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Trends in Paints

Kitchen Remodelling

Dealing With Doors

Resourceful Decorating

Having Your Hardwood Floors

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Paint Perfection Here Are The Latest Colours And Sheens

*P*ainting is one of the easiest ways to change the look of a room. Whether you're looking to create an old world feel in the dining room or a modern space in the kitchen, colour on the walls helps tie a room together and injects a little personality in to the space we call home. Before you pick up a brush, consider the following trends and tips for choosing the right colour from The Home Depot Canada:

Paint and light: Choosing paint colour is an important first step in the painting process. Before heading to the store, walk through your home and pay special attention to each room's natural and artificial light. Keep in mind that lighter colours tend to make a room look brighter and sometimes larger, while darker colours create a more intimate atmosphere.

Colour trends: Versatile water colours or shades inspired by the ocean work well with any style from classic to contemporary. For a vintage feel, pale shades of straw, brick or marigold - colours that originate from

Victorian times - are now the latest trend in modern style. For the more adventurous, consider a bright shade of watermelon, mango or lime to add punch to the entire room or to accentuate one wall.

Colour personalities: Cooler shades of red, including raspberry, fuchsia and deep pink are a hot trend and a great way to add energy and drama to a room. Meanwhile, fresh orange shades create a happy or social mood, while green sets the tone for a cheerful yet calm atmosphere. A subdued blue creates a more formal space and brings out the best in traditional decors, while a greeny-blue works well with the sleek look of modern interiors.

Supreme sheen: Other than colour, selecting the right paint sheen will affect the look of a room. Sheen is the amount of light reflected from the paint's surface. Flat paint absorbs light, while gloss paint reflects it. Typically, the flat/matte sheen is used on interior walls, while satin finishes are used on exterior surfaces.

Sheen for select spaces: Oil and latex base paints are available in various sheens. Flat and matte sheens give a smooth, subtle and elegant finish that helps hide surface imperfections. Flat and matte sheens work well in living rooms, dining rooms and bedrooms. For a laundry room, bathroom or children's room where washable walls are needed, an eggshell, low-lustre or satin sheen will do the trick.

For more information on the latest paint colours, trends and painting tips, visit homedepot.ca or The Home Depot in your community. N/C



Tips for Kitchen Remodeling

Kitchen remodels are among the most popular home improvements because they offer a great return on investment while giving you the opportunity to enhance and simplify your daily routines.

An effective design is crucial when planning a kitchen remodel. Even the most beautiful kitchen will cause stress if it isn't designed properly. Today's kitchens are used for a multitude of activities, including cooking, eating, arts and crafts, entertaining, and gathering friends and family. Several techniques are used in creating a user-friendly

kitchen design. Some involve improving the kitchen work triangle and others involve proper organization and storage.

Remodeling the Work Triangle
Designers use the kitchen work triangle to create efficient use of the kitchen. The concept focuses on the arrangement of the three basic work stations: the refrigerator, sink and stove. The idea is to make the distance from each of these areas far enough to not feel cramped and close enough to carry food and dishes without strain.

Organize and Consolidate Kitchen Contents

It is very easy to become disorganized and cluttered in the kitchen. This is especially true when several people are in the kitchen at the same time. One way to organize and consolidate the items you have stored in the kitchen is to install a walk-in pantry.

This popular modification allows a homeowner to quickly take in the kitchen's contents without having to search through cabinets and drawers. Pull-out pantries can also be used for kitchens that are tight on space.

Kitchen pantries localize the kitchen traffic, providing more open space in the work triangle.

Use All your Kitchen Space

Every inch of space in your kitchen can be used to store the many items that clutter this room. Consider installing tall cabinets that go all the way to the ceiling. Also, add baskets and shelving inside to maximize storage space. For larger items such as pots and pans, consider adding a hanging rack to free up some space in your cupboards.

Extra Convenient Appliances

Think about how your appliances can simplify your daily routines. For example, a third rack on a dishwasher can cut down on the number of times you have to load your dishes. You could also invest in self-cleaning ovens. Furthermore, energy efficient appliances can save money on your monthly energy bills. Consider a dishwasher or even a refrigerator with the Energy Star rating.

Designated Areas

Remodeling your kitchen is the perfect time to sit down and think about who uses the room and in what ways. You then have the opportunity to create specially designed areas to suit those needs. For example, many children do homework or other activities in the kitchen while mom cooks dinner. Consider adding a couple of stools at the kitchen counter to create an easy, informal place for kids.

When remodeling your kitchen, remember that beauty isn't everything. Of course everyone likes to have a glamorous kitchen with granite countertops and solid wood cabinets, but beauty only goes so far. Your kitchen design still needs to accommodate how your family lives and the traffic flow, and should be energy efficient. These important aspects should not be overlooked during your next kitchen remodel.

For more kitchen remodeling advice from a professional and a free quote, visit www.UnitedHomeImprovement.com

7 Tips to Keep Your Hardwood Floor Looking Its Best

by: Rob Buenaventura

Many people choose hardwood flooring because it is easy to maintain and keep looking great. True, you will not have to worry about hardwood staining if you spill grape juice on it, as you do with carpet. However, there are a few things that you need to remember when you are dealing with hardwood. Once you have spent a great deal of time and money on your beautiful hardwood floor, you will want to keep it looking fantastic. Many people choose hardwood flooring because it is easy to maintain and keep looking great. True, you will not have to worry about hardwood staining if you spill grape juice on it, as you do with carpet. However, there are a few things that you need to remember when you are dealing with hardwood.

The most important cleaning tip for hardwood is preventative maintenance. By cleaning your floors regularly and sweeping or vacuuming dirt and debris, you will save yourself a lot of time and expense in the long run.

Wipe up any spills as soon as they occur. Although you will not

have an instant stain when you spill on hardwood floor as you do with carpet, you may expose your hardwood to staining if you do not wipe up spills in a timely fashion. Once stains have a chance to set into the hardwood you may have to refinish the floor in order to get the stain out.

Sweep your floor everyday or as needed. It is important to sweep up any dirt or debris off of your floor as necessary so that the dirt doesn't scratch the wood. This will vary from house to house of course. If you have a high traffic home, you may need to sweep a few times a day. Although, you may only need to sweep every few days.

Use a hardwood cleaner once a week to keep your floor looking its best. Hardwood floor cleaners are available at any home improvement center or at a flooring center. They are quite easy to use, and with a little preventative maintenance, you will thank yourself in the future. Simply spray the cleaner on and use a cloth or hardwood broom to buff the floor gently.

Never use water and soap when cleaning your hardwood. Hardwood is not like linoleum or even laminate flooring and you cannot use a bucket of sudsy, soapy water to clean it. In fact, you can damage your floor if you try to mop it in a traditional style. Because wood is susceptible to water damage, you want to minimize the contact that your floor has with water. Water will seep into the cracks of the boards and can cause swelling, discoloration and deformation of the boards.

Protect your floor from furniture scratches and gouges. It is a very good idea to place felt on the bottom of all of your furniture in order to protect it from scratches. This is particularly important for furniture pieces that move a great deal such as your kitchen chairs. But it is a good idea to protect all pieces equally. You can purchase felt at the local hardware store, and cut it to size to fit the bottom of every piece of furniture that you have.

Polish your floor regularly. If you have a hardwood floor with a wax finish, you may want to wax it on a regular basis to keep it looking shiny and new. The waxing process will also help buff any scratches out of your floor as well. Every wax product is different so it is important to read the directions carefully and also consult the manufactures guidelines of your flooring before applying any wax product.

With a little bit of preventative maintenance and some common sense, you will be able to keep your hardwood floor looking fabulous for many years. There are only a few simple steps and rules to follow when dealing with hardwood flooring because it is actually one of the easiest flooring types to care for.

Hiring a Decorative Artist? Ask the Right Questions

by: Julie Hampton

Hiring a decorative artist to work in your home is a personal experience. From the beginning planning stage to the actual process of painting, a homeowner and artist will spend many hours together. Below are five tips to aid the creative process, and insure you hire the most qualified studio that fits your projects needs.

Finding the Artist. Home Shows, interior designers, and local home magazines are ideal places to find professional artists. Check out the walls of established hair salons or restaurants. Try the local phone book - many times artists are included in the paint contractors category.

A quick search on the web may lead

to immediate local results when looking for a specific area. Make sure to go through the first three pages of your search.

Questions For The Artist and You. When contacting the artist be prepared with questions. First, make sure the artist is an actual business entity, rather than a hobby painter. For example, decorative artists work is often considered to be part of the construction industry.

Second, ask if the artist is covered by insurance. It is extremely important to ask if they are covered not only by liability insurance, but that all helpers on the jobsite are covered by workers compensation insurance. Decorative

artists work on ladders and scaffolding on most jobs; safety must come first.

Other questions to ask include:

- * Do you have a website?
- * What is your lead time?
- * How much is your consultation fee?
- * Will you make a sample of any proposed ideas?
- * Where have you been trained?
- * Do you use professional, durable products?

While on the phone be prepared to explain to the artist what your vision and goals are for the proposed project area. Discuss ideas such as interior design style, or if you would like to add texture to the wall. Specific problems you are trying to solve, such

as incorporating color into an open floor plan are crucial. Be ready to talk about budget—what is the amount of money you feel comfortable spending on a project.

During The Consultation. Most artists will meet potential clients in their homes. An average consultation takes approximately 60 to 90 minutes. If more than one room is to be discussed, prepare the artist before hand so plenty of time is scheduled. For large projects, a consultation can run considerably longer. Ideally, all decision makers are present. The artist will bring a portfolio of work. The portfolio can include a number of items such as large samples boards, photographs of completed homes, idea books, and color decks. Make sure to judge the portfolio on the quality of items, and not the sheer number. However, an artist who has many years experience will have a much larger portfolio than an artist starting out.

Let the artist know what your budget is. If you do not feel comfortable, speak in broad terms such as “Between \$1300-1800.” By telling the artist an approximate price range, the best finishes can be chosen that fall into the budget. The artist will also measure out the wall or ceiling area, and take your contact information to return your estimate.

Compare Estimates. When comparing estimates from several different decorative studios, make sure you are comparing the same finishes. An eight layer finish can range in the \$8-12 s.f. category, while a 3 layer finish may price at \$4 s.f. Glazed walls will be significantly less than textured finishes. The below example gives different price comparisons:

A small powder room is to mimic an old rustic and aged leather that finisher A. refers to as a colorwash. The finisher prices this at \$1300. Finisher B doesn't recommend the color red for the bathroom, but suggest a light tan leather look, also referred to as a colorwash on their estimate. The price is \$650. Though it may seem as finisher A is double the price, the finishes are greatly different. The red leather finish will need a grey primer basecoat, as well as 2 coats of red paint. Red paint is often priced slightly higher than other colors, due to the red colorants added. The brown leather finish may not require a basecoat—the homeowner has leftover wall paint, and the painter has agreed this will work great for the basecoat by showing the homeowner a sample. The painter then will have to glaze the walls.

Ask the artist for an approximate time frame. An artist working alone may need several weeks to complete a home with multiple finishes. A studio with several trained artists on staff will complete the project in a shorter period of time. Examine each estimate. If a painter's price is considerably lower than other estimates the standard of craftsmanship may not be up to par with more qualified contractors. Weigh all factors-price quote, references, and professionalism before making a decision.

Hiring an artist is an exciting experience for any homeowner. Customizing your home, and inviting an artist to create an environment just for you is exciting and very personal. From asking and answering questions, to interviewing and reviewing estimates the process can be overwhelming. However, taking one step at a time, and focusing on your goals and vision will make the results tremendously rewarding.



Time To Fix Sticky Doors, Once And For All

Do your wooden doors give you more trouble than usual in the summer? And since September usually marks the peak moisture content within interior woodwork, this is also the best time to fix your doors so they never stick again. Why Are They Sticking?

Humidity is the number-one cause of doors that stick seasonally, but it's not the only source of trouble. Doors in buildings without deep foundations sometimes stick during winter or spring as the soil heaves with frost and twists the structure. Doors that stick consistently throughout the year may have worn or loose hinges. Even swell-resistant composite wood doors may be just too big for their openings. You've got to find out the root of the trouble before you can fix it.

Start work by testing the hinges. Stand at the edge of the door, grab each side of the handle with one hand, then lift up and down. Do you feel any wiggle? If you hear something, but don't feel much, the hinges are fine. If the edge of the door moves up and down more than the

thickness of a loonie, however, find out why. The most likely cause of hinge movement on old doors is wear. The internal pin that joins the two halves of the hinges has become too small, allowing vertical movement.

Another possible cause is loose hinge-mounting screws that let the entire hinge move relative to the door frame. Have someone else do the up-and-down wiggling of the door so you can get a close look at the hinges. Hinge replacement is the only cure for wear.

Try tightening the screws on loose ones. If the screws never get tight, their holes are stripped. Take a couple of screws out of each side of the hinge, then stuff round wooden toothpicks into the screw holes with carpenter's glue. Re-drive the screw 12 hours later, after the glue has dried, then repeat the process for the other loose screws you left in to keep the hinge in place.

Making The Door Smaller

If your door still sticks even after checking and stabilizing

the hinges, it's too big. The challenge is to find out exactly where, then to work down these high spots as easily as possible.

Scribing is the key.

Scribing is used all the time in cabinetmaking and carpentry work. It's the act of using a pencil to mark one part relative to another, so the two can be shaped to fit together flawlessly. In the case of scribing already-hung doors, the process requires unique preparations.

Start by sharpening an ordinary pencil, then sawing off the tip, 1 1/2 inches from the end. This is your scribing tool. Next, stand facing the side of the door you pull shut, then close it towards you so there's just a tiny gap between the door and the edge of the frame. If you do this correctly there'll be just enough room for your stubby pencil to fit between the door stop strip on the frame, and the door itself.

Lay what's left of the flat, painted side of the pencil against the door frame, then drag the pencil along the frame with its point touching (and marking the door). The outline of the frame -- including the high spots causing trouble -- will be marked on the door's face. You can scribe along the bottom of the door and floor too, if there's evidence of sticking there, but leave the hinge side of the door alone. The distance between the point of the pencil lead and the side of the pencil automatically creates the gap you'll need between the other three sides of the door and frame.

Now get some help to take the door off its hinges, either by driving the hinge pins up and out using a slot screwdriver and hammer, or by unscrewing the hinges from the door if the pins won't budge.

Planing a Door in the 90s

Since most homeowners don't know how to sharpen and use a hand plane, power planers are growing in popularity. A power plane is a hand-held electric tool with revolving cutters that removes shavings of wood. It's easier to use than a hand plane, though it does kick up dust and make lots of noise. They cost about \$200 - \$250, or you get one temporarily from a rent-all.

All power planes have adjustments to control depth of cut. If you've never used one before, adjust for a light cut and practice on some scrap. It's not hard. Wear safety glasses and ear protection. With someone holding the door on edge for you, start planing down to the lines you scribed on the door. Work slowly and don't completely remove the lines; only plane within a dime's thickness of them. Move your plane especially slowly at the top and bottom corners, since the wood's grain direction is easily split there by the spinning blades. Replace the door and check it before repainting the edges.

Trying to Save on Energy Bill? Plant a Tree

Rising gas costs, higher property taxes, escalating real estate costs ... these days it seems homeowners can't catch a break when it comes to finance. But as daunting as rising energy costs can be, homeowners can take solace in the knowledge that there is something they can do to help ease some of their financial burden. By strategically planting the right types of trees, bushes or shrubs around their home, homeowners can inexpensively relieve both their heating and cooling costs.

In fact, homeowners can expect to save an average of 10 percent on their cooling costs simply by planting the correct

type of tree in the right location. When planting a tree, plant on the east or west side to block low-angle sun or on the south side to block overhead sun. Planting a 25-foot tree 10 feet from a west wall can shade up to 47 percent of the surface of your house in mid-afternoon. As a result, you can turn down your air conditioner considerably, saving you a bundle in energy costs while allowing you to maintain an acceptable level of comfort.

Another way to keep your cooling costs at a minimum is to plant trees in such a way that they will shade your windows. Nearly 75 percent of all solar heat gain in a building comes

through windows, so keeping them in the shade will allow you to drastically cut down on the amount of heat entering your home. Also try and keep your air conditioning units in the shade as well, as this has been shown to increase the unit's efficiency.

When planting a tree for energy conservation purposes, it is imperative you plant the correct type of tree. For those people living in climates that experience all four seasons, deciduous trees are the best to plant. This is because deciduous trees will lose their leaves in the winter time, allowing sunlight to come in and warm your home when it's cold while those same leaves will cool your home during warmer seasons.

It's also important you plant trees with strong wood, as they are far more likely to protect your home and keep you warmer from gusting winter winds. Also, trees will deflect wind upward in the air as opposed to letting it continue on a horizontal plane on the way to your home. When planting trees strictly for windbreaking, conifers are your best bet. These are trees such as firs and junipers and also spruce. Keep in mind, however, that these types of trees often take long periods of time to grow. Also, for maximum windbreaking plant these trees perpendicular to the prevailing winter winds, as planting them parallel will greatly reduce their effectiveness. Try to avoid planting evergreens where you

need winter warmth, as they will block sun from the house, meaning you'll need to turn up the thermostat to stay warm. Keep in mind, too, that if you plant trees too close together, such a strategy can cause a marked decrease in the amount of sunlight you're allowing into your home.

Shrubs can also provide homeowners with an effective means of energy cost cutting. The height of a shrub makes it ideal for cooling the lower levels of your home in the summer and warming those same levels up come the winter months. Shrubs planted on the south side of your house can help you accomplish both these goals. As the mercury begins to rise in your thermostat, let your shrubs grow out a little. This will allow them to shade the lower-level windows of your home and keep the rooms on the other side of those windows and walls a lot cooler. As the colder seasons draw nearer, trim your shrubs down to an acceptable and attractive height. This will allow that same sunlight your shrubs blocked in the summer to come on in when it's cold outside, reducing your reliance on the heater to warm up your home.

While planting the right trees in the right locations can help you save on energy costs, it's also good to note that more trees improve the air quality of your neighborhood. So while you'll definitely be saving money, you'll also be doing your part to save the world.

Protect Your Outdoor Furniture

by [Steve Bailey](#)

Replacing your outdoor furniture with a brand new set of wood patio, deck or garden furniture can feel as satisfying as overhauling a bedroom or kitchen, and you might feel that if your furniture was shipped yesterday, it still won't be quick enough. Naturally, a primary concern that can dominate your awareness is how to keep your newly purchased furniture - or your existing furniture - in as excellent shape as possible. While research scientists are busy at work coming up with futuristic self-cleaning wood furniture, let's discuss now what you can do yourself to maximize the life of your cherished wooden backyard or patio furniture.

This article primarily covers background and provides some brief education on the impact outdoor elements have on our wood furniture and concludes with hints and guidelines on cleaning and using protectant solutions.

What comes to mind immediately is the concern of exposure of rain or snow to wood furniture. Obviously, the utmost importance is to maintain awareness of the weather patterns in your particular locale.

Underestimation of Moisture's Effects
Although water in either form of liquid or vapor (moisture) both have their own unique taxing effects on wood furniture, home owners may have a tendency to treat the effects of moisture lightly. Using an outdoor shed or a temporarily constructed overhead built with tarp may provide a false sense of protection. If those methods are used, pay close attention

to shrinking and swelling taking place with your furniture. This leaves clues as to whether you are leaving your furniture vulnerable to the degrading results of moisture exposure. Consider three categories of "dryness levels":

1. Totally Dry.
2. Exposed to moisture, or water, but not yet reached the "fiber" saturation point..
3. Fiber Saturation and beyond

A varying or uneven supply of water vapor exposure will keep your furniture in that middle range of moisture level. When it is below that fiber saturation point, still in category 2., the wood cell walls actually expand and contract due to rising and falling levels of moisture, and this is what causes shrinking and swelling of the chair, bench or table. The results: cracking, peeling, and paint defects. Thus, even if you have an outdoor enclosed shed, consider using waterproof covers around the furniture while you are keeping them during winter.

Protecting Against Water

As we know, like moisture, liquid water from rain or other source can of course affect any of the above categories concerning dryness levels. Unlike moisture, water will cause the wood to reach fiber saturation very rapidly. Problems with the breakdown of the wood's internal structure is the unfortunate result. You end up with furniture that loses its strength and this equates to a chair or bench that you can't trust as much, or rely on as much as the day of purchase.

"Let's take a look at the impact outdoor elements have on our wood furniture, plus we'll uncover a few hints and guidelines on cleaning and using protectant solutions to maximize the life of your cherished wooden backyard or patio furniture."

When wood is near fiber saturation point (3.), what you have is decay (otherwise known as rot) affecting the full volume of wood. Decay is degradation caused by various kinds of decay fungi capable of breaking down the structural components of wood for food. The strength of wood comes from polymers which form the wood cells. Thus, if the wood is brought directly and quickly into that fiber saturation point and beyond, via rain or other liquid water, considerable loss of strength occurs before visible damage is even apparent. The suggestion to use waterproof covers bears repeating here.

Weathering

Weathering involves a degradation of the wood's surface caused by the combined effects of the UV radiation of the sunlight, water and abrasion by sand and other granule particles. It is different than the decay of wood described below, and there are ways of identifying the first stages of this process.

The first stage is color change of the wood. With redwood or cedar, the color becomes light, and with lighter woods such as pine and fir, the tendency is for the wood to become darker. The next stage involves erosion of the wood surface and loosening of the wood fibers. This erosion, however, is extremely slow. Even with an average level of care, the rate of surface erosion is 1/8 inch to 1/4 inch per 100 years.

This last fact could be a welcome relief from any concern that the wood structure itself is decaying just because of a color change that you happen to notice. The weathering process strictly involves the surface of the wood, and itself can still be controlled with proper care.

Preventative Care and Maintenance

The following list of tips and guidelines can help you on your next visit to an online/local home and garden warehouse store or furniture care supply center:

- Strongly consider obtaining waterproof furniture covers for an ideal level of protection from moisture
- Water Repellants or other products

with a high percentage of oil are not recommended for outdoor furniture due to the tendency from outside air particles to stick to the wood furniture

- Try to avoid linseed oils or other natural oils as this will lead to mildew fungi (mildew fungi leads to the surface deterioration, as opposed to "decay fungi" which results in an accelerated compromising of the structure within the wood)
- Washing wooden furniture: Clean about twice a year with a mild detergent and a scrub brush.
- Try to avoid varnishing on top of screw fittings. The shrinking and swelling due to weathering as explained above will require the tightening of the the screws, and this could be problematic if that area is gummed up with varnishing.
- If your furniture is close to a pool or spa, use a hose to wash them once a week, as chlorine is a risk to most finishes
- If possible, avoid situating wood legs directly on top of grass. The wetness from the ground may promote early decay of the wood over time. If in your situation, it is difficult to avoid this, try standing the table and chair legs in saucers of wood preservative for several hours to add protection.

Also, in the event of spills make sure to clean up all of the liquid, as opposed to just a quick wipe. Unless the sun is at it's hottest that day, never assume that the sun will take care of drying it thoroughly. If the wood takes all day to dry out, airborne pollen or other dirt may get a chance to form an invisible yet sticky film on your furniture surface.

In conclusion, this could be considered as one of those areas where a small investment in time and effort gives you a large payback. The tradeoff is longer life for your beautiful porch, backyard garden or patio furniture.

Steve Bailey has a passion for enjoying the outdoors. [www. OutdoorChairsandHammocks.com](http://www.OutdoorChairsandHammocks.com)

Resourceful Redecorating

by Cheryl Johnson

“The best strategy in budget decorating is to always inventory and use what you have on hand before buying decorating supplies... so before you go shopping for bargains at your favorite thrift store, shop in your own home first!”

The best strategy in budget decorating is to always inventory and use what you have on hand before buying decorating supplies... so before you go shopping for bargains at your favorite thrift store, shop in your own home first! As the seasons change, many times your local thrift and consignment stores will have a change in inventory. So, be sure not to miss out on decorating supplies, furnishings, accessories, paint, wallpaper and fabrics that can be found at many thrift stores. But, before you go shopping for bargains, make a plan that incorporates items you already have into your decorating task.

The best strategy in budget decorating is to always inventory and use what you have on hand before buying decorating supplies. Be sure to check out the garage, attic, and/or basement for useful materials or furnishings that can be recycled into a new decor.

Shop in your own home first! Consider moving items from one space to another. Sometimes pulling items from one room to another and simply re-organizing, fixing up, or just using an item in a different way can be enough to jazz up a room. Add a fresh coat of paint, different window dressings and rearrangement of furnishings, and WHA LAH! You have a new room.

Need some paint? If you can be flexible about color, check the mis-mixed table at your local home improvement, hardware, or paint stores. You can find high quality paints for a fraction of the original retail cost when colors don't turn out exactly as they should have. Sometimes you can find a slight variation of just the color you've already picked that will work just as well with your selected color scheme and save you lots of money.

I buy these mis-mixed paints (usually for \$2-3 per gallon or less) throughout the year and store them appropriately for later use. This way I go shopping in “my own” paint department first to see if I can accommodate the decorating plan I have chosen. Planning ahead and grabbing these types of decorating supplies when they're a bargain is a great way to maximize your home decorating savings.

Collecting fabrics for future use is also another great idea. Even unwanted clothing can be used to create small window dressings, pillow covers, and accessories. Many people give away scraps of fabrics or sell them at yard sales. Be sure to check clearance and end piece items at sewing and fabric shops. It's really so simple to make a curtain or a pillow. Usually only requires sewing simple seams.

For more complicated tasks, if you can't figure it out for yourself, you're sure to find a how-to book at any library or search on-line for free information.

I've found some excellent ideas for decorating on a budget, do-it-yourself projects, and decorating theme ideas from television, how-to books, and online sources like Designing Online. Benefit from some of the wonderful ideas and projects offered by professionals. You can get some great ideas for areas of your home that you just don't know what to do with.

Before you make your plans, check out several books at the library on home decorating. You will find no shortage of books on the subject of do-it-yourself home decorating. Glance through them and grab ideas to incorporate into your own decorating task.

If you have a specific challenge to overcome, likelihood is someone else has already encountered it, conquered it, and written a book or web page about it. Use their knowledge! It will save you time and frustration of figuring it out.

Learn to make swags and wreaths. Swags and wreaths bring texture and color into a space and can be fairly simple to create. A simple how-to book is all you need to create a few decorative pieces. Wreaths can easily be adapted to suit any theme or color scheme. And, handmade ones are a fraction of the cost of those purchased already made.

Tip: Some people grow to love the craft of wreath making and it becomes a useful hobby. They make great gifts!

Swags are soooooo easy to make once you have the right supplies and tools. Like wreaths, they have a basic structure that can be adapted to suit your theme or color scheme. Once you become an experienced swag or wreath crafter, you can whip together an accessory for any decor in a matter of minutes.

Don't over accessorize. If you have collections, group them together for the best displays. Your trinkets and treasures will look less like clutter and more like valued collections.

Cheryl Johnson - redecorating, home decor, budget friendly, budget decorating, inventory, decorating supplies, shopping for bargains, bargains, thrift store, consignment stores Cheryl Johnson is a mother of four helping herself and others become and stay debt free. Publisher of Simple Debt Free Living - A self-help plan, ideas, and resources for debt management, household budgeting, frugal and debt free living. Lots of money saving tips to balance your budget and maximize savings everyday.

Choosing the Right Bed

Ask a number of people what their favorite room in their apartment or house is and you're likely to get a variety of answers. Some might enjoy the serenity of a den or reading room, while others might enjoy the isolation of a good basement. Ask those same people where they'd prefer to be most comfortable in their home, and the answers could be more uniform: their bedroom.

A good bed is a welcome sight at the end of a long day for most people, affording them the chance to rest up in absolute comfort or sleep in late on rainy mornings. Part of what makes a bed a good bed is the type you choose since not all beds are made for all people or places.

- Platform beds. Platform beds are arguably the simplest choices, coming without a box spring and oftentimes without a head- or footboard. That makes them rather easy to assemble, something that appeals to people who are moving without the help of a professional service.

What's also appealing about platform beds is that, thanks to their lack of head- or footboards and box springs, they're easy to move around. Platform beds are often the ideal choice for apartment-dwellers whose quarters are more confined, as they leave more space for other amenities.

- Sleigh Beds. Sleigh beds look exactly as their name would suggest: like an old-fashioned sleigh. Among the most aesthetically appealing types of beds, sleigh beds boast an upward curving headboard and footboard, creating a sense of style and coziness.

Thanks to their headboards and footboards, however, sleigh beds might not be the best choice for apartment dwellers or those with loft-style bedrooms that don't boast an abundance of space.

- Upholstered beds. These are ideal for anyone who likes to read in bed before they go to sleep at night, as the headboards are upholstered with fabric that is both soft and supportive of the back. When purchasing such a bed, be sure to bring along a picture or design of your bedroom, as the color scheme of your room can be incorporated into the headboards.

- Waterbeds. While they were more popular years ago, waterbeds still have their devotees. Much of those devotees cite the back support their waterbed provides because waterbeds are known to distribute weight and avoid pressure spots. That makes for a comfortable sleep. In addition, the vinyl mattress on waterbeds does not collect dust or mites, a significant benefit to those suffering from asthma or allergies. Instantly, when many people hear of

waterbeds thoughts of the bed bursting come into their mind. Those thoughts are often unwarranted, as puncturing a waterbed is very difficult, and even if that does happen,

they come with safety liners to ensure you won't wake up atop a puddle and a shrunken mattress.

Waterbeds can be bulky and heavy, making them a less-than-ideal choice for anyone with a smaller apartment or bedroom. Those with more ample sleeping quarters, however, might want to consider a waterbed.

- Futons. Futons have become particularly popular choices over the years for

apartment dwellers or as extra guest beds. Resembling a sofa, futons typically come with a wooden frame and a thin mattress on top. The futon's owner determines how to best use it, whether as a sofa or a bed.

One thing to look for in a futon is not just price, but how comfortable the mattress is. Whereas older futons were widely known to have paper-thin mattresses that weren't very comfortable, nowadays most still boast thin but more supportive mattresses.

- Chest bed. Chest beds are a particular type of platform bed that offer more aesthetic appeal as well as practicality. Chest beds are so called because they have a chest of drawers or compartments built into them. In lieu of nothing but space underneath the mattress, chest beds essentially provide users with a built-in dresser, particularly valuable for people with limited space.

- Bunk beds. Certainly not the choice for adults, bunk beds can be ideal for young children who either have limited space or just want to sleep in the same bedroom. Bunk beds can even be fun for kids, and they take up less space than having two beds in the same room. Be careful to ask about weight or age specifications for certain

bunk beds, as most are made with kids of a certain age and size in mind. HI068140

SIDEBAR: Sizing Up Your Next Mattress

Oftentimes what makes a bed most comfortable is the room it allots its occupant or occupants. People generally find that the bigger the mattress, the more comfortable the bed. The following rundown provides a quick glimpse of what size mattress you might want to consider for your next bed.

- Twin: Generally only for kids or smaller adults. At 39" x 75", these are not suited for grown men or women and don't provide much space even for smaller adults.

- Full Size: At 54" x 75", the full size (or double, as it was once called) can prove sufficient for one or two smaller adults.

- Full XL Size: These mattresses are slightly bigger at 54" x 80" than full size, so taller can adults will find them more comfortable.

- Queen Size: The most popular choice at 60" x 80", these are both wide enough and long enough to comfortably accommodate two average-sized adults.

- King Size: Though roomy at 78" x 80", king-size mattresses are typically only necessary for taller adults.