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Stylish Solutions

By Ann McDonald



The photo above is one example of a great seasonal update. Indoor/outdoor so it can move from family room to outdoor patio, with heavy use - it bridges the gap for people who normally purchase very traditional patterns. This contemporary pillow would work well partnered with a tartan or floral or solid. Photos Couture Chateau LLC

but instead have a larger allocation of both (time and money) for the "first quarter" to purchase the niceties you were hoping for.

First, divide the year into quarters. Just like a well-run business, a well-run home has seasons. Remember, this is not the line item for the deep clean or the changing of the dryer filter, this is for the seasonal updates you need to make so your home doesn't look dated.

I like January through April (different from financial quarters to accommodate for Easter), then May through June, July to September and October to December.

One of the keys: Push yourself outside your normal limits of style. It's OK to start small at first. Do you always purchase plaid? Try a contemporary style in a pillow or something non-committal. These small increments of money and time allow for great experimentation. If you are really unsure, experiment in guest rooms and home offices, where you can go and visit your new styles rather than live with them every day.

How to determine numbers? Use a simple per square foot model. If you allocate approximately \$1 to \$5 per square foot to update accessories throughout the year, for a 600-square-foot family room/kitchen area, you would be setting aside approximately \$3,000. That budget would be used for everything from updated pillows, throws, accessories and books for shelves, an ottoman or even an extra chair and side table.

Ah, January - the perfect time for resets, clean-outs and editing. I love the month of January from a design standpoint. Last year, we wrote about the deep clean (see the Jan. 14 Lamorinda Weekly article "Stylish Solutions: The Intrinsic Nature of Deep Cleaning and Design" in the online archives) and this year I wanted to share our inside tips for developing your own yearlong home accessory update calendar.

Every year our design clients ask questions about how to update realistically with manageable time frames and budgets.

Just like you allocate time and funds for things like hair color, oil changes or cleaning supplies, taking the initiative to budget out accessory updates goes a long way to gaining mastery over your home. It no longer feels out of control when you realize it's OK to spend "x amount of dollars" and "x amount of time shopping" on simple beauty during the year.

Some clients like the monthly approach, but I have found, for most, setting aside time to shop and money for each quarter of the year is more realistic. That way if you decide to host a spring party, you aren't robbing from March to pay April,

Many clients with larger homes used for entertaining may set aside up to \$15 per square foot for accessory updates throughout the season and more.

A great exercise if you are unsure and have never done a line item or calendar for such things is to take a few hours and review your purchases from last year, or use a nice home catalog like Pottery Barn or a visit to Home Goods to come up with a baseline you are comfortable with.

Write down the items you might like to incorporate and add up the totals. You might be surprised at how quickly those numbers add up. While I love HGTV and the other design networks, the numbers are not always so forthright. Sponsor heavy shows, no tax and deep discounts are most often the reason for the low numbers. It is best to not use those programs as guidelines for your Lamorinda accessory updates or budget numbers. Use real time retail stores for baselines. That way, if you spot a bargain, you will be confident to jump on it because you will have done your homework.

Give yourself some time to have fun with this process. We once brought a group together in a workshop to add up a typical room of accessories only, out of a nice, but medium-priced home store catalog. It was a great exercise. It also showcased visually how you can pull a picture out, circle the items you like and then recreate that same look in your own home, all while knowing precisely what it would cost to achieve that look.

Tip: No need to reinvent the wheel. These large stores with beautiful catalogs hire excellent stylists, use their visual expertise and translate what you like from them into your own home.

Remember my strong feeling about colors, and use one of the color apps on your phone. Simply take a photo and let the app show you what will work and what won't.

Let me know how it goes! Just this past week, I used part of my first quarter budget to bring two new flower pots, a new candle and a sweet gold bird accessory to my desk at home. The simple fresh change of colors and display has energized me. Next? I'm looking at a teapot and new cup to match, along with some fresh pillows on the sofa I see from my desk. Not a lot of money, but simple and refreshing, and hopeful for the New Year.

Let me know how it goes and what you find this first quarter.

For more information on Couture Chateau LLC and how we can help you with your home redecorating, visit www.couturechateau.com.



A Moraga client had a plate as a family heirloom, and found these bunny plates that matched the color palate in a nice home-store catalog to possibly use seasonally, after the design of their kitchen is completed. For seasonal, inexpensive updates, this is an ideal influx of non-committal pretty.



We pulled the color wheel out using a simple app to match the colors in this heirloom plate. I like it because you can easily see how the colors work, even though at first glance the patterns might not seem like a good fit for a space.



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