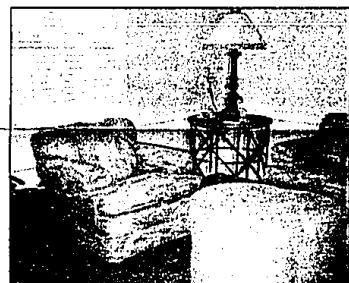




Brighter days: White fabrics and drapes will add vibrance to any dining area.



Sit comfortably: An ultrasuede ottoman and pillow adds a colorful accent and works well with the rug in this reading corner of a master bedroom suite.



Color your world: Rich and colorful fabrics and wallpaper along with a floral bouquet on a table can brighten up a room for spring. The fabrics and wallpaper are available at the Stroheim & Romann showroom at the Michigan Design Center in Troy.

Brighten Up!

Spring colors can brighten your home

By KEN ABRAMCZYK
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If you want to brighten up your home for spring, you probably want to learn what colors work well for your home interior.

That means taking a look at the rooms in your home and being objective, according to Carol Youd, a senior designer at the Hudson's design studio in Westland.

"Sometimes we are so busy, we really don't take time to look at our home, so you should try to take a long objective look with a fresh eye," Youd said.

For other homeowners, having a fresh eye can also mean using Feng Shui, the fine art of placement and balance to create a peaceful, harmonious and healthy environment.

Achieving balance

"Feng Shui is all about achieving balance," said Lynn Meadows, a Feng Shui consultant. "In some situations we may want more yang, or active furnishings, or in others, we may want more 'yin,' which is peaceful and quiet."

Perhaps the room needs something as basic as a fresh coat of paint, said Carol Cousineau of Sherwood Studios in West Bloomfield. "Many builders use a shasta white on the new homes, which tends to look dingy," Cousineau said. "Now is a good time open up the windows and paint."

Homeowners should "lighten up" a little for spring, whether they shop for furniture, visit a local interior designer or stop in a design center showroom.

It's time to evaluate

Before they start, homeowners should evaluate their rooms. "Decide what it is that is pulling the room down," Cousineau said. "Maybe the artwork is getting old. The carpet may need to be cleaned along with the fabrics and the drapes."

Homeowners should measure areas they want area rugs or artwork to occupy," Cousineau said. "They should keep a list and carry those measurements with them for those occasions when they see a piece they may want to purchase."

Earthtones and neutrals remain the order of the day for homeowners along with a little bit of gray, greens or sage colors, Youd said.

The background color is a vital part of the total picture. "Your wall color is one of the largest areas of color in the room," Youd said.

"(Homeowners) use very light neutrals. They like these colors because it looks very open. They come back and want to add color in artwork and accessories."

Accessories help residents dress up a room. A new pillow for a sofa, rug or even a artificial fern plant allows a room to breathe new life after the winter doldrums.

Even adding a single chair can help.

"An accessory has to be important to you and is something you enjoy," Youd said.

"Big" is the word for accessories, Cousineau said. "Large candlesticks have a nice bold look to them. Colored glass can brighten up the room." Silver can accessorize gold and gold "never goes out" of style, Cousineau said.

Meadows said homeowners should rid the room of clutter as clutter takes away energy. When using mirrors, make sure they reflect something pleasant in the room.

"When you see a chair, it reminds you of your grandmother's chair," Meadows said.

Area rugs add color

"Adding a new area rug can get a little color in the room," Youd said. Area rugs also are popular. Many chains and local family-run furniture stores offer the rugs in a variety of styles and colors.

Imported rugs from around the world fill store shelves. Area rugs can be selected from a variety of sizes to fit a room properly.

"You want an area rug to define a space or define a focal point," Youd said.

Large rooms with several windows don't convey much color. "Even with white carpeting, there often aren't any items to add color to the room," Cousineau said.

She said rugs can be ordered custom-made at the West Bloomfield store.

Great rooms in new homes present a problem because they are so large. "It takes some research to find the right piece," Youd said. "You want something with some height to it." Homeowners often fill the area above, topping a large armoire with a plant or artwork.

"Often we just collect (accessories), make additions and just let them gather into a bunch. Again, take a fresh look at your tabletop, console and curio."

Sort out old pictures and replace with new. Add new fresh colors to your accessories. Art can accentuate colors and moods.

"Artwork can be freshened up with new matting and framing," Youd said. "A narrow frame can 'date' a picture. Today's frames have grown wider, she said."

Meadows said art can be incorporated into Feng Shui. "Pictures can be very symbolic. What it symbolizes is very important."

Plants and flowers can help a room flow and ease the eye, particularly when another does is opposite the room entrance, which tends to draw people in and out of the room. "Plants are a wonderful life force," said Meadows.

Soothing nerves

Aquariums can calm and soothe frayed nerves. A heavy object, such as a statue, can anchor a room, Meadows said.

Cousineau loves to cut fresh flowers to brighten up her kitchen. Peonies and lilacs have relatively short seasons, but dahlias bloom all season. "They make magnificent cut flowers," Cousineau said.

Homeowners may focus on windows this spring to draw the natural light of the sun into the room.

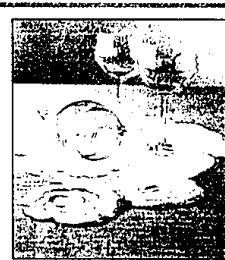
"The trend is window treatments," Youd said. "But you see people going back to drapes, because they like the softness and the warmth of them. You also get more insulation from drapes than you do from just a blind."

"You don't have to do the whole room over. Sometimes one or two pieces will give you a newer fresher look." Of course, reupholstering a single chair can present a new look, but sometimes that can cost as much as a new piece.

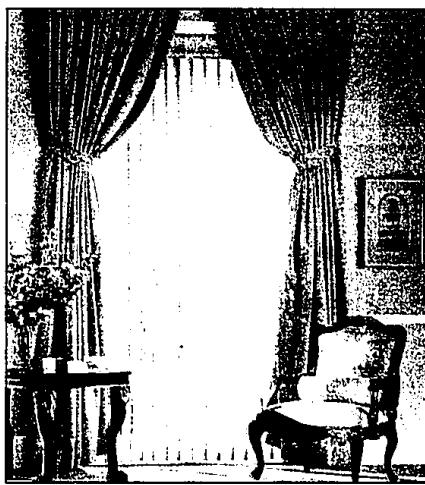
Using Feng Shui for interior decor is a "personal practice" and should be adapted to people who use it, Meadows said.

"We have gotten so removed from nature, we get in our cars and drive to work or school," Meadows said. "When is the last time you took a walk in the park or sat by a river?"

"A lot of it is getting in touch with ourselves."



Lighter touch: Above, watch your table blossom with hand-painted floral glass balloon stems from Carol Shiber Designs. They are available in pink, yellow or purple at Jacobson's. Below, add this elegant handcut crystal vase and bowl from the Czech Republic to your collection this spring.



Shading characters: The Serenette Softfold® Shadings from Hunter Douglas offer a tailored drapery look that evokes classic elegance. The window is dressed with a crepe-like Signature Cloth and coordinating fabric by the yard top curtains in the Vintage Damask.

JOE GAGNON

Venting a little

The Appliance Doctor believes proposed national guidelines for dryer vents are long overdue. See Home Work, Page 2



MARTY FIGLEY

Put out pansies

Want flowers in your garden right now? Plant pansies, as they stand up to cold weather better than any other annual. See Gardening, Page 3



HOMETOWN LIFE: Mercy Service Fair:

Students at Mercy High met representatives from many groups to learn about opportunities for volunteering.

HomeTown Life, Page 5

