

Recycle, re-purpose and renew to decorate on a shoestring

DEAR GIA,

My children are back in school and I want to do some really inexpensive, creative decorating to refresh and renew my home for fall and the holidays. Do you have any suggestions? SST

DEAR SST,

Some of the best ways to save money and be creative in decorating is to recycle, re-purpose and renew. This simply means using something you already have in a different way or buying something someone else has and using it your way. Instead of buying a new dresser, go to a flea market, buy an old dresser, repaint it and you now have piece of renewed furniture and have also saved a lot of money. Buy an old chair missing a seat and use it as a planter. The chair has now been re-purposed. Not only do these projects save money but they are also helping the ecology of our planet.

Here are even more budget friendly/creative ideas (and I've actually done them all at some point):

- Eliminate clutter. Streamline your collections and remove all the little knickknacks and dust collectors. Store things where they belong. If you can't do this yourself hire a professional organizer, they work miracles.

- Give your home a thorough cleaning. A good and thorough cleaning makes any room look fresh and new. Make a list of exactly what has to be done in each room. Then take it one room at a time and in this way the tasks will not seem overwhelming.

- Rearrange your furniture. Sometimes rooms get stuck in a rut. Shake it up. Move things around. Look at your rooms with new eyes.

- Paint can transform a room or a whole house. Paint is still one of the cheapest ways to redecorate and get a new look. Go to your local paint store for some great information, tips, and inspiring paint colors.

- A new piece of artwork can totally transform the look of a room. And it does not have to be expensive. You can find inexpensive prints at art stores, museum stores, flea markets, and tag sales. You can often buy them already matted and framed or frame them yourself.

- Add plants or get more plants. Plants are essential to making a room feel alive with energy. If you do not have a green thumb, do not be embarrassed to use artificial plants.

- Add some new pillows. Adding a few pillows in vibrant colors is another very inexpensive way to give a room a totally new look.

DEAR GIA,

I have just moved into a new home which has very small rooms. Can you give me some tips on how I can decorate to make the rooms look bigger? BTT

DEAR BBT,

Decorating small rooms and coming up with ways to save space and make rooms look larger represents a special challenge. One of the most effective ways to make rooms look bigger is to remove furniture. Think minimal. Remove all clutter and reposition the furniture. Remove as many items off the floor as possible; stereo equipment, statues, urns with dried flowers, potted plants, etc. The more visible the floor is the bigger the room will look. Small bathrooms look bigger when you use pale, cool colors that reflect light; whites, pastels and neutral colors.

Many furniture showrooms have entire sections devoted to small apartment and space saving furniture. Even if you do not plan on purchasing new furniture, visiting these showrooms will give you unique home décor accent and small room decorating ideas you can implement to create the illusion of more space in your home.

Gia Miele is the owner of Urban Sampler in Pittsboro and is a professional decorator.

Water quenches summer's thirst

By Ginny Gregory

It looked like it was fall as I sipped my morning coffee on the screen porch. Yellow leaves were gliding, swirling ...floating to the garden floor. As I focused more carefully, I began to see that "the leaves" were butterflies. Beautiful Swallowtails and Monarchs were chasing each other as they swooped through the Limelight and Tardiva hydrangeas, finally landing on the bowing blossom of the Joe Pye Weed. This morning there were seven on one mauve colored blossom head.

Behind them are the hummers. They are zippers...buzzing by the screen, hovering to snag a snack from the coral honeysuckle that is starting to re-bloom just for them. They tease and taunt each other as the race through space. With a terraced garden and my house perched high on the hillside, I get to see them taking a rest as they sit perched on the tiniest branch.

Together the hummers and butterflies work the phlox, the Joe Pye weed, the butterfly bushes and the hydrangeas gathering nectar...their sweet treat. In spite of the most wicked summer heat, these winged creatures have been out in full force this season. When I walk out my back door, I am surrounded by butterflies and hummers...I am walking through them as they feast on the window box flowers on the deck rail.

My mother-in-law was visiting from New York for several weeks and is a garden and animal lover. She kept saying, "Is it always this active? Are the hummers always chirping and the butterflies thick as thieves as they float through the garden?" She sat in the living room (the heat was too much for her) with a dog in her lap sipping coffee and enjoying the garden movie playing just outside the window.

Over the years I have worried that the irrigation was an irritation for my winged buddies, but just this year, for the first time I saw a hummer playing in the stream as it sprayed water through the garden. He was perched on top of the riser quietly sipping water. The butterflies slice thru the sprays of water and later sun on the tops of flowers to dry off. This is a daily ritual for the butterflies as they really need dry wings to fly.



Swallowtail on butterfly bush. PHOTO BY CYRISE DAVIS

Without this wonderful water, I could not have the garden show that I now enjoy. Without water, I could not work in gardens to create the magical spaces that I live to create. This year we took hourly water drinks. I would yell out...water break! Since I have a 'no talking about the heat' rule, we would pause, guzzle water and breath in long deep breaths of air and then turn to continue to weed, lay stone or prune.

Gardens have a way of begging. Their outstretched crispy arms plead for moisture. Even with the horrid heat, we have had good rain this summer. I am often guilty as I think about water. I get to take a hot shower each morning. I pour clean cool water in my glass for a long drink; I water the plants when they ask for it. Because of water, I get to pick fresh blueberries and tomatoes from my garden. When Chloe and Jackson tear around the woods chasing each other and come panting up to me in search of a cool drink, I comply without hesitation.

So many on this planet have too little. Their wants are so basic. As you drink a glass of clean water, water the newly-planted flowers, or just change out the dog water...be eternally grateful. Our gifts are huge. Enjoy this precious life of yours.

Ginny Gregory is the owner and creative energy behind "Beyond The Pail...Creating Gardens and Beyond". She is starting "Beyond The Crate... Finding simplicity out of chaos", an organizing, de-cluttering, down-sizing business. For more information, please check www.beyondthepail.net

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