

The Inside Track...

June 2007 Edition

Special Home Improvement Edition

ARE YOU BEHIND THE TIMES WITH YOUR RENO?

Home improvements, be they decorating, designing or renovating, are becoming almost as common as the annual summer holiday! However, like clothes, shoes and diets, fashions change. What's the new best thing? Here's what the experts are saying:

- On average, renovations are getting bigger, and people are tending to want high-end, quality products. A continuous upgrade approach is popular with fewer people waiting several years between projects.

- With children staying home longer and an increased desire to care for the aging parents within our homes, there is a subtle upswing in requests for multi-generational suites.

- Retrofitting to improve air quality and energy efficiency is important, particularly during major renovations.

- A popular home addition coming out of Europe is a

scullery, or as it is sometimes called, a 'dirty kitchen'. A scullery is typically about half the size of the home's eat-in kitchen, and allows the host to hide the messier aspects of cooking from guests while entertaining. It features a big sink for cleaning, a large cutting/preparation area and storage for appliances and oversized items.

- Other European trends include appliances in vibrant hues. And, rather than traditional large refrigerators, ultra-modern kitchens are now featuring smaller units, such as under-the-counter pullout freezers and cooler drawers for fruits and vegetables.

- If you are seeking the best return for your renovation dollar, your top three renovation choices remain unchanged: kitchen renovations, bathroom renovations and interior painting. According to the Appraisal Institute of Canada's 2004 Home Renovation Survey, these upgrades will net you a return in the range of 70 percent to 100 percent of your investment.

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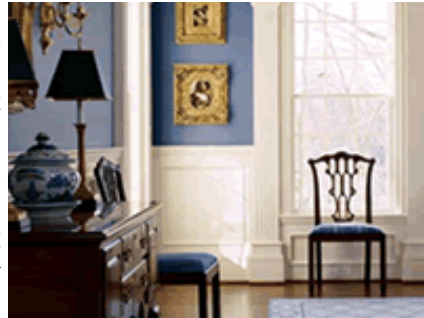
Small rooms are the bane of the home decorator. How do you achieve a pleasing look that doesn't feel cramped and claustrophobic? Short of building an addition or knocking down walls, you are limited to a few, but effective, decorating tricks that create the illusion of space.

The strategic use of colour and light is the best way to achieve this. Choose light shades of paint or wallpaper for the walls. Lighter colours reflect light making for a brighter room. Use an even lighter shade of the same colour or white for ceilings and floors. A darker colour on the ceiling will make the ceiling look lower and tends to make the walls look as though they are closing in.

Avoid harshly contrasting colours. In fact, a monochromatic colour scheme that carries throughout the room into fabrics and accessories is very effective. Steer away from too many patterned items. The goal here is to blur perspective.

Anything you can do to bring light into the room will also give the effect of increased space. A corner wall sconce that casts light up onto the wall works well.

Try to vary lighting effects for interest. A skylight is a great way to add light to a room, but isn't always practical or affordable.



Mirrors are a great solution for small rooms. A mirror placed across from a window is also effective. Place a lamp in front of a mirror to add more light to your room. Place mirrors directly across

from another for maximum impact. If you have wood or patterned flooring, have it installed so that the lines run diagonally across the room. This makes for longer lines, which give the appearance of a larger space.

When furnishing the room, pick objects that are proportioned to the size of the room. For example, opt for a loveseat over a full-sized sofa. Lastly, keep the clutter to a minimum. Avoid using a lot of knick-knacks and keep the room tidy and well organized.

IT'S ALL ABOUT FIRST IMPRESSIONS

The summer months are the perfect time to freshen up the exterior of your home. Whether it's for your pleasure or to impress potential buyers, you'll boost your home's curb appeal with these good old-fashioned cleaning tips:

- Edge the gardens, clean out debris
- Pull the weeds and rake the leaves
- Prune the plants and wooly shrubs
- Plant some urns by the entrance and flowers to the beds
- Tidy the garage of winter trappings

- Dispose of rusty broken garden décor
- Put out a fresh welcome mat and oil the front door
- Paint the windowsills, mailbox, and anything else that is looking tired
- Place clear light bulbs in exterior fixtures, and ensure burned out bulbs are replaced
- Reseal the driveway
- Fix the saggy gutters

Who says cleaning has to hurt? Get the kids involved! Borrow or buy a power washer and have fun cleaning siding, windows, sills, railings, decking and patio furniture.

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