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Your guide for New Hampshire
home owners & home seekers

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Add in warmth



Decorating tips to add warmth and welcome to your home

No matter where it is, no matter how it's decorated, a home should always provide a sense of warmth and welcome for family and friends. Start by focusing on the areas of the home that your guests will use the most. The design experts at Through the Country Door, offer advice on how to create a feeling of warmth and welcome in your home throughout the year:

■ Guest bathrooms can often be short on storage space, but your guests will need somewhere to stow their items while they visit. A freestanding towel cabinet, such as the Ridgeway cabinet, provides storage space for towels and other items, so you can keep vanities and counter spaces free for guest use. Or, if your space is really limited, the Ridgeway Space Saver adds elegance to very practical over-the-commode storage.

■ Don't forget to give guests somewhere to park their beverages and play board games. A coffee table can be an essential entertaining piece - and a great way to continue your decorating theme of comfort and class. The Leeds Coffee Table evokes the appearance of a 19th-century baggage cart with its metal undercarriage, handles and stationary wheels, and a well-worn, "aged" finish that makes it look like a piece right out of the past. (ARA)

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Room 'redos' for renters

Renters face a perennial decorating dilemma: Do you personalize your apartment decor, knowing that when you move out the

landlord will likely require you to put everything back the way it was? Or do you live with bare white walls, neutral-toned carpets and

homogeneous decor? You may not be able to make major changes - like replacing that bland sand-colored carpet with one in your favorite hue of purple - but you can personalize your rental space with some easy-to-reverse upgrades. While the effort to install, and later remove, these upgrades is small, their impact on your home's decor can be very big, indeed.

Here are a few simple room "redos" that can add pizzazz to your apartment - without creating extra work when it's time to move out:

■ WALLS

Paint is an easy way to switch up the color of a room, but if you paint the walls, be prepared to repaint them back to white before your lease ends. Peel and stick wall decor can be a better option for personalizing a space, while leaving the white walls intact - especially if you opt for high-quality peel and stick wall murals. SmartStick peel and stick wall murals are backed with a patented adhesive that allows you to easily place the material on nearly any surface (walls, windows, even doors), pull it down, reposition it, even move it to a ▶▶▶



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▶▶▶ different wall - all without damaging the mural or the wall beneath it. Unlike wall decals or wall stickers, the mural does not rip or wrinkle and can be reused hundreds of times. MuralsYourWay.com carries thousands of murals that can all be printed on SmartStick fabric and customized for size.

■ FLOORS

Replacing apartment carpet is usually a big no-no. Even if the existing carpet is worn and stained, unless you strike an agreement with your landlord for replacing it at your own expense, it's better to simply cover up the carpeting you can't stand.

Fortunately, it's easy to find decorative throw rugs that will add color and personalization to your space - and help protect neutral-toned carpets from wear, tear and staining, all of which you may be required to pay for when you move out. You can opt to arrange several smaller carpets in key areas of the room, such as placing a long runner in high-traffic hallways, or a large area rug to anchor furniture groupings in living areas. Or, you can even find a very large rug that covers almost the entire floor.

■ WINDOWS

Often, apartments will have no window treatments beyond blinds when you move in. You could install your own curtain rods and drapery, but the landlord may require you to



remove the rods, and repair all those little holes left by the hardware, before you move out. An easy way to get privacy, without having to install hardware, is to purchase removable window film. The frosted film affords privacy, but is easily removed, leaving the windows clear.

Or, you could minimize the amount of hardware needed by placing decorative holdbacks (usually used to hold a curtain away from a window at about the midpoint) at the top corners of a window and draping yards of

fabric in your favorite color or pattern over the holdbacks. The holdbacks leave just one hole each in the wall, so wall repair time is significantly less.

From reusable wallpaper murals to creative carpet options, it's easy to redecorate your rental - and you won't have to worry about restoring everything to its original state when your lease is up. (ARA)

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DIY-challenged



Three easy tricks for floor to ceiling

If you're among the millions of American homeowners who've decided sprucing up the home you have is more cost-effective than moving into something newer or bigger, you may be looking for some easy ways to improve your living space. If you're not a seasoned do-it-yourselfer, you could consider calling in the pros - but that would fly in the face of your efforts at frugality.

Transforming a room from floor-to-ceiling isn't as hard as it may sound, even if you're DIY-challenged. The job can be simple if you start from the ground and work your way up with these easy DIY tasks:

■ FLOORS WITH FLAIR

Look down. What's on the floor under your feet? Are you happy with what you ►►►



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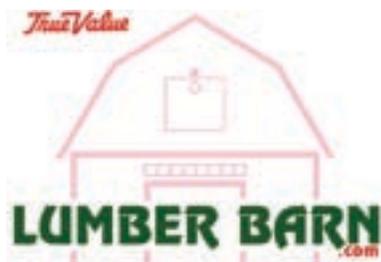
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▶▶▶ see? If you're living with stained carpet, shabby vinyl or hardwood that has seen better days, it's time to make a change. If you were a DIY diva, you could refinish those hardwoods, lay some new carpet or rip out that vinyl with your bare hands. But if you're a DIY newbie, you can change the look of your floor with a lot less effort and skill.

Cover up crummy carpet with colorful area rugs and strategically arranged furnishings. Mask that vinyl that is so "last-decade" with easy-to-install, self-stick carpet tiles or vinyl tiles. Refinishing a hardwood floor may be beyond your skills, but virtually everyone can wield a paint brush and roller. Simply paint tired wood floors in a neutral color - brown, tan, khaki or even white - to create a fresh-looking foundation for your room decor.

■ **WALLS THAT "WOW"**

Painting is one of the easiest ways to freshen up a room, and painting walls really requires no special skills. Pick a new color you love - or simply freshen up the existing color. Hit the paint store and ask the staff there for some tips on how to make the job go smoothly.

Wallpaper is another great way to revive a room's look, but it's traditionally considered a job requiring some sophisticated DIY skills. Until now, that is. Mural-maker MuralsYourWay.com now carries a line of wallpaper murals that



is virtually DIY foolproof. SmartStick repositionable wall murals are backed with a patented adhesive that allows you to easily place the wallpaper on any flat surface (walls, windows, even doors), pull it down, reposition it, even move it to a different wall. The material does

not rip or wrinkle and can even stand up to a trip through the washer and dryer. MuralsYourWay.com carries thousands of murals that can all be printed on SmartStick and customized to fit your wall exactly

Wall murals and wall paper are great ways to dress up a room, and now it's easier than ever to use this favorite technique of top designers.

■ **CEILING THAT SNAP**

When was the last time you looked up at your ceiling -- for any reason other than to change a light bulb? It's an area of room decor that often gets overlooked, but smart interior designers know ceilings have a big impact on how a room looks and feels.

For your purposes, a little color experimentation can probably go a long way. Fortunately, many paint stores and home improvement warehouses now offer free brochures and paint chips that suggest subtle pairings of appealing wall colors with unexpected ceiling hues. Or, if you prefer to play it safe, simply repaint the ceiling white - it's one of the fastest, easiest ways to make a room feel bright and new.

You don't need the DIY-skills of a home improvement show pro to upgrade your home and freshen your decor. You can get the job done with a few simple tricks and a weekend of elbow grease. (ARA)

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Home projects



Delaying home projects could cost more in the long run

Been to the grocery store lately? Filled up your vehicle with gas in the last week? It's not your imagination - many of the items you use most often are getting more expensive.

And near the top of the list of price increases are the building materials that go into remodeling projects and new home construction. The Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates the new home that cost \$85,000 to

build in 2003 would cost somewhere in the neighborhood of \$113,000 to build now, due to residential construction costs jumping 33 percent since 2003.

■ DELAY AND PAY ... MORE

Industry experts recommend consumers not wait to tackle home improvement projects but start first with the projects that provide the most return on investment or address a pressing need.

■ BACK TO THE BASICS

When it comes to essentials, there's nothing

more crucial to a home or its inhabitants than a roof over their heads. A new roof can be a major selling point and can help protect the rest of your home improvement investments.

So whether planning to fix your leaky roof, add a deck for enjoyment or increase your living space, remember that \$85,000 house in 2003 costs \$113,000 today. Regardless of the home improvement projects you are considering, it's important to remember that the longer you delay, the more you're likely to pay.

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Houseplants

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Bright blooms, the smell of fresh cut grass, and a warm breeze may be missing this time of year, but there are ways you can brighten up the indoors and bring some summer gardening back into your life.

Houseplants create a fantastic distraction for passing the winter doldrums as we eagerly await summer. In addition, they also provide valuable health benefits during our harsh cold months. Most houseplants add oxygen and humidity back into the air and some can even rid an area of toxins expelled through materials used to build, decorate and furnish a house.

■ LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

After plants are arranged appropriately in their containers, you'll need to find a suitable location for them. The first step in keeping

a plant healthy is to situate it away from any drafty areas or heat sources. For instance, do not place a fern by a front or back door, or on top of a heating vent. Heat sources such as fireplaces will also cause plants to dry out.

■ KEEPING HYDRATED

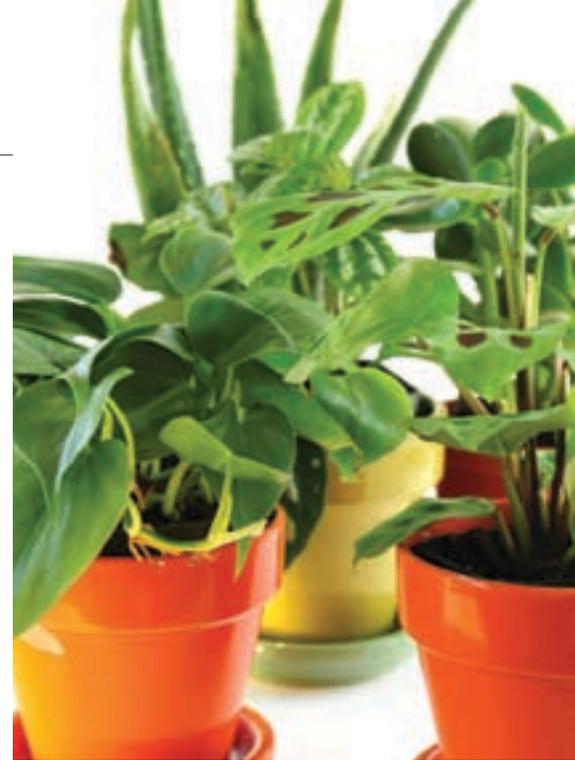
Many of us overwater our plants. Using a product that regulates overwatering and infuses soil with oxygen will allow you to avoid the woes of overwatering, which result in wilting, dulling and death of the houseplant.

■ CATCHING RAYS

Placing houseplants indoors where the sun will hit them only about four to six hours a day is sufficient. Sunlight results in denser, greener foliage and overall healthier plants.

■ MOVING TIME

Like us, plants would much rather be outdoors than stuck inside during warm



and sunny days. Houseplants can be moved outdoors after the danger of frost has passed. Before moving plants outdoors, add about 2 inches of potting soil to their containers. Once outside, you should soak your plants from top to bottom. Not only do potted plants add design elements to interior and exterior living spaces, but they are also beneficial to your health. So go ahead, indulge in a houseplant or two. A little green can really do the body good.

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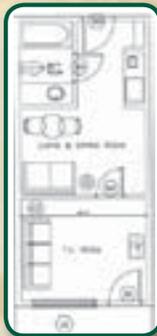
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Home trends

Something old, something new. Something borrowed, something blue. While typically the refrain for most brides, this adage holds equally true for the top home decorating trends for the coming year.

■ **WHAT'S OLD IS NEW AGAIN**

Whether they're genuine period pieces being repurposed or home furnishings reproduced from popular items from the '50s, '60s or '70s, vintage will be hot next year, according to Kenneth Ludwig of Kenneth Ludwig Home Furnishings, Ltd. Examples include chair frames redone in new upholstery, traditional lighting fixtures in newer brass or pewter finishes.

■ **A SPECTRUM OF COLORS**

Color trends will carry over from 2010 to 2011 with the soothing aqua and green hues



that draw their inspiration from the verdigris deposits found on weathered copper statues, predicts design experts. For outdoor furniture and accessories, colors like lime green, bold orange and Caribbean blue, along with more subdued hues such as sage green, barn red and mocha brown will be used.

■ **THE MAD WORLD OF FURNITURE**

Taking a nod from the award-winning AMC series "Mad Men," Linda Fougrousse of Interior Transformation, Inc. also sees furniture styles returning to the '50s and '60s with

round tapered legs on angles, geometric accents and seating with curved backs.

■ **ILLUMINATING INSIGHTS**

As living green becomes more ingrained in our lives, LED lighting will continue to light the way, according to Jeff Dross, senior product manager of Kichler Lighting, who will introduce several new under-cabinet systems and landscape products with an ultra-efficient technology next year. For a casual, contemporary twist, Dross also suggests hanging chandeliers in new ▶▶▶

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▶▶▶ areas such as bathrooms, bedrooms and closets, and embracing today's art glass applications, which are much more chic and casual than the Tiffany lamps of the past.

■ **NOTHING BLAND ABOUT NEUTRALS**

In a recent video posted on her website, Michelle Lamb - of Minneapolis-based Marketing Directions, Inc. and editorial director of The Trend Curve - spoke about a resurgence in neutrals in 2011. These more complex "chameleon" neutrals will have more color, and will shift and change based on the light

and whatever's around them. Lamb claims that these neutrals will be "the likes of which we haven't seen in 20 years or more."

■ **YOU'VE GOTTA HAVE HEART**

The kitchen remains the "heart of the home," and consumers interested in remodeling their kitchens should consider a well-designed, open, airy layout that integrates the kitchen into the rest of their homes.

Try new countertop materials in lieu of granite, such as quartz stone or binding crushed recyclable glass underneath a solid,

smooth surface for those seeking green alternatives.

■ **UNDERFOOT, BUT NOT UNDERRATED**

M. Grace Sielaff of M. Grace Designs, Inc. envisions rich-looking herringbone-patterned hardwood floors in an ebony oak finish - paying attention to board thickness and giving special consideration to products that meet industry LEED requirements. For a green touch, Frederick suggests hardwood flooring from reclaimed wood or sustainably grown and harvested sources. To add warmth, try round rugs - the bigger, the better.

■ **THINGS ARE DEFINITELY LOOKING UP**

According to Janet Davidsen of Details in Design, Inc., homeowners are casting their eyes upward. The ceiling will be embellished and noticed more as the "fifth wall," and may be painted or architecturally enhanced to play more of a focal point in a space. Sielaff also suggests homeowners consider a painted metallic ceiling with a large, eye-catching chandelier.

■ **GREEN CONTINUES TO BE KEEN**

According to Kathy Hoffman of Susan Fredman Design Group, products and materials such as bronze, copper, clay, cotton, linen and hemp - which are environmentally friendly, contribute to healthy indoor air quality, and can be repurposed or recycled at the end of their lifespan - will be in high demand. Using such natural textures as hemp, jute, organic cotton, recycled polyester, bamboo fiber, organic wool and linen, and soy silk will help keep it simple but still green. (ARA)

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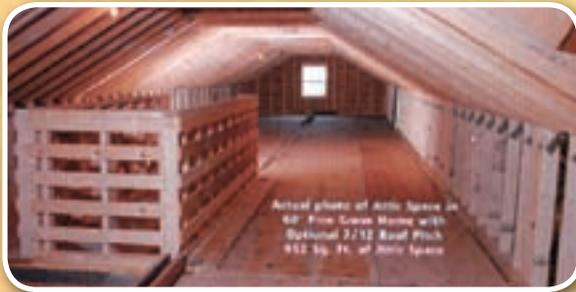
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