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Stylish Solutions

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Simple clean lines for an outdoor kitchen make room for life and people. Many Lamorinda homes were built in the 50s and have brick outdoors. This showcases an easy way to work around that for an updated look.

steward in your home will pay off in more ways than you can count.

One of my most requested presentations is what I call "Present Future Design." This has to do with truthful evaluations of what space is currently emphasizing in ones' life and how to systematically go about changing those spaces without trashing the entire set-up.

Seasoned, and sometimes hardened, architects, designers and decorators are reminded of their heart that brought them into an industry where creating spaces and places blesses and encourages new growth, both in the built environment and for people who will inhabit those built environments.

So for the Lamorinda reader, here is my reminder: Your home is meant to catapult you into the next season, not hold you captive to a yesterday, laden with faded memories. Make room for the next. The next season with your spouse or significant other, the next season with your children and/or friends and/or pets, and most importantly, the next season of you.

How do we do that? Here are my foundational tips:

1) Take an unplanned photo of each and every space, room, and if possible, the outside of your home. Nothing speaks truth like a good, unplanned picture. I recommend you don't tidy up. Why? Because it gives us a strong understanding of how we really live. Today.

2) Evaluate those photos in a neutral location. Don't sit and look at the spaces and places you live in from your messy dining room. Go to a peaceful place for you, which could be an outdoor hike, a coffee shop, library or the neighborhood pool. Just get out. Bring a notebook and tag photos with what an ideal life would look like in those rooms one, three and even five years out.

Plan for your present to future life in those spaces.

Do you yearn to pick up painting again? Create space for that today. Do you yearn to have more peace in your life? Eliminate the television and donate all those old video games. Do you yearn for less time cleaning up? Eliminate all the clutter.

3) No playing catch-up. Forward march only! Many times, families especially, are designing for

What an incredible time of year. We are so blessed to live in Northern California. I absolutely love the seasons, and am particularly enjoying the summer blooms following our recent rains.

This month, Stylish Suburbanite, I wanted to share helpful tips from "Behind the Drapery" as many in Lamorinda undertake remodels, refreshes and other updates to properties and homes this time of year. Even as the world swirls around us, there is something sacred about home. It does not matter if our abodes are big or small, the spaces and places we call home set the stage for so much of our lives.

As we look toward the summer months and consider what to undertake, may these tips help us create beauty and invite peace into our living spaces.

First, an encouragement for any who are feeling overwhelmed at the prospect. As a veteran of the Design Industry, I am often asked to speak encouragement to my peers. I don't know if it's just because I'm old or what, but as I say to them, "Stay the course!" The beauty you create and

the past season of their lives trying to catch up. It's often unconscious. We find the resources grow as the kids leave home, and that pool that never materialized looks mighty inviting. However, by honestly evaluating where we'd like to be five years out, we are able to make educated wise decisions about design and remodels.

One trend we are seeing strong is the aging in place concept. As such, many clients are preparing for in-law suites or revamping so there is a first floor master bedroom. Take time to take stock. Don't rush - plan well. It will save time once the project starts, I promise. Your soul will thank you for planning.

4) And finally, only undertake by yourself, what you can finish by yourself. We joke in the studio that DIY is actually an evil spirit. Here's wisdom: there are some projects you can do alone. You can plant the front porch pots alone, but probably not re-build the steps. As the summer hits its stride, remember that help is often booked out, so plan for your sanity now. It's okay to ask for help. Not one of my friends with television shows on DIY does it themselves. If you knew the teams, sponsors and crews making it all possible, you'd never feel guilty about hiring again.

What's the old saying? Many hands make for light work. It is especially true in design-related projects.

For today, may your home be blessed and may your spaces be places of refuge and restoration, beauty and good cheer.



In this small space we see practical application of four chairs and a coffee table with a fireplace. Note the teak is not in perfect condition, and accent pillows provide color. Stick with neutrals for the main cushions so you can switch the look each year. The addition of an outdoor rug would be nice as well.



Here we see clean lines for an outdoor kitchen. The view is the star, something many Lamorinda homes can take advantage of. If your outdoor kitchen is far away from the main house, perhaps up a hill, make sure to allocate enough storage so you aren't constantly going back and forth. A disposal is also a good idea.



Here we see armless chairs in a very neutral setting. Low profile is timeless, especially in outdoor furniture. These are investment quality pieces. I like how they work with the old pavers, something many Lamorinda homes have. Don't rush to rip them out. If uneven, lay an outdoor rug atop instead.

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