

THE JUNIOR LEAGUE OF NEW ORLEANS KITCHEN TOUR P. 47



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& LIFESTYLES

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SPRING CLEANING TIPS
from 6 Home Décor Experts

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clean sweep

Spring is the perfect time to de-clutter and freshen up your home.

By Lee Cutrone

CALL IT A SEASONAL effect. In January, we make resolutions. In spring, we clean. But spring cleaning isn't just about brooms and dustpans. It's an opportunity to improve the aesthetics of our homes as well. And with a little guidance, we can streamline the process and do it with ease.

DE-CLUTTER

The experts agree. Spring cleaning should start with clearing your home of clutter. "Spring cleaning is the perfect time to finally let go of things in your house that really don't bring anything other than dust to your space," says Shaun Smith, owner of the eponymous Shaun Smith Home. "I always say if you feel like you might have a place for it later, it really means you will never have a place for it. Purge." Villa

Vici owner Vikki Leftwich offers similar advice. "To me, spring cleaning means minimalizing; start taking things away," says Leftwich, whose rule of thumb for saying goodbye to something is when it's been in a drawer or closet unused for a year. A firm believer in serene, less-is-more interior design, she counsels clients to pare down the things they display in their homes.

Rather than having personal photographs all over the home, for example, Leftwich prefers a small collection of favorite photographs in a personal area such as a bedroom or bathroom. (For a large gallery of photos, she suggests framing them alike and grouping them in a private area such as a hall leading to a bedroom.) There are many ways of passing on the gently used, collectible and/or valuable things you

eliminate from your home: Donate them, gift them, have a garage sale or take them to a consignment shop. And once you've removed the unwanted things that literally cloud your vision, cleaning – the next step – will be easier.

CLEAN AND ORGANIZE

Smith's formula for cleaning and organizing begins in the kitchen and moves from there to the closets.

But wherever you start, spring cleaning will be more manageable if it's done a room at a time. Villa Vici's Leftwich likes to remove all of the smaller pieces from a space (items on bookshelves and tables, throws and pillows) and leave the larger anchor pieces such as sofas and tables in order to assess how the space is working. "Start analyzing your furniture," says Leftwich. "Before you slipcover a

Vikki Leftwich at Villa Vici shows us how to layer and marry pieces for a great look.



sofa, ask yourself how old it is and if you like the style of it. Slipcovering could be half the cost of a new sofa when what you really want is a new sofa." Once the basics are considered, you can selectively bring decorative pieces back in and determine what's no longer in sync or what might be added. "One mistake people make is they shop first," says Erin Jacobs, owner of Abode in Metairie, who also goes through the exercise of removing and replacing. "I prefer to take everything out and just leave the big pieces and kind of go shopping in your house. Once I put things [the client already owns] back, then I go shopping for new things."

Containing your belongings also will go a long way toward giving your home a renewed sense of organization and

beauty. Two ideas for the organizationally-challenged: Shauna Leftwich of Ashley Hall Interiors favors keeping shoes in plastic bins labeled with photographs; while Jacobs likes the diversity of basket options currently available. "Baskets are great for children; they make things accessible and easy to clean up," says Jacobs. "And there are some pretty ones out there that can become part of the décor."

CREATE STORAGE

Other, more permanent storage options may cost more, but designers say they are worth the investment. Depending on the client's space and budget, Leftwich says custom built-in cabinetry that's simple and modern can be a transformative solution. "All your stuff is behind closed

doors," she says. "There is less cluttering your mind and visual senses." Rivers Spencer of Rivers Spencer Interiors also uses furnishings, such as buffets and storage ottomans, as a means of keeping clutter at bay. A hot trend in the furniture market, many of today's sleek, dual-function ottomans work in a variety of rooms including living spaces and bedrooms. Custom, one-of-a-kind furnishings are another great way to hide away the necessities of life. "The beauty of what I do is that if people have a special size requirement or function requirement, I can make it," says Blueswood owner Casey Lipe, who designs and builds pieces using cypress from the Mississippi Delta. "The only limitation is our own imaginations." Lipe's stock

and custom items include cabinets, armoires, and platform beds with drawers for stowing things like sheets and duvets.

SMALL CHANGES/ BIG DIFFERENCES

Choosing neutral underpinnings such as wall colors and sofas, according to our experts, will extend the life of your décor and make it easier to refresh your environment without breaking the bank. "I always recommend neutrals for big investment items like custom drapes," says Spencer. "Neutrals transcend seasons. It's about getting it right the first time." Among the small ways that our experts say you can create a change: Replace light fixtures or the shades on lamps, add color with pillows, throws or accent pieces, change pillows or throws for a more seasonal look, buy new books for your coffee table, repurpose a piece of furniture (whose lines and scale you like) with paint or new hardware, bring in fresh blooms and add a piece of art. They offer the following creative ideas as well:

Vikki Leftwich: "Mix a traditional Tara Shaw antique chandelier with a great contemporary bubble glass chandelier. If people are willing to step outside the box a little, it makes a statement."

Erin Jacobs: "I love Dash



Rivers Spencer's great way to use a buffet for storage



Beautiful Dash and Albert indoor/outdoor rugs from Abode

and Albert's indoor/outdoor rugs. They are made of polypropylene that cleans nicely and are very economical. It's a nice way to bring in some color on a budget."

Shaun Smith: "A very dramatic change in a house is yanking that ceiling fan down from your living room/bedroom and putting up a beautiful lantern. You can always tuck a fan away in a closet when you need it."

Rivers Spencer: "I like to pick something a client likes and build on it. For instance, minerals and geodes are trending right now. If you

like that sort of thing, add it to a mantle or as an accessory on top of books or start a little collection."

Shauna Leftwich: "Drapery styles today are more minimal. If you have drapery that's traditional with swags or jabots, eliminate the heavy top treatment and just use the side panels to soften the window with a beautiful rod."

Casey Lipe: "I like the idea of replacing something new with something old. Natural, rustic woods give an air of nature that refreshes year-round."

KEEP IT COHESIVE

All of our experts advocate a mix of styles and periods for a look that's relevant to what's going on in the world of interior design. But all say that a discerning eye, attention to detail and a consistent hand are also a must. "A mid-century modern piece works well with other simple or transitional pieces, but I wouldn't put it next to a French armoire," cautions Villa Vici's Leftwich. "It has to do with layering and marrying pieces," says Jacobs, who likes to juxtapose contemporary pieces with antiques. There should be a cohesive blend." Jacobs says creating a cohesive design scheme throughout your house even extends to the outdoors. "In spring we start thinking about bringing the outdoors in and vice versa," she says. "It's a good time to consider

things like outdoor furniture and cushions."

CONSULT A PROFESSIONAL

If you're not sure what to do away with, how to organize and arrange things, or how to tweak your décor with the subtle or the unexpected, hiring the services of a professional can help. "Get professional advice so you don't have to continuously change things," counsels Villa Vici's Leftwich. "Planning is key." Even designers themselves sometimes turn to other designers for ideas. After decades in the business, Ashley Hall's Leftwich once made an appointment with the store's late founder, Joe Morrow, to review the selections she'd made for her own home. "A designer can give you a fresh pair of eyes," she says. ■



Shauna Leftwich at Ashley Hall Interiors gives us a great idea to place shoes in plastic bins labeled with photographs