden at the back, so the existing island unit ended up in the skip. “Having someone to mediate kept our

marriage on an even keel as Joe and I are both hoarders and very opinionated,” Simona explains. “Annabella, together with Alice and Allegra, helped us through the trauma of disposing of superfluous items we didn’t need. Our girls hate clutter, so their firm yet diplomatic approach ensured we got it done. Having everything in place and in order makes it a much calmer space.”

The original kitchen was more traditional in style with an island in the centre and the dining table set adjacent to the run of French windows. A heavily carved Arts and Crafts piece that had originally belonged to Joe’s great-grandparents, the dining table has been retained. “We love the fact that generations of the family have sat around it, so keeping it was non-negotiable, but it has been moved to the side of



'We wanted to give it an update that is more in keeping with how we live now rather than 20 years ago'

the room where Annabella sited the new dining area," Simona explains. Essential to the new, more contemporary look were large grey porcelain floor tiles and bi-fold doors, which enable the kitchen and garden to become one space for larger gatherings.

Along with the decorative wallpaper that forms a splashback behind the hob, accents of understated colour include the row of hand-blown glass lampshades above the dining table that symbolise the five family members. "Annabella suggested each of us select a different shape and colour, so we viewed the samples at the Rothschild & Bickers showroom and chose the ones we liked best," Simona says.

A set of wide steps lead up from the kitchen to the sitting room, which has changed little over the years. Set against walls painted the colour of stone and ▶

ABOVE Against a backdrop of walls painted in Farrow & Ball's London Stone and framed by curtains in a Colefax and Fowler fabric, an asymmetric buttoned sofa by George Smith covered in ultramarine velvet forms the centrepiece of the sitting room.

RIGHT Multicoloured prints from a set of Italian astrological designs are displayed in the stairwell.





*‘Having everything in place
and in order makes it a
much calmer space’*

ABOVE In the principal bedroom, walls in Buff by Farrow & Ball are contrasted by cream floral curtains and the striking pattern on the headboard, both Colefax and Fowler.

RIGHT A set of watercolours of shells hangs in the principal bathroom, which has remained largely unchanged since the couple bought the house in 2001.

curtains in similarly understated tones, the curvaceous buttoned sofa in blue velvet was one of the first purchases the couple bought for their new home; the small Regency sofa which fits neatly into an alcove came from Joe’s grandmother’s home in Hampstead. “She had a great eye and filled her home with beautiful things, many bought for next to nothing before and after World War II,” says Joe. “She and my grandfather, who painted non-stop after he retired, were interested in art and their walls were hung with interesting works by 20th-century artists. My father studied at the Royal College of Art and was taught by Leon Underwood and Frank Dobson and knew Henry Moore, so those were other strong influences growing up.”

Upstairs, the principal bedroom is a combination of styles and materials, demonstrating a fluent example of mixing rather than matching. “A couple of Regency chairs from my grandmother, newly upholstered in an Osborne & Little design, are the finishing touch,” says Joe. “I think she would have approved.” ■



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INSIDE BLENHEIM

As her book *Blenheim: 300 Years of Life in a Palace* is published, Lady Henrietta Spencer-Churchill, interior designer and a 12th generation descendant of the family that built it, talks to our editor Samantha Scott-Jeffries candidly about its colourful past and current restoration

What are your earliest memories of Blenheim Palace?

It was very much the home of my grandfather [the 10th Duke of Marlborough], and my father [the 11th Duke], was very involved with running the estate. We lived in a pretty Georgian house about five miles away in a village called Charlbury, but we spent a huge amount of time at Blenheim. My grandfather wasn't terribly good with children. He'd grumble at us with his boxer dog sitting by his feet, so we'd spend a lot of time outside – water-skiing on the lake, going on my brother's speedboat, doing all the things you're not allowed to do today! And we'd help in the gift shop or pick fruit in the garden. If we were inside, exploring, we'd go up on the roofs. It was awe-inspiring to be up there.

You describe growing up and visiting wonderful homes of friends and family as inspiring in the book. Did this, as well as Blenheim, influence your vocation as an interior designer?

Definitely, yes. My mother [the 11th Duchess] was artistic and had very good taste, as did my maternal grandparents. We'd often go out to lunch at other people's houses and I'd disappear to explore. I was always curious, wanting to know about the layouts of houses and how people's lives worked within them, whether it was the staff, the cooks or the family itself. I was always observant, noticing pictures and furniture, so I think this was all drip-fed into me. ▶



PREVIOUS PAGE

Author and highly regarded interior designer Henrietta Spencer-Churchill with her Border Terrier, Bruno, sitting under one of her favourite portraits of her great-grandmother, Consuelo Vanderbilt, 9th Duchess of Marlborough, painted by Umberto Veruda in 1903.

ABOVE The building of Blenheim was a reward from Queen Anne to the 1st Duke of Marlborough for his victory at The Battle of Blenheim on the River Danube on 13 August 1704. Designed by John Vanbrugh, it is a splendid example of baroque architecture.

At what point did you become interested the history and design of Blenheim specifically?

That came much later. My father [the 11th Duke] knew the architecture and the history of Blenheim and he got me involved in aspects such as the restoration and entertaining. What was his passion, became my passion.

When did you start to become involved in the continuous restoration of Blenheim?

Since I've had my business [Spencer-Churchill Designs, incorporating Woodstock Designs] I've been partially involved with the restoration works, but the frustration is that a lot of the time the restoration that takes place is on things that need to be done but the general public wouldn't even be aware of, such as rewiring or putting in heating systems or repairing roofs. Often there's not a lot of budget left on an annual basis to do things such as modernising the decoration, especially on the private side of the house.

As an interior designer, if you didn't have to spend money on the roofs, what would you love restore?

There's a State Bed which the 4th Duke commissioned when King George III was coming to stay. It was placed in the Third State Room. My passion is to have

it restored and for it to go on public view. Or one of the newly vacated rooms above the State Rooms – the Godolphin rooms – which also need to be tackled. It would be wonderful to restore those and have two or three lovely bedrooms and an apartment there for people to stay in when they hold upmarket weddings. There are also bedrooms in the private apartments that need updating.

There is great skill in ensuring that nothing new feels as though it is an addition or out of character when updates are done. How have you perfected this?

We're lucky with all of the wonderful resources we have. We recently had to replace the cut-velvet fabric on two sofas and chairs in the First State Room. I knew the original fabric on the walls and sofas had come during Consuelo Vanderbilt's time. She used to go and buy wonderful, extravagant things in Paris with her mother. We looked into having the original fabric totally rewoven, but it was going to be an unbelievably ridiculous expense, about £5,000 a metre, and cost about quarter of a million pounds in total! So, due to my resources and knowing people, I managed to find what I think is a very attractive alternative, which everybody loves, for a fraction of the budget. It looks good because it's the right type of fabric, the right



‘My great-grandfather loved Blenheim and realised it was his life’s duty to try and preserve it’

colours and of the right period. It would have been lovely to have the original, but the place has got to evolve, and it’s got to evolve in the right way. And actually, some of the original fabric also remains on the walls, so it still can be seen.

You attribute Blenheim being in family hands today to Consuelo Vanderbilt, the 9th Duchess, in the book. Can you tell us why?

She married my great-grandfather, the 9th Duke, known as ‘Sunny’ [despite his disposition]. It was very much an arranged marriage by her mother, Alba, who was a very pushy person. She wanted her daughter to marry into European aristocracy and she saw that as a way of elevating them into a different part of life. My great-grandfather loved Blenheim and he realised it was his life’s duty to try and preserve it. The couple both forsook happiness initially in order to save Blenheim.

He did wonderful things and spent his money wisely on Blenheim. Although it wasn’t necessarily a marriage

of love, Consuelo was very well-liked and respected in England and carried on doing a lot of good work.

Do you have particular admiration for Consuelo?

Yes. Although I met Consuelo, I don’t have a recollection of doing so, but I have a lot of admiration for the way she coped with everything, being in a loveless marriage and doing a lot of charity work. She was very much a family person too, even when she separated from my great-grandfather she kept in touch with everyone. She was very close to Winston [Churchill], too, who was like a brother or cousin to her, so I think she had very good values. Despite having a powerful mother, she managed to make her own mark.

Do you also admire her style and taste?

A lot of what she did is still at Blenheim because it is so lovely, but also largely because we haven’t been able to afford to change it. However, I think that if and when we do update some of the rooms, it will ►

ABOVE RIGHT The Great Hall looking south towards the Saloon and parkland towards Bladon. The imposing grand stone arch is supported by fluted columns with Corinthian capitals executed by sculptor and wood-carver Grinling Gibbons and his assistants. The keystone depicts Queen Anne’s coat of arms.



‘Voltaire wrote of Blenheim “If the apartments were as large as the walls are thick, this mansion would be convenient enough”’

ABOVE The First State Room was decorated by Consuelo Vanderbilt. She sourced and purchased fabrics and furniture in Paris that are still in the rooms today. However, they are gradually being replaced as they have deteriorated with use and sun damage. The sofas and chairs in this room are being re-covered using a similar silk cut-velvet fabric.

very much be in the same style because it’s suitable for the style of the house and it just works. Consuelo had the money to spend on wonderful, quality things.

If it were possible to converse with any of the former Dukes and Duchesses of Marlborough, who would you have most liked to have met?

Sarah, the 1st Duchess of Marlborough. She was a tour de force! I have great admiration for her and I certainly feel I’m a little bit like her in the way she just managed the complexities of the building work while the 1st Duke, literally, fought his battles. She just got on with life. She wasn’t a complainer. She was highly intelligent and managed money and people very well alongside the mammoth project of Blenheim, which she didn’t like at all initially. I think when he died, she made it her life’s work to finish it off as a memorial to him.

What do you think of Sarah’s desire to simplify the initial design and for it not to be too lavish?

The thing about baroque architecture is that baroque doesn’t do small! It’s austere, it’s grand and it’s not cosy by any means. I think the 1st Duke saw Blenheim as a palace to compete with Versailles and Louis XIV. Although the styles were different, he saw it as a monument to hold up to that. Sarah wanted Sir Christopher Wren to be the architect, which would have resulted in a prettier, more manageable house, but that was the only time her husband got his way, selecting Vanbrugh [who we now know was a soldier, spy, wine merchant, playwright and member of the Kit-Cat Club before becoming a self-taught architect, as detailed in the book].

I’m sure in those days it wouldn’t have been a pleasant place to live for Sarah, with these massive, cold rooms. She didn’t really have the chance to live

BELOW A wash hand basin is cleverly built into an antique cabinet in one of the bedrooms.

RIGHT The George III mahogany tester bed with a giltwood cornice

carved with scrolls and gadroons. The bed curtains are much in need of replacing and on a long list of restoration work to be carried out when funds permit.



in it like a family home. It wasn't really until the 4th Duke that happened.

Under the 4th Duke, you say that the palace became a showcase for the best of British craftsmanship. What survives of his influence today?

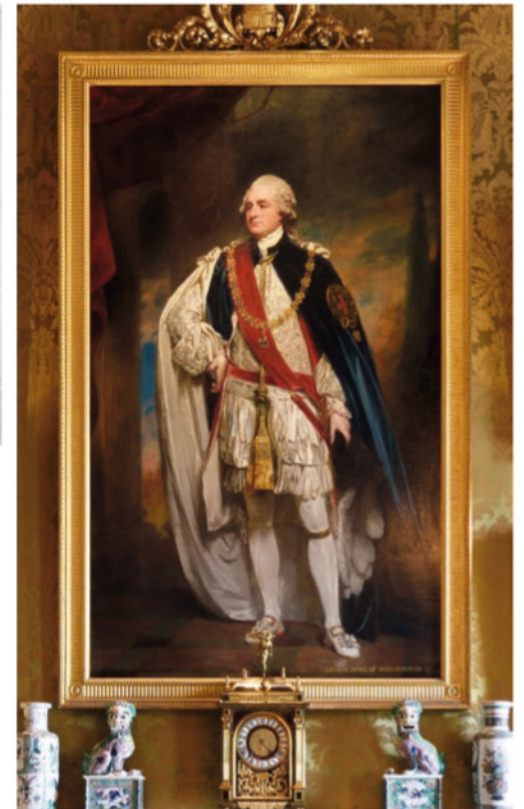
By this time, Georgian architecture and decoration was the fashion, so the 4th Duke wanted to bring Blenheim into that era. He would have gone on a Grand Tour, shopping in Europe, buying a lot of French furniture predominantly, some Italian. He changed certain things, like some of the fireplaces in some of the rooms, to bring it into that period. He employed the architect Sir William Chambers. Obviously the architecture was still very baroque, but he enhanced some of the plasterwork Hawksmoor was originally responsible for by adding gilding to make it grander.

It is astounding that so much detailed information about the creation of the palace has survived and been preserved – such as some of the original ▶



ABOVE Undoubtedly the power behind the Marlborough line, Sarah, 1st Duchess of Marlborough, was a force to be reckoned with.

RIGHT George Spencer, 4th Duke of Marlborough, was only 19 when he inherited the Blenheim title and estates.



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‘The key is trying to get that balance to have the charm of a family home, keeping some mystique, but also a business’

bills for the initial works. Can you tell us about the archive?

It’s quite varied as it is set over various different places. A lot of the letters between Queen Anne and the 1st Duchess, Sarah, are in the British Library. We have quite a lot at Blenheim and at the Churchill Archive. There is a lot of archive material from various Dukes, but there are also great gaps. Initially, the book was going to be 100 pages shorter, but there was so much archive material we didn’t want to cut.

Can you describe the private apartments?

They are on the main floor, the *piano nobile*, in the East Wing, which overlooks the Italian Garden. On the second floor there are a lot of bedrooms [15 in total] in the East Wing and part of the South Wing.

When people come for the first time, they are always surprised at how cosy and welcoming it is. It’s just not terribly practical as a lot of the bedrooms don’t have en-suite bathrooms. Firstly, because they weren’t built at that time, and secondly, because the building is built of solid stone, there is nowhere above the state rooms to put plumbing. It’s a fact of living in a house built over 300 years ago. There is also no private entrance or exit to the private part of the house, or separate gardens. No one lives at Blenheim full-time anymore as

it’s not very practical when you have a million visitors. We do use it for lots of events. My father lived here until he died, but it’s changed a lot since then.

Your father always claimed that the maintenance and repair of it are “the new front line of the battle for Blenheim”. You and your family estimate it costs upwards of £40million in any 10 years across multiple projects for its upkeep. What are the current plans?

We have a two-year project starting next year to repair the roof over the Great Hall and the Saloon. It means a loss of income from events such as filming and weddings while the scaffolding is up, so there’s never a good time to do it. However, if we don’t do the work, things like the wonderful murals and painted ceiling in the Saloon are going to get damaged. It’s a necessity. We’ve done an awful lot over the last 10 to 15 years. It’s been a real team effort, so hopefully when my nephew takes over he will find it in pretty good shape.

Can you tell us more about the ethos your father has passed down to you and your brother?

Everything previously had been run in-house and we had an agent. Now, things have to be more professional, with charitable trusts. It’s very much run ▶

ABOVE This south-facing bedroom had a partial facelift in 2016 using the existing furniture but replacing fabrics and some upholstery.



‘More frustrating is the 8th Duke, who sold several paintings, and that nine Titians went up in flames’

like a business today. It sometimes annoys me, but the key is to get the balance of the charm of it being a family home and keeping some mystique but also to be a business.

There are so many exquisite rooms, tapestries, artworks, pieces of furniture and collections at Blenheim, do you have a personal favourite?

I love The Chapel and I’m proud of it as we recently restored it, along with The Orangery. One of my favourite rooms is The Grand Cabinet. It’s got a fabulous aspect. We tend to use it in the evening. I love the decor and, to me, it’s a very spiritual room as it has all of the family portraits there.

Over the centuries so many paintings have been sold or passed to different hands from Blenheim, some of which have been acquired again. Which of have you been most excited to see return to Blenheim?

We were lucky to reacquire a lot of the family portraits and miniatures from Viscount Churchill, a descendant of the 4th Duke. We also recently acquired a pastel of Consuelo, which had annoyingly sold in New York, but we did get that back. We don’t have unlimited coffers, but it’s all relative, because if you didn’t know about certain things you wouldn’t miss them. More frustrating is the 8th Duke, who sold several paintings [estimated to be worth over £60 million in today’s

money, including a Van Dyke and a Rubens], and that nine Titians went up in flames [in a fire in 1861].

What does the future look like at Blenheim?

My nephew has planning permission to build a pretty Georgian-style house in the park to live there with his young family, but still be on hand to see what’s going on. It’s the perfect situation and makes total sense. He’s leaving his legacy for the next century. It will become something like a dower house, but he’ll be living in it.

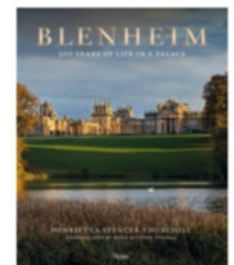
How do you personally describe Blenheim?

I was always thankful that as a young child I wasn’t living at Blenheim because it’s not the sort of place you want to bring school friends home for tea! It was wonderful as a teenager, when we had a lot of friends at Oxford, studying. We had lots of parties, enjoyed the boathouse and generally had lots of fun. It’s not my home but I’m passionate about it and feel a responsibility to it. It’s very much a team effort.

It could be argued that perhaps no one in its history knows Blenheim Palace better than you – if walls could talk, what is one thing they would say?

Hopefully thank you! Thank you for loving me and for keeping me in as good shape as possible and to survive for many more generations. ■

ABOVE The Grand Cabinet displays many beautiful family portraits and miniatures. Over the fireplace is Caroline, 4th Duchess, by George Romney. To the left is a painting of the Spencer children – Charles, Robert, Anne, and John – by Godfrey Kneller.



Blenheim: 300 Years of Life in a Palace (Rizzoli, £57.50) by Henrietta Spencer-Churchill, with photography by Hugo Rittson-Thomas



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DECORATING

THIS PAGE In this design by Sibyl Colefax & John Fowler, a bold red palette creates an inviting snug. **OPPOSITE** Elegant weaves offer practicality and longevity as well as interest when layered in different textures and colours. Sofa, Viggo, £110 a metre, and all other fabrics, Manuel Canovas





Whether a second sitting room in a larger home, or perhaps the main one in a bijou property, a cosy snug is often where the family gathers for an evening. Less formal than a drawing room which might be used for entertaining or as a morning room to enjoy coffee and reading the papers, the snug is perhaps where the television might be watched, books might be read by the fire or even a games night held with friendly competition. As such this space is more intimate, can be more personal and comfort is of paramount importance. A snug can therefore afford to be decorated with a more relaxed approach, with more practical, long-wearing finishes to ensure that it is suitable for all the family, including pets. However, it can still remain stylish and full of character.

Home comforts

Usually a smaller space, the proportions might dictate the type of furniture – though as its main function might simply be for relaxing in, do not be afraid for a sofa to be as large as it can be in the room. There might be little need for other pieces so make seating a priority with large, plump-cushioned sofas, and ▶



ABOVE The fire is a natural focal point to sit by to enjoy a family games night. *Camille limewash-finished oak coffee table, £499, The Cotswold Company*

LEFT A plump armchair will be the sought-after spot to curl up with a book. *Coleridge armchair, Velvet Spruce, £1,195, and other furniture, all Oka*

OPPOSITE An ottoman is a useful, multifunctional piece in a snug. *Ophelia footstool, Harris Tweed Marmalade, £1,725, Neptune*

STYLE NOTES:

- Comfort should be a priority for seating and scale can afford to be bigger than one might expect if little else is vital in the room.
- Express personality through bold colour choices and playfully use a mix of patterns for an eclectic, evolved look.
- Use lighting to add atmosphere whilst also considering practicalities such as ensuring light sources are well placed for reading.
- Add layers of cosiness through extra cushions and blankets.

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perhaps an armchair by the fire. An upholstered ottoman is useful for a smaller room too, since it can be used as extra seating, a footrest, a coffee table for placing a tray of drinks and snacks on, or a pile of magazines, and a surface for a game of cards or Scrabble. As a more private space, shelves and bookcases can display favourite books along with cherished personal ornaments and family photos rather than more formal art and antiques.

As children and pets might use the space more readily than a grand drawing room, fabric choices should be a little more hardwearing – embroideries and silks are not viable here. Instead, woven textiles can add some pattern and texture as well as a good longevity. Use cushions to add both some extra comfort and introduce more character and colour. As a space that might naturally be used more in cooler months to spend long evenings, the colour palette will suit warmer, richer colours of brown, olive, orange, navy or red – perhaps even a bold colour to envelop on walls. Patterns can be a little playful too, mixing stripes and checks with eclectic prints, perhaps even some subtle animal prints. Add trims such as fringes and ▶



ABOVE Use stripes in different colours and widths to add a lively yet softly harmonious feel. *Sofa, Camber Stripe, £94 a metre, Jane Churchill*

LEFT A comfortable armchair with a handy side table are essential ingredients for a cosy night in. *Sandringham armchair, £1,899, Bridgman*

BELOW Have fun with patterns, perhaps adding a subtle animal print to the mix. *Clarence, Olive, £174 a metre, Colefax and Fowler*



DECORATING



tassels to cushions or curtain edges to add some more character.

The fire will be a focal point, though if film nights are a primary use, then positioning seating for all to have a good viewpoint is a crucial consideration. A padded fender round a fireplace will provide somewhere to warm up, perhaps toasting some crumpets on a roaring fire. A piled rug to sink feet into is also an extra layer of warmth and luxury. Lighting will also be of importance on dark winter nights. Keep it cosy and atmospheric with tall floor lamps and wall lights or a table lamp to offer pools of soft light, with a suitable task light for reading too. Add in the warm glow of some candles, and of course plenty of throws and blankets and the scene is set for cosy nights in. ■

ABOVE A mix of patterns and colours will lend an evolved, inviting look perfect for a snug. All fabrics and trims from Sanderson

ABOVE RIGHT A smart striped linen in different-sized scales is practical yet exudes character. Exbury three-seat sofa, from £2,749, Sofas & Stuff

ABOVE A floor lamp takes up minimal space while providing practical lighting. Cranling articulating standing lamp, £365, Pooky



FEATURE KATY MCLEAN PHOTOGRAPH (SEBY), COLEMAN & JOHN FOWLER © GAVIN KINGCOME; (THE COTSWOLD COMPANY, SANDERSON) © JON DAY PHOTOGRAPHY



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Cave Interiors picked out the red in this rug by Robert Stephenson and painted the cabinets in Bronze Red by Little Greene to tie the room together.



Floor as canvas

To add instant colour, texture and warmth to a scheme, use the floor as a canvas. Here we look at how to choose the perfect rug to set off a space

Rugs are an ideal way to tie a scheme together, and for many interior designers are the starting point when decorating a room. Indeed, the late interior decorator Robert Kime considered that what went on the floor was just as important as whatever was put on the walls for determining the overall look and feel of a room.

There are several approaches to choose from, beginning with using a traditional rug with strong

colours and a pattern which sets the tone for a scheme. Then there is the option to go for a plain rug, such as sisal or jute, which adds texture and warmth to a space. Lastly, rugs can be layered in order to ground a design. "We often start with them to guide the entire design," says interior designer Sean Symington. "The key is to know how to balance all the elements such as colour, texture, pattern and practical requirements." ▶



COLOUR & TEXTURE

“We often call the floor the ‘fifth wall’ as it takes up a substantial proportion to the eye and so has a big responsibility in infusing the space with an overall mood,” says rug designer Jennifer Manners. Following on from this, choosing the right colour will transform an interior, adds homeware designer Susie Watson, whose collection includes hand-woven kilim rugs. “Rugs are the foundation of any room. Almost like a painting on the floor,” she says.

To create a cohesive look, pick a rug with an accent colour that complements other features in the room such as artwork or soft furnishings, recommends Andy Guard, creative director of Roger Oates. “To create a calm, relaxing space, opt for soft neutrals or cool blues,” he says, “but if you want an uplifting, energetic atmosphere choose vibrant yellow or multicolours.” The key is to make sure colours work together. “They don’t have to be an exact colour match, but they should be harmonious,” says designer Christine Van Der Hurd.

In terms of the main construction methods that rugs can be made from, there are two types to consider: knotted pile and the flat weave kilim style. “Flat weave can add depth, colour and warmth but in a more casual way,” says rug consultant Amy Kent. “They are brilliant in open-plan spaces, such as barn conversions, where they can be used for zoning.” But for depth of colour and texture, nothing beats a hand-knotted rug. “Even in a plain colour, a hand-knotted rug will look sumptuous and textural, and never flat like a machine-made rug,” Kent adds.



ABOVE The tufting process of this rug by Roger Oates Design stands the yarn on end, causing it to reflect light, adding texture and creating an intensity of colour.

LEFT An oriental rug laid over a hardwood floor is a classic look for a country house, as in this design by VSP Interiors.

RIGHT Part of a new ‘Heritage’ collection by Jennifer Manners, this textured Persian knot rug is heavily treated to appear old for that desired “lived-in” look.





PATTERN CHOICES

When introducing patterns on floors, consider the scale in balance with other elements in the room. "It's vital for a rug, as is the colour," says interior designer Flora Soames, who likes using antique rugs for their lived-in impact. "For optimum effect, one rug should be larger and of simple or minimal pattern, acting as a foil for a smaller, highly patterned rug over the top," explains Guard. "Alternatively, two rugs that carry equal weight in pattern and colour can sit alongside each other for a clash effect." ▶

ABOVE Interior designer Lisa Burdus chose the Afghan Amara rug design from the Australian brand Cadrys for this room. A neutral, the texture is warm and inviting.

LEFT A geometric pattern adds instant energy and colour to this home office designed by Flora Soames.

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FIND A STOCKIST



As a rule of thumb, bold patterns add energy and focal points, perfect for making a statement in otherwise neutral spaces. Subtle patterns, on the other hand, provide a gentle visual interest without overwhelming the senses. “When selecting a pattern, consider the room’s size and existing decor,” says Jon Flannigan of Crucial Trading. “Large patterns can make a small room feel even smaller, while smaller, intricate designs might get lost in a spacious area.”

Simple, block-colour rugs work well with patterned carpets, such as stripes, to add dimension and interest to a room. “Alternatively, a vibrant and decorative rug with a solid neutral carpet creates a perfect combination,” adds Alexandra Ellis of Cormar Carpets. There is a practical advantage of choosing a patterned rug, too, beyond the aesthetic values. “Spots, spills and general wear and tear are often easily concealed within the intricate detailing of the design,” says Kirsty Barton of Alternative Flooring. Therefore, it might be preferable to place a patterned rather than a plain rug under a dining or coffee table, for instance. ▶

ABOVE This Blue Serrif handwoven kilim by Susie Watson Designs acts as a painting on the floor and helps zone the dining area.

LEFT With contrasting areas of stippled colour and bright loop pile, this Tide carpet by Roger Oates Design is ideal for a formal sitting room.

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SIZE MATTERS

Choosing the right rug size is important for a harmonious look, but there is considerable room for subjectivity, says Jon Flannigan, head of product at Crucial Trading

- A too-small rug can make a space feel disjointed. One option is to consider a runner on top of solid or carpeted flooring instead. If the rug is on the small side but is vital to the scheme, another option is to use glass-topped furniture so that the design is not lost.
- A rug that is too large can overwhelm a room. Allow a border of approximately one metre around the edge of the room. Use paper (masking) tape to mark the size of the rug on the floor to experiment with various sizes. This allows you to visualise the placement of the rug in relation to the walls and furniture.
- Choose a size that allows the rug to fit under the furniture – even if it is just by a few centimetres. In dining rooms, rugs should extend beyond the table to accommodate pulled-out chairs.
- When layering smaller rugs in a room, each one should be visible enough to make its own design statement – too many competing patterns could mean they get lost in the overall scheme.
- With awkward-sized and -shaped rooms, a bespoke design is often the only solution as it can be tailored to fit the unique dimensions and contours of the space without compromising on style or functionality.



ABOVE Synthetic rugs, such as this runner in Anywhere ca-rPET by Alternative Flooring, are ideal for floors that are likely suffer from spills as they are easily cleaned.

LEFT A zigzag pattern injects instant energy and multiple colours can be picked out across a scheme. This Zig Zags flat weave from the Shop Amy collection by Amy Kent is handmade and can be altered to be 6cm larger or smaller, or made bespoke to any size and colour.

MATERIALS & PRACTICALITIES

Wool is durable and resilient, ideal for high-traffic areas with regular care. Sisal is tough and long-lasting, perfect for entryways and staircases. Jute provides a softer feel and is best for low-traffic areas. Seagrass, meanwhile, is stain-resistant so can be used in kitchens and dining rooms. With rugs, do watch out for what the trade call art silk – it is made of bamboo or banana silk. “They aren’t hard wearing and don’t like getting wet,” warns Kent. “Most people know that pale shades will show more visible signs of discolouration and staining, but what many don’t know is that the background lustre of the yarn also has an impact,” adds Lisa Conway of Brintons. “More lustrous yarns and colours will show more visible contrast between the heavily soiled areas and the less used areas.”

While wool and nylon can handle being cleaned with vinegar, it is not suitable for delicate fibres such as sisal, jute and dyed fabrics like cotton. Use a product with a WoolSafe or other seal of approval for ▶



BUYER'S GUIDE

Ideal for any space that could benefit from a little warmth, this vibrant design, Juxtaposition by Crucial Trading, is made of hard-wearing wool.



cleaning rugs and carpets, recommends Alternative Flooring's Kirsty Barton. "Also, be sure to use only the suction vacuum option when cleaning rugs made of natural plant fibres. The brush can be too harsh."

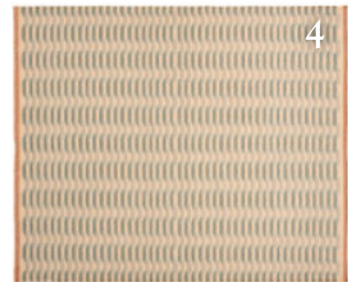
Rugs woven using synthetic, recycled materials are gaining popularity. These are stain-resistant, moth-resistant and easier to clean while also withstanding sunlight. "If stains and spills are common – particularly with young children and pets around – something which is made from recycled plastic bottles is simple to clean," adds Barton. ■

BELOW Designing from the ground up, interior designer Suzy Hoodless picked out colours from this patterned rug and used them on the upholstery and walls for this sitting room.



EIGHT OF THE BEST RUGS

Eye-catching patterns and notable designs



1 Rose Tulip wool kilim, from £995, Susie Watson Designs

2 Brussels Weave in Squiggle, £337.80 a linear metre, Sibyl Colefax & John Fowler

3 Alhambra, a hand-knotted cut-pile design, £POA, Vanderhurd

4 Abacus flatweave in Cirrus, from £1,671, A Rum Fellow

5 Moorish in Green, from £1,150, Amy Kent x Rapture & Wright

6 Hand-knotted Afghan Sundas, £9,980, from a selection sourced by Rugs of Petworth

7 Rhode Dark Red, from £425, Agnella by Brintons

8 Lichen Malachite Green, from £3,389, Sonya Winner



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Take a soft
APPROACH

Interior designers and experts reveal
the creative potential of fabric walling
and how to achieve a tailored finish



Traditionally applied fabric walling brings subtle softness to this classic bedroom design by Salvesen Graham.



‘There is a depth and texture that you don’t get from wallpaper’

Karen Howes, founder and CEO of Taylor Howes

ABOVE Hand-embroidered, bespoke de Gournay Deco Wisteria wool sateen fabric walling in this bedroom design by Taylor Howes.

“**F**abric walling is one of the most luxurious finishes you can add to a room,” says Karen Howes, founder and CEO of interior design studio Taylor Howes.

“There is a depth and texture that you don’t get from wallpaper or a paper-backed fabric wall covering, and it feels gorgeous.” The process is akin to upholstery and involves padding the wall and stretching fabric across its surface to create a smooth and opulent result that feels soft and springy to the touch.

Covering walls with fabric is not new: there are many examples of tapestries and silks in historic houses used to provide decorative beauty and thermal insulation, including the elegant damask on the walls of the Withdrawing Room at No.1 Royal Crescent, the Georgian townhouse in Bath. But what is new is the resurgence of interest in this traditional technique. “I love the richness of fabric walling,” says interior designer Rachel Chudley. “It feels warm and comfortable – and I enjoy playing around with quite traditional fabric but using it in unusual ways.”

Joyful patterns, bold colours and striking contrasts can all be used to create a contemporary take on the classic look. Interior designer Veere Grenney recently used a checked fabric in brown on a white ground for a bedroom. “I often use wall upholstery because it’s brilliant for acoustics and immediately atmospheric,” he says. “Brown grounds a room, goes with everything and with crisp white, it looks terribly modern.” The checked fabric was a very tight weave to aid with keeping clean, crisp lines and minimise distortion of the check pattern. ▶



LEFT Walls upholstered in Lilac Original on Oyster linen, £350 a metre, by Bennison Fabrics.



‘Fabric walling can conceal imperfections’

Louise Richards, Bennison Fabrics



To create a sumptuously inviting and restful feeling in this bedroom, interior designer Rosanna Bossom upholstered the walls in Nantessa Ciel linen cotton, £110.42 a metre, by Lewis & Wood.



In this design by Veere Grenney, walls are upholstered in Woodman Check in Berber, £117 a metre, by Schumacher.



'I often use wall upholstery because it's brilliant for acoustics and immediately atmospheric'

Veere Grenney, interior designer

Aesthetic benefits

"Fabric walling can conceal imperfections and uneven surfaces in old properties," says Louise Richards, Bennison Fabrics' London showroom manager. "Walling looks especially good in attic bedrooms, smoothing out odd shapes, giving an overall cohesion to the look of the interior."

Designers use it to emphasise the splendour of a grand room or the inviting warmth of a small one, as Jo Maudsley, director of Charlton Brown, explains of a recent project to create a children's reading nook as part of a family home. "We wanted the space to feel cosy as it is a niche within a wall, so we decided to use a fabric with a lovely soft and tactile quality, with padded panels for extra comfort," he says.

In addition to the cocooning effect, Kit Kemp, creative director of her eponymous design studio, highlights another quality as a key reason she likes to use fabric walling as one of her signature design features. "We are all about texture, so it feels only natural to cover the vast majority of a space with something tactile and sumptuous, that delivers instant personality and depth," she says. "We love the upholstered feel of fabric walling for added weight and softness, particularly in a bedroom – it's also brilliant for soundproofing and acoustics." Kemp often opts for linens and weaves, but might opt for an embroidered fabric for something extra special: "It will add another wonderful layer of texture and depth, with the three-dimensionality making a room feel truly special." ▶



INSIDER KNOWLEDGE

Here, Vienne Silk Chalk paper-backed wallcovering, £128 a metre, is trimmed with Apollo Key paper-backed braid, £57 a metre, both by James Hare.

*'Silk wallcoverings,
in particular,
bounce light
around the room'*

Saffron Hare (*opposite*),
managing director of
James Hare





Taylor & Turner created a cosy sleeping space for a child under the eaves with walls in pretty Marquis de Seignelay cotton, £261.60 a metre, by Pierre Frey.

Neatly done

The classic upholstered wall method typically involves framing the wall with thin wooden battens. Each wall is then covered with cotton ‘bump’ (interlining or padding) which is stretched and stapled on to the frame. The fabric, which has been cut into lengths, pattern matched and sewn together to make one full bespoke piece for each wall, is then applied in the same way, but stretched tightly over the interlining so that it is almost drum-like in its tension. The fabric is then trimmed and finished with braid for a smart result. “As soon as the fabric is up, noise levels drop, the room sounds so soft and feels calm,” says Molly Wemyss of Stretch Fabric Walling.

Another option is to line the walls in paper-backed fabrics, which are offered by some textile companies as an alternative to ‘standard’ wallpaper. “A special paper is applied to the back of the fabric,” explains Saffron Hare, managing director of James Hare. “The effect is stunning, creating a totally different look and atmosphere in a room, producing an intense depth of colour and drama – silk wallcoverings, in particular, bounce light around the room.”

Fabric wallcoverings are generally easier and quicker to install than fabric walling as they are similar to traditional wallpaper in requiring adhesive application, and may also be more cost effective and make it easier to create a seamless look. That said, Hare does recommend using an experienced specialist decorator to install fabric wallcoverings, as they require special adhesive, and it can be trickier to pattern match small-scale semi-plain patterns. ■



PROFESSIONAL TIPS

Molly Wemyss’ practical pointers for fabric walling

- An ‘average’ room might require 35m–40m of fabric plus about 70m of braid, required to trim the top and bottom of the walls and vertical lines at the corners.
- Each room, depending on its size, usually involves about two weeks’ work, in measuring the site, preparation, seaming the fabric and installation.
- Sewing together the fabric lengths must be done very carefully to create one large piece for each wall with perfect pattern matching. Unlike curtains, it is not possible to conceal imperfections in the draping.
- Most fabrics can be used for walling, although each comes with its own quirks. Anything too lightweight may show shadow lines of the seams, and velvet may be subject to pressure marks, as the process of requires plenty of handling. Stripes and checks can become distorted under tension, certainly they will take longer to install for an immaculate result. Linen is my favourite fabric for walling, as it is well behaved and looks so pretty.
- ‘Obstructions’ on walls, such as switch plates, curtain-pole brackets and clock points for picture lights will need to be prepared with battening, to create a frame for the fabric to be cut away in these areas.
- There are two options for hanging pictures on fabric walls: the first is to use a picture rail, either mounted onto or fixed above the height of the fabric, and the second is to simply nail through the fabric. However, a nail will create a visible hole in the fabric which may be problematic if the picture is later moved or replaced with another of a different size.
- When choosing a trim, look for a braid with a minimum width of 12mm to conceal staples with relative ease and with at least one straight edge to butt against the skirting or cornice. Anything too lightweight will mean that occasional bumps are more obvious, and too thick may make mitred corners bulky. George Spencer Designs, Samuel & Sons, Houlès and VV Rouleaux have a good selection of trimmings.
- I learnt my skills from my mother, Fiona Wemyss, who has covered miles of walls in beautiful fabrics.
- Even when replacing walling that had hung in historic houses for more than a century, the fabric was not dirty. If worried, contact a specialist upholstery cleaner for advice.



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From inventive storage to exploiting a home's unusual angles, there are a variety of creative solutions when it comes to making the most of compact spaces

FEATURE EMMA J PAGE



Form and function collide in this eaves bedroom by interior designer Louise Robinson, who opened up walls to follow the roof line, creating angular storage alcoves. Panelling adds texture and character to the bed nook.





ABOVE Built-in joinery around an entryway is ideal for book storage. Here, interior designer Kate Guinness finished the woodwork in Papers and Paints' grounding Veinous Blood Red.

BELOW This study by Rebecca Hughes also serves as copious coat storage. A pale green finish, textural wallpaper and a serene window seat belie the room's hard-working nature.



Enhancing the spatial potential of a home, whether that means reworking an unintuitive layout to better access storage, or capitalising on particularly diminutive proportions, can often reveal an entirely new way of living. The key is to respect the historical integrity of a building while making it suitable for contemporary needs. “Many period homes and townhouses were built at a time when pomp and circumstance were concentrated on the lower levels, so it’s common to find spaces that are more difficult to utilise on the upper floors,” believes interior designer Laura Stephens. “This is often seen in triangular or unusually shaped windows, petite landings and bedrooms with awkward footprints. Whatever its age, I like to lean into a building’s inherent cosiness, creating pause points that invite attention.” Above all, whether the scope of work involves reassessing interior architecture or simply employing clever decorative tricks, there are several ways to blend form and function so that the constraints of small or atypical spaces are turned into opportunities.

Scale back

It is useful to start by examining the advantages and drawbacks offered by the bones of a building. Understairs nooks, alcoves, niches and sloping roof lines all offer storage potential. “Check every possibility of opening up the space, including unused fireplaces,” says architect and interior designer Débora Foresti. “You can add shelves to nooks and alcoves, drawers or doors to eaves and anything from a cupboard to a powder room or study area under the stairs.”

Look to a room’s height too, bearing in mind that tall ceilings offer valuable opportunities. “Bookshelves to the ceiling and over door frames are having a moment and they are an impactful way to lean into the space,” advises interior designer Alexandra Childs. “Another favourite solution of mine is to move the utility room upstairs, where possible. It means you don’t have to sacrifice any ground floor space, making the kitchen feel more generous, plus it’s a practical use for small box rooms. And in period homes, consider replacing multiple doors leading off one room with internal windows for a crisper look.”

Pocket doors are another great space-saving device, whether in timber, metal or glazed sliding panels. “We recently installed double pocket doors with a synchronised opening mechanism, so that when one door leaf is opened, the other moves at the same time,” says Squire & Partners architect Michael Poots. “Bear in mind that a pull handle will restrict the door leaf from sliding into the wall completely, but a recessed option will allow it to slide back all the way, making the most of available space.” ▶



In this cleverly designed teenager's bedroom by Laura Stephens, a raised, sunken-sided sleeping platform reached by a space-saving staircase houses a zoned study space beneath, panelled to distract from the low ceiling.



In this colourful kitchen-diner in a Victorian apartment, designer Lonika Chande has utilised every inch of space with banquette seating along the back wall to counter the lack of depth available for traditional dining chairs, allowing for the flexibility to entertain in a smaller space.



DESIGN INSIGHT

Built-in storage with bench seating topped with Garden Trading's Aldsworth seat pad at its centre ensures that everything has its place in this boot room.

Simple tricks can be as effective as an in-depth reconfiguration. Converting a narrow alcove into a mini home office with a floating desk and shelves is a quick design solution that can turn an empty space into something that is used daily, a favourite option for Studio Raff's Sophia Ayrton-Grime. Narrow entrance halls can also be elevated by simple integrated bench storage seating for stowing shoes, as well as slim floating shelving for keys. "Remember that if bespoke joinery is too costly, you can always look at off-the-shelf solutions like Elfa, String or Vitsœ modular systems, all of which offer flexible configuration," offers interior designer Margot Tsim. "Nowadays, there are also companies that build bespoke doors to fit onto Ikea carcasses."

Visual tricks of the eye are another important factor. "Recently, we opened up the ceiling to follow the slope of the roof and although it didn't increase the space in square footage, it instantly made the room feel much bigger," says Foresti. "We added wallpaper to the ceiling for depth."

Outside the box

Be clever with furniture and opt for items that serve more than one function. Think ottomans with storage, kitchen benches that double as toy boxes, built-in banquettes and beds with integrated drawers for stashing suitcases, linens and other bulky items. ▶

ABOVE LEFT In this traditional Victorian hallway decorated by Kate Guinness, storage in the form of freestanding furniture with rattan and wicker

elements complements original detailing and the artwork.

BELOW In Studio Peake's first-floor west London design studio, an L-shaped

kitchen topped with Verde Luana marble combines closed and open storage, slotting neatly within the angular architecture of the space.



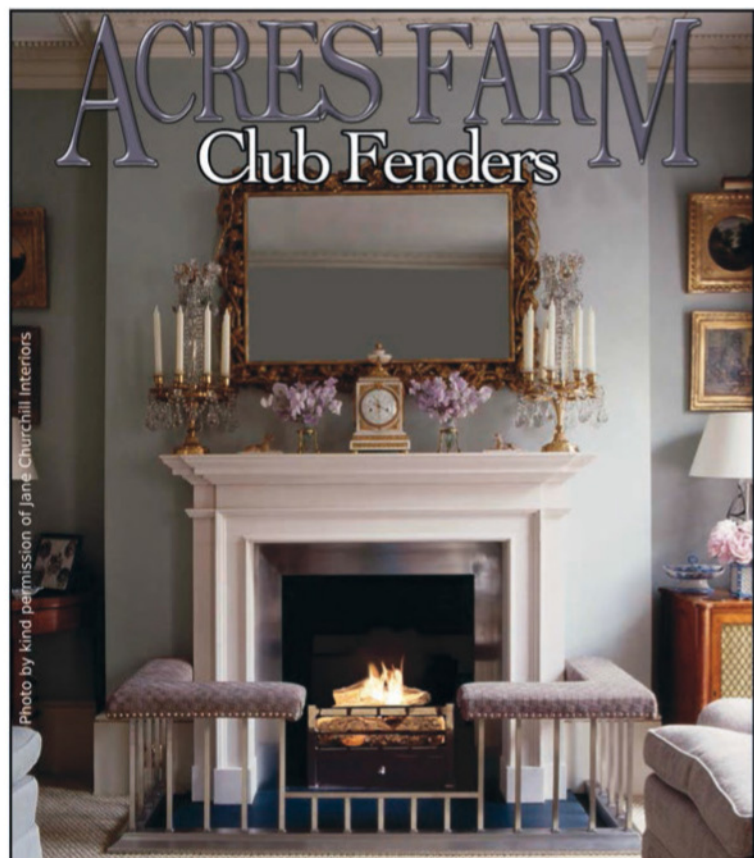
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Hotel rooms and other hospitality spaces can be inspiring when considering what items to buy for small spaces. “However, avoid any piece of furniture that can’t be moved,” counsels Stephens. “Small armchairs on wheels, lightweight tables and storage baskets are all great solutions that can easily make way for something else. In the kitchen, a bar cart on wheels can be decorative and functional, or rolled away to make room for more seating if necessary. A window nook with a reading chair can be replaced by a small desk if you have a work-from-home visitor.”

Small or unusual spaces offer the opportunity to be playful as well as practical, whether painting alcove joinery in bold colour combinations such as burgundy and powder blue or creating a cocooning window-side bed area trimmed with a pelmet and curtains. “Recently we worked on a small, terraced fisherman’s cottage,” says Hutley & Humm’s Melissa Hutley. “We created a fantastic understairs bar, backed with a mottled mirror and finished in canary yellow. To keep the look streamlined, slim timber drawers were added above the countertop for accessories such as bottle openers and coasters. The whole thing is so unexpected, yet utilises the space so efficiently.”

ABOVE LEFT A cosy reading nook surrounding by panelled storage, including handy drawers, internal shelving and a narrow wardrobe adds depth and interest to previously dead space in this bedroom, created by Otta Design.

ABOVE RIGHT Lightweight furniture offers maximum flexibility in compact spaces. Here, Vanessa Arbuthnott’s new Wild Garden fabric collection complements the natural textures within this scheme.

Avoid the temptation to furnish a scheme with several smaller pieces and instead scale up with fewer, multi-functional items for a more generous look. “In a recent townhouse project, we added custom fireside chairs at the perfect height for pulling up to the dining banquette to create extra seating, setting them on castors for added manoeuvrability,” says interior designer Lonika Chande. “It’s all about flexibility.”

Murphy tables and beds, sofa beds and fold-up tables hooked over balconies are excellent multifunctional solutions. Ottomans that serve as coffee tables help reduce clutter while increasing functionality. “In the kitchen, adding a tall single pantry unit with plug sockets at the back to store coffee machines or toasters keeps your work surface clear,” offers interior designer Brooke Collins. “A boiling water tap eliminates the need for a kettle. Drawers are more usable than cabinets, while pegboards keep everything in place.”

In bathrooms, look to use wall-hung and elevated fixtures, keeping as much off the floor as possible. Utilise space above built-in cisterns with recesses to create shelving and concealed storage. Combining this with ambient lighting and mirrors maximises a sense of space and volume. ▶



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KITCHENS BOOTROOMS WALK-IN PANTRIES MEDIA WALLS BAR AREAS DRESSING ROOMS

Form & function

Once the bones of a scheme are settled, there are plenty of ways to elevate a small area decoratively. “I like to make jewel boxes of small spaces, with lots of textures at play, gloss joinery, wallpaper or grasscloth walls and mirrors to reflect the space and amplify the design details,” says designer Octavia Dickinson. Bars, the inside of cupboards, small loos and the backs of shelves are all perfect places to decorate in this aesthetic. “If I had to avoid a particular approach in a small space, it would be to not make something of it. The balance of textures, colours, light versus dark and hard and soft surfaces is key. In a small space, you can enhance this balance and stretch it to the extreme.”

Compact areas are the perfect vehicle for pattern or saturated colours. “I don’t hold back,” says interior designer Cynthia Ferguson, whose own diminutive home is decorated with verve. “Measuring a mere 3m x 3.3m, my bedroom is tiny but it feels well-scaled because it’s uncluttered and fabric patterns are repeated in the space,” she explains. “In living rooms, I avoid lining up the furniture around the perimeter because conversational areas should be cosy and personal. At my design studio, we have a few golden rules, such as having two sofas flanking a fireplace if possible, allowing 45cm minimum between the coffee table and the sofa edge. Utilise a matching pair of small tables or an ottoman with a tray if space is super-tight. Extra chairs, stools or benches tucked away here and there allow for additional guests.”

Opulent finishes in petite spaces such as understairs cloakrooms will always look show-stopping and an advantage is being able to use higher-priced decorative elements. “For example, you can fabric-wrap a wall or use a wallpaper that you have loved for decades but couldn’t afford as you’re not having to tackle large square meterage,” says Hutley. “Go for bold colours or tent ceilings for wow factor.” Bear in mind, too, that patterned wallpaper masks awkward or uneven nooks, while colour drenching can envelop a room in one warm shade to help to open up a space.

For simpler, more streamlined schemes, try opting for timeless shapes and silhouettes. “In compact bedrooms, it’s very effective to create a shallow niche on either side of the bed, deep enough for a book and a glass of water,” says interior designer Lucinda Bullock-Webster. “Line the niche with a foxed-glass mirror or a contrast colour for impact as well as function.” A forensic approach when looking to optimise a layout pays dividends; add a dash of decorative verve and the result will be a space that may be small but is beautifully formed. ▶



ABOVE In this guest bedroom by Otta Design, bespoke joinery, like this clever wardrobe with an adjoining floating dressing table and reeded drawer, comes into its own when space is at a premium.

RIGHT Walls covered in Cole & Son’s Nuvolette wallpaper complement a generous, deeply veined Arabescato vanity counter, adding depth and luxury to this compact guest cloakroom by Margot Tsim.



SHOPPING



NEAT PROPORTIONS

Designs suitable for modest-sized spaces can offer style without compromise

1 Blinds and bolster cushions, Palette Stripe, Maple, £49.50 a metre, Ian Mankin 2 Magazine rack, £1,135, Katharine Pooley 3 Tubby Too bath, £2,459, Albion Bath Company 4 Chester Forest Green small kitchen island with granite top, £499, Cotswold Company 5 Sink skirt, Arlington, Sage, £38.40 a metre, Prestigious Textiles 6 600T compact electric range cooker, Shadow Blue, £6,500, Esse 7 Scalloped Green wall storage, £29.95, Melody Maison 8 Rococo I radiator, £377.62, The Radiator Centre 9 Marino small sofa, from £2,185, Ercol 10 Faye nesting side tables, £219, Atkin and Thyme 11 Laya round carved mango wood dining table, £1,400, Nkuku 12 Dinky bobbin lamp, £245, Folie Chambre; lampshade, Anna Lisa, Tobacco, £91 (small), Cathy Nordström 13 Audacious sideboard cabinet, Oak/Sugar Brown, £899, Black By Design 14 Fabric swatches, Albie in Rose Pink, Pistachio, Citrine, £144 a metre, Jessica Osborne ■

Coming home to The Roost

Your new one-stop sustainable shop
for vintage home style

Join the furniture revolution and inject some period character into a space by providing a new home to antique pieces thanks to The Roost's online interior design and shopping platform. Having already proven itself with its offering of a simple, stress-free planning tool to help clients bring their ideas for their homes to life, The Roost now hopes to change the way we shop even further by adding an antiques category to its website.

Instead of searching a variety of auction houses or browsing several different sites simultaneously, The Roost's new antiques category enables shopping for favourite vintage brands and antiques in one place. The company's marketplace, which already features over 70 artisan and well-known brands, now includes some of the biggest names in the vintage interiors world, from Bull + Tash to Stowaway London and Cart House.

Shop for unique items at Vantage Living, where founder Katie Ridges specialises in modern rustic items from France and 20th-century studio pottery, or invest in a beautiful heritage piece from Pato Interiors, whose furniture spans the early Georgian period through to the Art Deco era.

Having started The Roost to make it easier for people to furnish their homes, managing director and founder, Will Plowden recognises that though high-quality items are paramount to his customers, they don't always want to buy brand new pieces.

"That's why we've introduced an antiques section to the website where customers can now buy second-hand gems," he says. "We know that 'new' isn't for everyone, and that pre-loved items must ooze quality and be built to last."

Sustainability is at the heart of what The Roost offers. It has long championed local and homegrown suppliers, and now, by offering a retail space for antique and vintage furnishings, it is also helping to extend the lifespan of everything from lighting and mirrors to sofas and desks.

Plus, with a near zero returns rate thanks to its visualisation tool (see panel right), The Roost can keep its carbon footprint down nice and low, easing our consciences so we can concentrate on the joyful task of shopping for our homes.

To find out more about The Roost and to shop sustainably, visit theroost.com ■



ABOVE The Roost's antiques and vintage category is an exciting new addition to its online offering.

BELOW With brands like Bull + Tash, sustainable shopping never looked so good.

TRY BEFORE YOU BUY

With The Roost's clever visualisation tool, which acts as an interior designer and mood board in one, simply select a room's dimensions and experiment with colour schemes and different interior

styles and furnishings to see which pieces suit the space the best. Once happy with the selection, simply head to the checkout for a seamless buying experience. theroost.com/pages/visualise

The Roost is offering *The English Home* readers a 10% discount on purchases with code TR10.

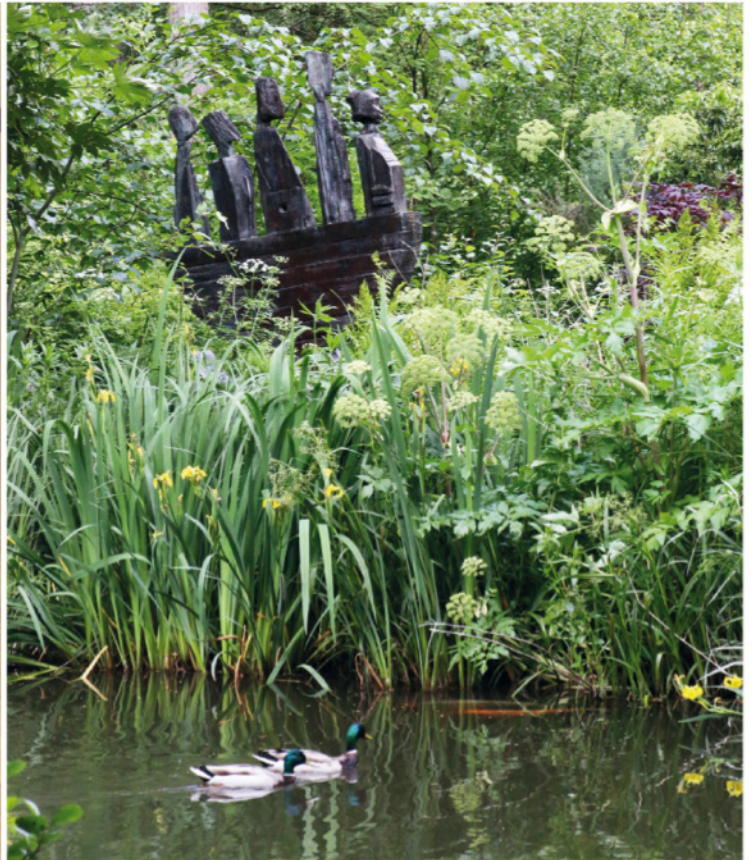
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LIVING THE SEASON

Inspiration for seasonal pastimes and making the most of life at home starts here ►

POACHED PEARS FOR WINTER

This recipe for warm winter poached pears is robust, dark and unctuous: perfect for a cold winter's day. Taken from *Supper with Charlie Bigham* by Charlie Bigham and published by Mitchell Beazley

Serves 6

Preparation time: 10 minutes, plus at least 1 hour cooling.

Cooking time: 45 minutes

INGREDIENTS

6 firm Conference pears
Bottle of inexpensive red wine
175g demerara sugar
8 cloves
1 cinnamon stick
Generous thumb-sized piece of root ginger, cut into matchsticks
Thyme sprig

METHOD

- Peel the pears, leaving the stalks on. Cut off the bases so they are flat and the pears will stand up on their own.
- Lay the pears down in a saucepan, then add all the other ingredients. Heat until just short of boiling, then reduce the heat and leave to simmer for 30 minutes.
- Remove from the heat and leave the pears to cool in the syrup for at least 1 hour so they absorb the flavours and turn a rich maroon, then remove from the pan and set aside.
- Heat up the remaining liquid in the saucepan over a high heat and boil for 10-15 minutes, or until thickened to a golden syrup-like consistency.
- When you are ready to serve, carefully place the pears standing up on individual flat plates or shallow bowls, or place them all on a large, flat serving dish. Pour over the syrup, warming it up first, if you need to.



AUTUMN BEAUTY

Embrace the colours and textures of the changing season to maximise the last chances to dine outdoors, bring nature inside and plan ahead for spring

FEATURE & STYLING SELINA LAKE PHOTOGRAPHY SUSSIE BELL

Take inspiration from the here and now, the gentle rustle of fallen leaves, low golden light and the delicate changes happening before our eyes each day. These fleeting moments in the garden or great outdoors are too special to miss, so create a calm, comfortable outdoor living spot to enjoy a

well-earned break. Then retreat to a seasonally styled potting shed, inspired by the surroundings. Blend natural-wood accessories with collected leaves and baskets of drying seedheads with rich browns and touches of blush pink to create an almost ethereal setting that is perfect for making the most of the change of season. ▶

OPPOSITE Leaf-motif brownies, arranged and served on a hand-turned elm dish by Ash & Plumb. THIS PAGE On a dry and bright day head outside for coffee and cake with friends and family, just remember to take some blankets to wrap up in.



A natural display of autumn botanicals featuring bracken, old man's beard and silver birch twigs makes a beautiful rustic scene.



ETHEREAL MOMENT

It is easy to create a magical table setting in the garden at this time of year thanks to a tonal backdrop of autumn colour and texture. Start by positioning a table in the best spot for autumn sun in the garden, making the most of the rust, brown and amber tones from surrounding leaves on plants, shrubs and trees. Style the table with grasses and dried seedheads arranged in metal or brown-glazed ceramic pots, along with candles flickering in lanterns to add to the magic.

Once the table is set, continue the autumnal theme by placing found leaf skeletons on or near each place setting, along with just-fallen oak leaves to add some rich colour. Amber glass mugs in which to serve steaming hot coffee, chocolate or tea continue the tonal colour palette from the leaves to the table, while an artisan hand-turned wood dish or platter seems the perfect way to serve some delicious homemade brownies. For a finishing touch, these could be decorated by collecting a variety of flat, dry leaves and placing a different one onto each brownie, then dusting icing sugar over them to create a cut-out leaf design.

Cushions and throws added to seats or benches will provide comfort and warmth on chilly days. To make life easy, everything needed to make the table special can be packed into baskets or wooden crates and carried outside.



Layer ceramics with a woven dish and linen napkins in plaster pink from Rowen & Wren.

‘Continue the autumnal theme by placing leaf skeletons onto your place settings’

WREATH

Celebrate the season with a beautiful natural wreath, hang it on the door or over the mantelpiece. As it is made from dried or drying material it will last for ages.

MATERIALS

1 x 40cm rattan wreath base, £6.50, Hobbycraft
Natural string
Botanical material – here we have used bracken with dried honesty (Lunaria) seed heads.
Beautiful hand-dyed silk ribbon, from a selection by Cfleurs via Etsy
Sharp scissors

METHOD

- Start by gathering the botanical material. We have used bracken, which is abundant in hedgerows right now, and honesty seed heads.
- Next take small bunches of the bracken and secure onto the base with string. There is no need to cut the string; just keep winding it round the wreath capturing the bunches of bracken along the way.
- Keep building up layers until the base is covered. Then decorate it with the papery honesty seed heads, and add a pretty blush pink hand-dyed silk ribbon for the perfect finishing touch. ▶



The silvery translucent honesty seed heads will catch the light on a handmade wreath. Styled with a pale pink silk ribbon this wreath really captures the beauty of autumn.

LEAF-PRINTED BAG

Print a shopper bag – it is fun to make and will be useful to take along to farmers’ markets this autumn.

MATERIALS

Brown fabric paint
Paint brush
Natural cotton shopping bag
Cardboard, slightly smaller than the bag
Decorative leaves – choose leaves that are still slightly in the green
Iron and ironing board
Clean tea towel

Brown fabric paint, paint brush and natural cotton shopping bag, all available from Hobbycraft

METHOD

- Collect some leaves. These are better still just in the green, before they turn brown, as they are not too crunchy.
- Lay the natural cotton bag flat on a table and insert some cardboard inside the bag to prevent the paint seeping through to the other side.
- Daub the fabric paint on one side of a leaf and then press the leaf down onto the bag.
- Leave the bag to dry and then repeat the process on the other side. Once both sides are complete, place a clean, dry tea towel over the bag and iron it to fix the paint. Repeat on the other side. Put the iron on the hottest setting and use it without the steam setting. The bag can then be washed at 30° if necessary in the future.



Shop with the season by decorating a plain tote bag autumnal leaf motifs.



Gather seeds and create hand-drawn seed packets to give to friends and family.

SEASONAL RESTYLE

Right now most gardeners are thinking ahead to spring, planting out bulbs and tending to seedlings, tasks can be made more enjoyable when working from an inspiring environment. Tidying the potting bench will help achieve this. Blur the boundaries between outside and in by adorning window ledges with seasonal finds; have a basket of collected botanical materials at the ready for creative projects; and add a few candles in lanterns for a warming glow.

Now is the time to collect seeds from annual flowers in the garden to grow them again next year. A nice idea is to collect the seeds then get creative with small brown paper envelopes and a black ink pen. Sketch the flowers or plants which these seeds will produce as a reminder of what the seeds will grow into. These will also make sweet gifts for loved ones.

Autumn is a perfect time to create a striking display by placing long throngs of bracken in a large vase or vessel – no need to add water to the vase as this is a purely dried arrangement. First put some scrunched up chicken wire in the vase to support the stems. Next add silver birch twigs with branches of *Clematis vitalba* (old man’s beard) for an overall floaty look. If the backdrop is not right for such a display, hang a length of white muslin or linen fabric behind to add to the serenity of the season. The beautiful handcrafted ebonised ash wood dried flower vase by Ash & Plumb adds depth to the vignette (page 128) and the juxtaposition of the ethereal display against the rustic table makes the display one to admire. ■

A cool and dry potting area is the perfect place to dry seed heads like honesty and thistles ready for autumn and Christmas wreath-making and floral arrangements.



What to do in NOVEMBER

Make this the month for creating a rustic display with autumn leaves and seasonal squash, learning the art of sustainable floristry and embracing the beauty of natural wood with furniture and accessories handcrafted from native species



RIGHT Kingham Cherry extendable dining table (to seat 6-10), £799, matching buffet sideboard, £499, and upholstered chairs, from £99; Garraffa glass bottle table lamp, £159; Simplicity Mulberry blown-glass vase, £29; Antique Botanical prints, £35 each; Riva wine glasses, £9 each; Ravello Flower jug £35, all The Cotswold Company



GATHER *together*

As the temperature drops and the darker evenings set in, keep the autumn chill at bay by enjoying indulgent evening suppers gathered together around the dining table. Create the perfect setting for serving up a hearty menu, coupled with a full-bodied red wine, to a hungry army of friends and family for a long, leisurely evening. It is also an opportunity for a table and seating configuration rehearsal in preparation for the festive season, with sufficient time before the big day to order any new pieces if necessary. Create a sense of relaxed formality with well-chosen, solid-wood furniture in classic oak or rich, stylish cherry. Dining tables that are sufficiently large or

extendable are hugely versatile, often allowing up to 10 or more guests, and matching cabinetry pieces such as consoles or sideboards that are slender in design will no doubt become investment pieces to be enjoyed for years to come. Choose upholstered dining chairs that are smart yet comfortable to encourage guests to linger. For autumn suppers, enjoy time before guests arrive by adding finishing touches such as vases of foraged foliage and tiny posies attached to napkins with a length of twine. Then pop a slow-cooked casserole in the oven and join guests for a pre-dinner drink and a chat. ▶

HARVEST *squashes:*

Squash, pumpkin and gourds can be used to create seasonal displays in a hallway, alcove or a deep-set windowsill or shelf in the kitchen. Celebrate all their individual natural colours and knobby textures that exist in varieties such as Knucklehead, Kabocha, Acorn Squash, Harlequin and Crown Prince. Use as the starting point for a nature display that will provide interest for Halloween and beyond. Invest in accessories such as candlesticks and lanterns in rich metallic hues that will complement the rich colourways in the gourds. Either leave the squash and pumpkin whole or carve out and use as a vessel for a bunch of dried flowers and foliage such as copper beech, or branches of hops. Finish the display with a scattering of red acer leaves or bronze fern, and enjoy the visual spectacle of a striking display that celebrates the best of autumn. A console made of natural materials coupled with a simple but elegant aesthetic would be an ideal surface on which to arrange a display. Source a design that combines the beauty of wood with the practicality of a solid surface like limestone or travertine to add interest to a hallway and be a welcome sight for guests when topped with a stylish display of flowers, foliage and seedpods, whatever the season.



Ira travertine and
mango wood console,
£895, and all other
items, Nkuku



UPDATE *the kitchen*

Add natural character with some superbly handcrafted wooden pieces made from naturally sustainable native species that have the ethos of slow living at their heart. From serving boards and bowls to spoons and scoops, products made from natural wood all get better with age, often only requiring minimal maintenance, just re-oiling the wood with a food-safe oil every couple of months to revive its natural texture and beauty. What is more, a hand-carved wooden kitchen object perfectly combines form and function, so not only will it be useful, but it will look good too. We suggest seeking artisanal pieces, such as

those of Norfolk-based wood-carver Ewen Brown, and enjoy using products made from wood that can be traced back to the area it was felled. Brown hand-carves scoops and spoons in woods from a variety of native tree such as elm, oak, spalted beech, rippled sycamore and cherry that all create a different end-result. Use these beautiful objects for measuring out rock salt, peppercorns, nuts, seeds, spices, cereals and more, or simply display them on an open shelf and admire their natural beauty every day. ▶

Wooden scoop with handle, £30 each, Ewen Brown at The Merchant's Table

Ira travertine and mango wood console, £895, and all other items, Nkuku

HARVEST *squashes:*

Squash, pumpkin and gourds can be used to create seasonal displays in a hallway, alcove or a deep-set windowsill or shelf in the kitchen. Celebrate all their individual natural colours and knobbly textures that exist in varieties such as Knucklehead, Kabocha, Acorn Squash, Harlequin and Crown Prince. Use as the starting point for a nature display that will provide interest for Halloween and beyond. Invest in accessories such as candlesticks and lanterns in rich metallic hues that will complement the rich colourways in the gourds. Either leave the squash and pumpkin whole or carve out and use as a vessel for a bunch of dried flowers and foliage such as copper beech, or branches of hops. Finish the display with a scattering of red acer leaves or bronze fern, and enjoy the visual spectacle of a striking display that celebrates the best of autumn. A console made of natural materials coupled with a simple but elegant aesthetic would be an ideal surface on which to arrange a display. Source a design that combines the beauty of wood with the practicality of a solid surface like limestone or travertine to add interest to a hallway and be a welcome sight for guests when topped with a stylish display of flowers, foliage and seedpods, whatever the season. ■



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STANDING TALL

Carefully chosen trees can bring year-round interest, grandeur and longevity to any town or city garden, however large or small

Trees are majestic design features in any town garden. Versatile, they provide privacy, shade and drama in addition to instant height and form. They also boast hidden charms, making them a treasured necessity for landscape designers, homeowners and the wider neighbourhood.

Providing shelter, food and nectar for pollinators, birds and wildlife, trees help to broaden the biodiversity of a garden and knit together to form invaluable green corridors, allowing creatures to thrive and move safely through urban environments. Occupying a practical role, their foliage also muffles the noise of passing traffic and neighbours and absorbs harmful pollutants, all while offering those nearby cool shade and welcome privacy.

The most important and often overlooked value of trees in an urban front or rear garden is the ability to reconnect onlookers with nature. Whether it is the sight of leaves moving in the breeze, the passing of blossom and autumn fruits or the glimmer of sunlight through branches, they offer seasonality, well-being and quiet reassurance.

INSTANT IMPACT

Although trees are long-lived garden features, most home and garden owners wish to reap some short-term reward. “I’m regularly asked by our customers how I can incorporate instant impact into a garden design,” says Amy Robertson, senior garden designer at Architectural Plants. “*Taxus baccata* cones have dense, rich, green foliage and can be clipped into sharp, ▶



THIS IMAGE Adding drama and structure in this design by Emily Erlam, these mulberry trees have been trained horizontally. OPPOSITE Planted by Architectural Plants, bold, crisp topiary forms add drama and year-round interest to an all-green palette in this town garden.



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smart profiles, while *Laurus nobilis* half-standards always provide a striking contrast to the architectural lines of a town property and stand out with their brighter green and textural leaf.” For their refined and sophisticated leaf that remains sumptuously verdant all year long, Robertson suggests *Prunus lusitanica* ‘Myrtifolia’ spheres: “These clip beautifully, can be planted together in a border to create eye-catching undulations and also look rather grand in pots.”

Besides exhibiting strong, defined forms, trees can also transform a space with their coloured and tactile bark. “Himalayan birch, such as *Betula utilis jacquemontii* ‘Snow Queen’, have bright white, peeling bark adding year-round interest, while airy foliage provides attractive dappled shade in summer,” says Sally White, head of marketing and e-commerce at Ornamental Trees.

Japanese maples are another popular choice for small gardens. “*Acer palmatum dissectum* ‘Garnet’ is a standout variety,” continues White. “Dark red, lacy leaves turn scarlet in autumn, making a wonderful contrast to other green foliage.”

DESIGN FINESSE

Trees add immediate height, structure and interest to any location. Living specimens, they can be trained in specific ways to suit different design scenarios, but it is key to think long term. “When planning and planting in a town garden, it is important to visualise the garden in maturity,” says Diana Beamish, owner of Trees Direct. “Most town gardens are long and narrow, or some are little more than a patio. Whatever the size, it is important not to overwhelm it with too much ▶



‘When working with a period property, it is key to opt for trees which complement the language of the home’



ABOVE A mature olive tree inspired Lucy Taylor’s elegant planting featuring clipped bay laurel and Japanese holly spheres.

LEFT Fast-growing *Pyrus calleryana* ‘Chanticleer’ is a handsome tree with white blossom and purple autumn foliage. Ornamental Pear, £78 for a 15l pot, Chew Valley Trees

RIGHT The purple blooms of Magnolia ‘Susan’ appear in April. Dwarf Purple Magnolia ‘Susan’ tree, from £100, Ornamental Trees



'It is important to take account of the tree's overall height and spread at maturity in order to provide a long-term situation for the specimen'



ABOVE Serried lines of hornbeam guide the eye and frame a distant focal point in this design by Hendy Curzon Gardens

ABOVE RIGHT Glowing autumn foliage, rosy-red berries and blush-pink blossom make this compact tree highly prized.

Amelanchier 'Robin Hill', £78 for a 15l pot, Chew Valley Trees

content, simplicity is beauty. When deciding on a tree for your garden, you need to think whether you want the view or to block a view when choosing the tree. Most importantly, a tree in a town garden should not be planted too near to the house. It is better placed down the side or towards the end of the garden to give shape, space and a direction."

Choosing a tree is most successful when it is integral to an overall garden plan rather than for its looks alone. "When working with a period property, it is key to opt for trees which complement the language of the home," says Victoria Lepper, studio projects manager at Hendy Curzon Gardens. "Hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*) are the perfect marriage between contemporary and traditional. Versatile, they can be flat-pleached for privacy, roof-pleached – creating shade-giving umbrellas – topiarised to square box heads or left as a natural multi-stem."

Tailoring the surrounding planting to accentuate the characteristics of a particular tree can yield spectacular results. Helen Derrin, plant doctor at Crocus, explains: "A specimen tree should not be planted in isolation to its surroundings. Instead, background plantings can enhance any foreground or intermediate tree. For example, the darker purples and greens of hedges or larger shrubs can highlight the autumn colouring or spring flowering of trees."

There are plenty of compact trees to consider for smaller gardens. These include Chinese redbud and *Amelanchier 'Robin Hill'*. Both are suitable for growing in planters, adding extra height and drama. "Options

are limited for container planting as it is difficult for trees to thrive long term with their roots, and access to essential nutrients restricted," says Ellen Thurman-Carvey, sales director of Barcham Trees. "Cultivars of Japanese maple can be a solution to this. *Acer palmatum 'Red Emperor'* offers deep purple foliage through the summer months, turning a brighter purple red in autumn."

LASTING LEGACY

Planting a garden tree for future generations to enjoy is a joyful decision. Not only can it form a tangible connection across families, but it can also physically alter the landscape and enhance immediate surroundings. Dedicating a tree to a loved one or siting a finely crafted bench beneath it will underline the intention while allowing others the chance to marvel at the tree's natural beauty. Selecting a tree for posterity requires careful thought, but there are some standout options.

"With an exceptionally long lifespan, *Cedrus libani* – cedar of Lebanon – can live for hundreds of years," says Amy Robertson of Architectural Plants. "Stately, aromatic and gigantic, growing to over 40m, it is happy on well-drained soil, in full sun and is super low maintenance with no pruning required."

CONSIDERED SELECTION

Any lifelong investment requires careful thought, and this is true with planting trees. "Always choose plants that will suit the site, considering the direction and ▶



ABOVE Multi-stemmed Tibetan cherry trees make an impressive container feature, as seen in The Traditional Townhouse Garden, designed by Lucy Taylor at RHS Hampton Court Palace Garden Festival 2023.

LEFT Slow-growing, this *Magnolia x loebneri* 'Merrill' impresses with its

spring-flowering graceful, fragrant snow-white blooms.

Merrill 'Magnolia', £471 for a 3m–4m tree, Barcham Trees

BELOW Yellow berries, and red leaves in autumn, give this Rowan impact.

Sorbus aucuparia 'Autumn Spire', £65 for a 12l pot, Ornamental Trees





ABOVE Multi-stemmed trees add year-round drama, height and form to a border in this design by Sara Jane Rothwell with landscaping by Belderbos Landscapes

LEFT A standout Tibetan cherry tree with glossy, deep red bark and a vase-like silhouette. *Prunus serrula* 'Branklyn', £164.99 for a 12l pot, Waitrose Garden

amount of sun, soil type and structure. Most trees will be suitable for sunny or partially shaded spots, with some shelter, but it is important to take account of the tree's overall height and spread at maturity (10–12 years) in order to provide a long-term situation for the specimen," says Helen Derrin of Crocus.

Besides root spread, it is worth being mindful of the shade a mature tree will cast, especially if planting an evergreen, as this can restrict daylight falling within the home and cause perilous moss to develop. Falling leaves, fruit and other debris are other considerations as these can stain porous stone and unsealed paving.

"Planting trees is best during the winter dormant period to establish roots before spring, with bare root specimens being an option at this time," Derrin continues. "However, summer planting of containerised stock is possible with proper care and irrigation. Dig a hole wider and deeper than the pot; a square tree pit helps prevent circling roots. Add well-rotted compost to enrich the soil and plant the tree at the correct depth. Firm the soil and stake at a third of the tree's height using flexible ties." Adding a layer of mulch around the base of the tree after watering will retain moisture and reduce weeds. ■

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Decorating to chime with the seasons might not be viable, but taking a cue from the luscious tones of autumn if considering a change of colour is perfectly natural. Paint specialist Francesca Wezel has curated a palette inspired by Renaissance artwork, updating her range with a soft, modern, feminine mood. Each colour in Donne d'Arte is named after a prominent female artist of the period. Lavinia, seen here, is a soft earthy brown with a note of plum purple. It will work year-round but is particularly fetching in mellow autumn light. *Walls and woodwork, Lavinia, from £40 for 11 Eco Emulsion, Francesca's Paints*





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A very ENGLISH CHRISTMAS



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WELCOME



The way we celebrate and decorate for Christmas is something that is often very personal and full of ritual, tradition and familiarity. However, there are often ways to elevate the usual things we do to make the season all the more special. We have been lucky

enough to be welcomed into many beautiful English homes decorated for Christmas over the years and have enjoyed sharing these with our readers. We have always loved seeing how different homeowners dress their rooms for the festive season with simple yet effective styling ideas that create beautiful vignettes and cohesive schemes around the home.

Here we have collated some of our favourite ideas in a room-by-room format to impress and inspire. We've added our own tips for elevating decorating around the home too, and hope there will be plenty to enrich the way you love to decorate for Christmas or perhaps tempt you to try something new.

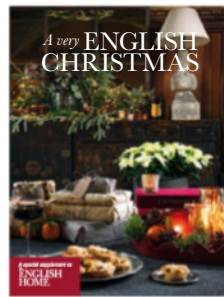
However you celebrate and whatever your style, we wish you much joy in taking the time to set the scene for your festivities, and of course, a very merry English Christmas.

Katy

Katy Mclean, Supplement Editor



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CONTENTS

- 6 WREATHS** Create a visual delight for guests and passersby alike.
- 8 MAKE AN ENTRANCE** Decorate hallways and staircases to create an impact.
- 10 SITTING ROOMS** Make the heart of festivities beautiful.
- 16 KITCHENS** Add flair to the backdrop of preparations.
- 18 DINING ROOMS** Tablescales for a feast to remember.
- 24 BEDROOMS** Add festive magic in the rooms everyone wakes up in and retreats to at the end of each day.
- 26 FINISHING TOUCHES** Embellish the scene with small but important decorative details.
- 30 OH CHRISTMAS TREE!** Celebrating the central, and perhaps most important, piece of festive decorating.

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 (6) © ASTRID TEMPLER; (18) RACHAEL SMITH



Wreaths

Spread festive cheer with a beautiful wreath to greet guests and bring a smile to passers-by



FEATURE KATY MCLEAN PHOTOGRAPHS P6 (TOP & BOTTOM LEFT) © ASTRID TEMPLIER; (TOP RIGHT & P7 TOP LEFT) © DAN DUCHARS; (BOTTOM RIGHT) © JAMES McDONALD; P7 (TOP RIGHT & BOTTOM LEFT & RIGHT) © RACHAEL SMITH



Use a wreath to set the tone for decor inside – picking out a colour scheme or emphasising a natural palette.

A wreath-making workshop is a great way to spend an evening during the build-up to Christmas, picking up professional tips on creating the perfect halo of foliage while indulging in a mince pie and perhaps a glass of mulled wine.

Use small bunches of foliage, dried flowers and berries and fix in sprays working around the wreath in a clockwise direction.

A ribbon can help to highlight a colour palette.

Consider adding feathers and pine cones for a country look, or use flowers for a more refined, classic wreath.

A simple, tied bunch or swag (as left) is a good alternative to a wreath, just be generous with long sprays of greenery and tie with a wide silk ribbon. ■





Make an entrance

Create an inviting welcome with a well-dressed hall and staircase using abundant greenery and lighting



Set a perfect first impression with a well-considered and beautifully decorated hallway. Grand entrance halls will look spectacular with a large tree adorned with lights, while more compact spaces will benefit from a small potted tree to add interest to an awkward nook.

Utilise console tables to create a festive scene with

lantern lights or hurricane candle holders, or high-quality, realistic LED candles that are safe to leave unattended. Add vases of greenery or seasonal flowers or display a few favourite Christmas cards.

A hallway can also be a good place to place an alternative advent calendar – perhaps an advent tree with small envelopes or parcels tied to its branches.



An impressive garland is the perfect way to dress a staircase. Be generous and gather plenty of greenery and berries to create one, using floristry wire to add in decorations. Consider natural pine cones for a traditional look – or spray them gold or silver for some glamour. Lights can also be added, or use a luxury artificial pre-lit garland for ease.

Garlands should tumble down the length of the handrail from top to bottom, finishing neatly, perhaps with a large bow for an extra flourish. Where possible, continue a garland around banisters in a galleried hallway and on landings too.

Alternatives to foliage garlands include using fabrics or ribbons. Velvet bows tied around the base of each bannister spindle can be a simple yet effective.

Dress deep window sills and seats in hallways for a particularly cosy and festive ambience. ■



Sitting rooms

The heart of festivities, the sitting room is where the whole family gathers so warrants special attention when decorating for Christmas



Whether it is the place where everyone gathers to open presents from beneath the tree on Christmas Day or to sit and enjoy fireside drinks in the evenings, the sitting room will no doubt be where all come together most of the time during the festive season.

The two main focal points of the room are of course the tree and the mantelpiece. Here we have gathered some of our favourite ideas for making these worthy of attention throughout Christmas.

Dress grand fireplaces with more formal, elaborate decorative garlands, flanked by tall candles or perhaps two symmetrical groupings incorporating candles, lights or ornaments among foliage, berries and flowers. ▶







STYLE GUIDE

- Co-ordinate the tree, mantelpiece and other decorations for a cohesive look, echoing other elements in the room too.
- Position the tree with ample space for presents, as well as where it can be appreciated by all. Placing it in front of a mirror can amplify the magic (as shown opposite).
- Use as many lights as possible on a tree for a magical impact. Warm white lights offer a lovely glow and can be used in their hundreds without being overwhelming.
- Create height and interest by draping a garland across a wall or mirror, or looping one between hooks above a fireplace – ensuring it is safely fixed and unlikely to catch fire.
- Weave decorations into garlands as well as candles or other ornaments to create interest.
- Make use of quality faux foliage for longevity, adding fresh pieces nearer Christmas week.
- Remember to have somewhere to hang the stockings on Christmas Eve.



Create cohesion between a mantelpiece garland and the tree by incorporating a few of the same decorations on each, especially if they are placed near each other. Any unwanted branches cut from the tree could be used to unite them further, but sticking to the same palette of colours and using similar baubles will create a considered look (as opposite top).

Decorations on a mantelpiece must be safe and not trail down to an open fire. Consider going upwards instead with a garland that trails down from a mirror (as above) or keep to a simple arrangement of greenery placed along the mantel, adding height with a spray of foliage around the mirror above. Co-ordinating sprigs can be added elsewhere, perhaps on picture frames and wall lights (as opposite left). ▶





FEATURE KATY MCLEAN PHOTOGRAPHS P10, P11, P13 (TOP LEFT & BOTTOM) & P15 © RACHAEL SMITH; P12 (TOP) & P13 (TOP RIGHT) © DAN DUCHAKS; P12 (BOTTOM) & P14 © ASTRID TEMPLER

Where space allows, a large tree will always impress. Trees can be dressed simply with hundreds of white lights, or decadently with lots of cherished ornaments, ribbons and even clip-on candles. When considering position think about where it might best be viewed, without obstructing walkways, but also where there will be space to place presents beneath it and everyone can gather round it comfortably.

If a mantelpiece is not available, a swag or garland could be used on a bookcase (as right). On inglenook fireplaces such as the one opposite, an extended swag can be used to highlight this impressive feature, complete with an oversized indoor wreath. Integrate battery-operated lights into garlands for added twinkle. ■





Kitchens

The hub of festive food preparations should be suitably dressed to bring cheer when baking or serving mince pies with a morning coffee



A few simple festive decorative touches can create impact and a cheerful atmosphere for cooks and their guests to enjoy while preparing and eating food in the kitchen. Hang simple garlands along mantels or beams above cookers, fixing bunches of greenery to a thick piece of string or thin rope that can be attached to a beam or wall using temporary hooks. Weave in a string of twinkling fairy lights to provide a warm glow to the room as the daylight fades. If space allows, and it is safe to do so, hang a few decorations to add colour and interest. Echo a similar treatment on a dresser or shelving to create a cohesive look around the kitchen. Or simply add sprigs of holly and ivy around shelves and picture frames.





For a country kitchen feel, display large bunches of evergreen foliage and berries in large stone or enamelware jugs rather than glass or crystal. Intersperse with dried flowers such as hydrangeas to soften the look and add interest. Dried hops used year-round to adorn beams (as above left) take on a festive feel when greenery is added elsewhere in the kitchen at this time of year.

If there is a kitchen table where everyone will gather for breakfast or coffee and mince pie, a garland or a few sprigs of fir and holly running along the length of it will unite the room. Otherwise a tall vase of flowers will act as a perfect centrepiece and is easily moved if the table is needed for other food preparation.

Dot candles of all heights and sizes around the kitchen to add to the cosy atmosphere. ■



Dining rooms

Create the perfect backdrop to Christmas Day with a beautifully dressed dining table, complete with personal touches

Christmas Day is the perfect opportunity to create a special tablescape that will impress all guests.

Bring out the best china, glassware and cutlery and devote time to decorations. From centrepieces to personalised place settings, putting in thoughtful details and festive decor will make it memorable and elevate an already wonderful occasion into something truly spectacular. ▶







Often, low-level arrangements such as garlands work well for allowing conversation to flow freely, with candles to add height. Create rhythm with groupings or vases of flowers and candles arranged along the centre of the table. Look above too, as light fixtures can be dressed to bring added drama with tumbling mistletoe (previous page) or a more structured arrangement (above). Faux foliage can be a good choice for long-lasting design if the table needs to be dressed throughout the season for dinner parties. Add in some fresh red roses or greenery on the big day. Eucalyptus will offer a pleasant scent to complement food.





This is obviously an occasion for using the best tableware and linen. Layer place settings with a charger plate as well as a dinner plate and cutlery for all courses, along with an array of sparkling glassware for water as well as wine. Napkins can be adorned with a ribbon, sprig of greenery or a decoration that highlights the colour scheme, and, if required, a name card.

No table is complete without Christmas crackers. Consider home-made options that can be filled with a personal gift for each guest – perhaps a miniature favourite liqueur, toiletry or a small trinket. ▶





Think about the essentials that might be needed on the table. Will there need to be space for serving dishes, condiments, bottles of wine and water? This might impact how the table is decorated, so plan accordingly to ensure there is room for these items as well as for floral arrangements and candles.

Use tapered dinner candles to add height to the scheme, and colour if needed or desired – pick out berry reds or add some glamour with gold or silver. Avoid heavily scented candles which might overpower the delicious aromas of the food. ■







Bedrooms

Add a few simple festive touches to make guests feel welcome, children's rooms more magical or bring Christmas spirit to the principal suite



Bedrooms are often neglected when it comes to decorating for Christmas. However, they might be where stockings are excitedly opened or somewhere for guests to retreat to for a quiet moment, so be sure to add a little magic and sparkle here too.

Hang a wreath on a door, at the end of a bed (if the frame allows) or above a fireplace. Or add a garland of foliage or simply some fairy lights above the bed.

A small vase of flowers adds a special touch in a guest bedroom – roses in merry red or snowy white are always a lovely treat over the festive period. Add a stocking with some small luxuries such as soap, hand cream and fluffy socks to make guests feel welcome. And children will love having their own little Christmas tree, dressed with twinkling lights and homemade decorations.



FEATURE KATY MCLEAN PHOTOGRAPHS P24 (TOP RIGHT & BOTTOM) © ASTRID TEMPLER; (TOP LEFT & ALL ON P25) © RACHAEL SMITH



STYLE GUIDE

- Echo elements from the rest of the house such as garlands, sprigs of holly and ivy on mirrors and picture frames, and a wreath on a door.
- Fairy lights are simple yet effective for adding Christmas magic. String them along a headboard or put a bundle in a fireplace for extra glow.
- Add a small Christmas tree. Children will love this and it allows them an opportunity to dress it themselves, perhaps with their own homemade decorations.
- Create a vignette in a guest bedroom with a small vase of flowers, some books and a votive candle. A potted plant such as a cyclamen can be a nice festive touch. Add a stocking filled with essentials they might need for their stay.
- Opening stockings in bed on Christmas Morning can be a nice way to contain a bit of the excitement before the main event. Hang them from a bed or door knob, or a mantelpiece if possible. ■



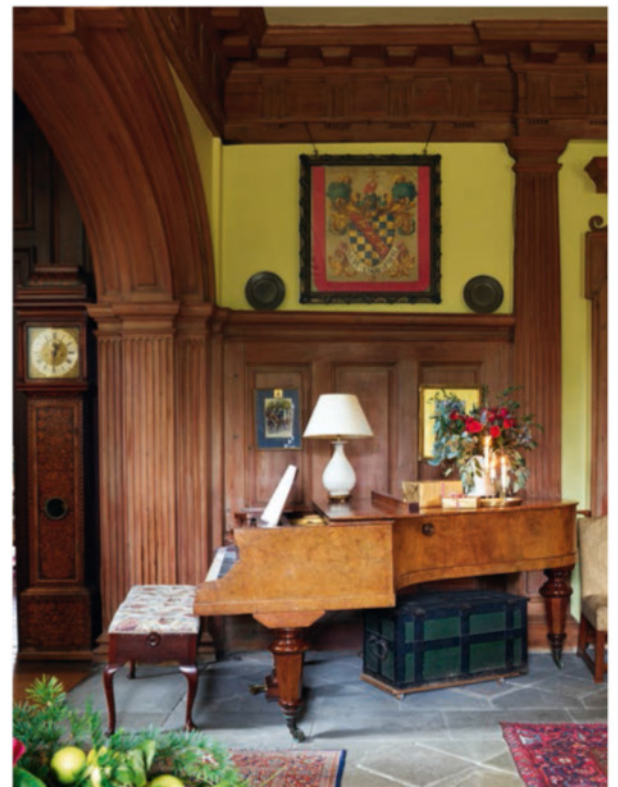
Finishing touches

Set the scene with little details to elevate the warmth, joy and magic of Christmas all around the home



Take the time to consider corners of the home that will benefit from a little more attention, adding some festive details. Candles are an obvious but very effective way to add winter warmth. Group a range of different-sized candles on tables, mantels and shelves. Mix up candlesticks in various heights as well as small votives and pillar candles. Though the flicker of a real candle is deeply romantic, it can be a wise option to invest in remote-controlled candles that can be turned off and on with the flick of a switch, while still adding that desirable glow.

Add small bowls of baubles or other decorations or a festive ornament to create a pretty still life. Even fruit including oranges, apples, pomegranates and pears can add to the Christmassy feel. ▶









Wrap small boxes in pretty papers and ribbons to dot around and enhance vignettes. These little scenes can be created on side tables, a console table or shelf, or even on top of a piano. Make them extra special by adding framed photos of loved ones or of jolly Christmases past.

Adding flourishes to picture frames with sprigs of holly and ivy is simple yet effective. These can be added to light fixtures too.

A simple vase filled with large sprays of foliage and berries (as below) is perfect for adding a festive note on a hallway table. ■

STYLE GUIDE

- Give awkward corners or spare surfaces some special attention to enhance the overall decorative effect.
- Create vignettes using framed photographs, maybe of a Christmas memory for the season, combined with candles and small decorations. Vintage books, ideally with Christmas themes, also look pretty in a small stack.
- Fill decorative dishes with shiny baubles or tempting treats guests can help themselves to – oranges, sugared almonds or mince pies.
- Make use of natural materials such as pine cones which can be tied onto ribbons using some floristry wire. Spray gold or silver or add a touch of glitter to edges using glue or a sparkly nail polish.
- Consider height and variety, adding in some tall candlesticks as well as mercury silver glass votives.
- Set candles or other decorations on a tray so they can be easily moved if surface space is needed.
- Adorn mirrors, frames and lighting with verdant foliage and cheery berries.



OH CHRISTMAS TREE!

The most significant part of Christmas decorating, the tree plays a central role in festive celebrations

We often thank the Victorians for the introduction of beautifully dressed Christmas trees, and indeed Queen Victoria's husband, Prince Albert, brought this tradition to English homes from Germany, where a tree has been part of yuletide festivities since the Middle Ages. We fully embraced the idea and now it is an essential part of an English Christmas. Setting aside time to choose a tree, or to get a very realistic faux one, and bringing out beloved decorations is a highlight of Christmas preparations. Mix shapes and sizes of baubles for a tree that is exciting to look at. Buy a new decoration each year so a tree tells the story of Christmases past and holds treasured memories. ■





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