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Making room to live

Autumn is here - and your living room should be easy, writes Interiors Editor Carol Burns

DECLUTTER

REFRESH your living space with a spot of removal. Living rooms can magically fill themselves with plants, candles, lamps, knick-knacks and cushions, books, your prized collection of *Devon Life* back issues and more. Take out everything and look afresh at your furniture. Is it time for recovering the sofa, replacing the side tables, or giving the room a lick of paint? Only put back what you want in the room and store the rest.

WINDOW DRESSINGS

The short days mean our window dressings are on display for much of the time. Are they looking good? Has the sun faded your voluptuous velvet? At the very least take any window dressings down for a good clean.

I'm vaguely obsessed with shutter blinds – which offer a touch of class and good insulation – and are now widely available. Bespoke companies will come in and measure them for you to fit – but expect to pay four figures. If your budget is a little smaller, head to online shops like blinds2go.com and you can measure them yourself and cut a zero off the price. Still not sure? Start off with a small window first.

COLOUR IT BEAUTIFUL

Autumn tends to bring with it deeper, richer colours. Give reds a rest this year and try out smoky blues and greys – don't be afraid to go darker than usual, but consider how your chosen colour will work in the size of your room. Choose a good quality paint and have some fun with colour – remember it's as easy to replace as your cushions.

Wallpapers have reached the next level – with flock wallpaper among the trendiest on offer. Thankfully wall murals have replaced the feature wall concept. These work best behind sofas – or even sitting behind alcove shelves. Or choose a busy floral pattern you would never use across the whole room. Be bold – or you might as well go with some innocuous looking stuff that can go across the whole room.

Wallcoverings with the wow factor: Boråstapeter Scandinavian Designers features geometric functional designs from Arne Jacobsen, decorative fairytale designs of Stig Lindberg and sketched foliage by Viola Gråsten. cloudberryliving.co.uk

Luxury Tibetan sheepskin rug in Rosa pink from miafleur.com

Shutter blinds add a touch of coastal class to your room and can be paired with curtains for extra cosiness. blinds2go.com

Industrial lighting adds a sculptural dimension and are sexier than traditional downlighters. Laboratory Style lamp £170 each from outthereinteriors.com

Colours to dye for: Crack in the Pavement Dead Flat Matt Emulsion (also available in satinwood/ eggshell) from dowsingandreynolds.com

SOFTEN IT UP

No room works better with textiles than your living space, and the good news is there's nothing easier to play with. Contrast colours with your wall coverings – try smoky blue with light grey and add a splash of violet or pink. And don't try too hard to match with your existing furniture. A fine linen/wool throw on the back of the sofa is a pretty and practical addition. Sheepskins work best flung casually across easy chairs – try them against harder, colder materials such as leather and wood for the best effect. If white is too subtle, there are some great dyed versions out there.

LIGHT IT UP

Nothing affects our mood like light. Fortunately in the South West we are treated to some of the best natural light Britain has to offer – although in the depths of winter this can be cold comfort when reaching for the light switch at three in the afternoon. The only answer is to make lighting up your room a pleasure. Forget overhead lighting - and those central pendants circa 1985. Make a feature out of a dark corner with a classic standard lamp sitting on a side table highlighting a plant or pile of books – or go with something more industrial. I'm loving cage inspection lights with long wires which can be hung from your ceiling - a change from the more classic arch lamps used for curling up on your sofa to read. If you are updating your lighting system, go smart and make sure you get the best from the latest technology – from simple single controls from your phone to controls that automatically react to provide a consistent level of light. Head to Exeter's Intelligent Abodes (intelligentabodes.co.uk) for a masterclass in modern lighting. ◆

Be bold with your walls with wall murals behind your sofa. This colourful geometric wallpaper mural is a 'peel and stick' from wallsauce.com

Feature walls are out, 3D wall art is in. Each piece is 50cm x 50 cm from vivalagoon.com

The versatile Shane Schneck lamp from black-by-design.co.uk

Farrow & Ball offer a colour masterclass for autumn. See their palette at farrow-ball.com