

Building Scene

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Trends lean toward home and hearth

By Jackie Fitzpatrick
special writer

With the '90s upon us, the trends of the new decade are making themselves known — particularly in interior design.

Yuppies no longer, people are into home and hearth in a big way.

We're cocooning, say sociologists. We're staying home, ordering in, getting comfy and watching Roseanne.

Designers say the lifestyle is reflected in the homes we're creating.

"I hate to use the terms 'cocooning' and 'nesting,' but people want a comfortable home now," says Betty Golrad, a spokeswoman for Hunter Douglas, a New Jersey window-covering firm. "The country and Victorian styles are the new look. Designs are a lot softer. The high-tech, spare interiors have gone. People want classic comfort."

The look this season is European country, with splashes of bright color — Byzantine sapphire and Regency jade or flickers of tangerine, red, violet or turquoise.

FURNITURE FABRIC, wall and window coverings are an eclectic mix of prints and patterns. Whites and beiges may make up most of the backdrop — but they're highlighted by tapestries and antique silver, worn wood floors and expansive garden views. An ancestral portrait might stare across at floral double-pleated shades and terra cotta flower pots.

"It's a mix of old-world designs and rustic," says Joseph Ruggiero, editor-in-chief of Home magazine. "The popular look of the home in the '90s is sophisticated European country. It's a relaxed, put-your-feet-up kind of thing."

Designers offer the following tips for your own little country province:

Start with the living room. A few strong pieces set the tone for the room. A chippendale chair, a classic bookcase or an antique end table can lend a nice touch to a couch reupholstered in a majestic teal.

THE BEST part of the European country look is that it can be acquired with the right accessories — none of which has to burn a hole in the wallet. Cluster framed



family portraits, books and fresh flowers on end tables. Cover wood chair seats and benches with floral prints and place baskets about the room.

Teri Seidman, an interior designer and author of "Decorating Rich: How to Achieve a Moneyed Look without Spending a Fortune," encourages choosing an upscale look but searching the flea markets and tag sales to find bargains.

For example, expensive tassels on draperies — hunt for them on old lamps at flea markets. Or cover a pillow in pieces from used Oriental rugs and arrange elegant accessories on skirted tables.

Next, meander to the kitchen. If you happen to have a central cooking space, an island in the center of the room, that's perfect, says Ruggiero.

EUROPEANS ARE long known as intimate party-givers, and an open kitchen allows the host to mingle as they cook. It doesn't cost much to give the room charm. Hang copper pots, cookware, dried herbs or maybe a long rope of red peppers from movable hooks.

Kitchen hutches are the rage these days. They can sometimes be found at New England auctions and tag sales and can be used to store everything from crockery to food.

Bedrooms are for romance, according to today's designers. Canopies drape softly over beds. The drapes are pulled back with lace. Vanities are back, and they might sport a wicker-framed mirror, a plate of chocolates and a copper vase filled with peace roses.

Other ideas:

- Rip out the wall-to-wall carpeting hiding those wood floors and bleach or stain the wood below it. The Oak Flooring Institute provides copies of a hardwood finishing and refinishing manual for 50 cents by writing to the institute at 804 Sterick Building, Memphis, Tenn. 38103.

- Stenciling is a great accent in children's rooms, kitchens and bathrooms. For ideas, visit a well-stocked art supply shop.

- Contact an interior designer if you're seeking the advice of an expert. It's advisable to look for someone with solid credentials and a membership in a professional association.

Be sure to have a budget to present along with specific ideas as to what you want your rooms to look like. If a designer is out of your price range, many furniture and department stores offer design services as part of a package with certain household purchases.

- Rent furniture. Although rental furniture once seemed synonymous with back-to-basics, today's furniture renters can get everything from washed oak and wall hangings to complete dining ware for six. You can opt to rent pieces of furniture for an entire three-bedroom house. According to the Furniture Rental Association of America, costs can range from \$60 a month for a three-bedroom package to \$200 per month for a luxury line.

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