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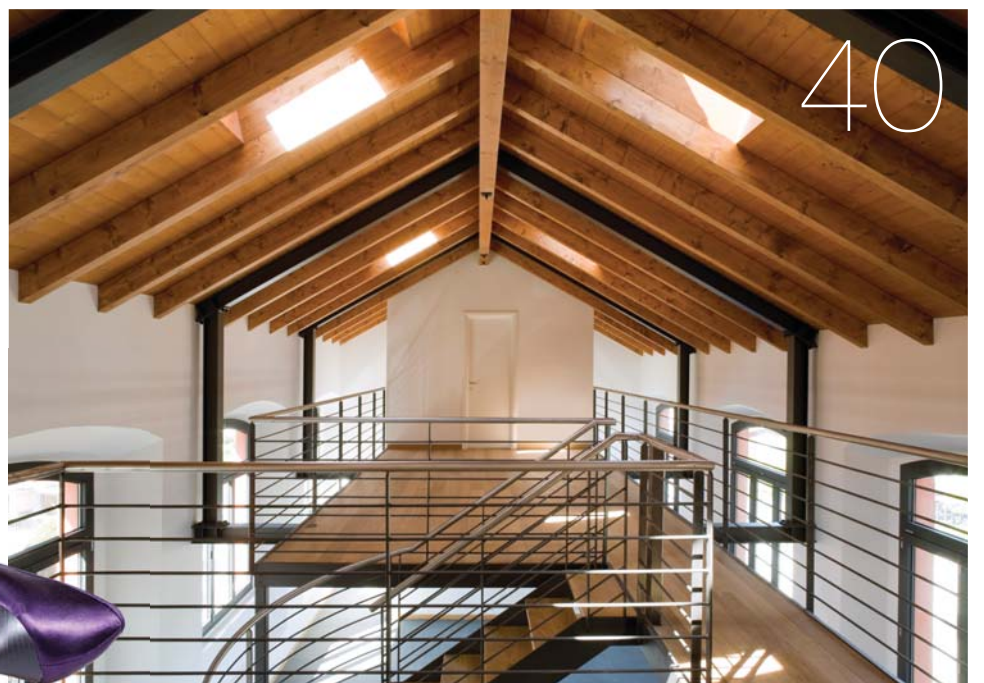
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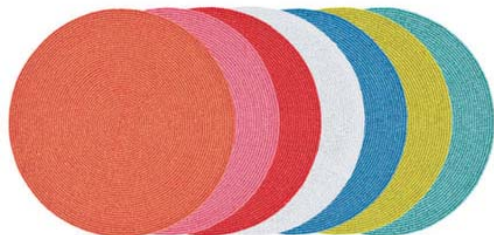
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10 DIY FLOOR TILING TIPS

By Tyson Henry

Tiles are sold in packs and the size and number of tiles they contain will determine the area of floor that they will cover.

There are many types of floor tiles, ranging from ceramic, clay and natural stone. Here in Barbados, most home builders install tiles over a mortar base, but it is not uncommon to layer new tiles on top of existing ones.

Below are ten tips to help you deliver a job good enough to be envied by the pros.

1. Tiles are sold in packs and the size and number of tiles they contain will determine the area of floor that they will cover. Round up the total to the nearest whole number to establish the number of packs of tiles you'll need. Always buy ten per cent more tiles than you need, to allow for breakages.
2. Seal before tiling. Always waterproof showers and water prone areas before tiling them. Even with the greatest diligence when installing and grouting, tiles are still not waterproof or moisture-proof. They are designed to make cleaning easier and protect the surface below them. There is a good range of waterproofing materials available that are easy to apply on the surface before you begin tiling.
3. Find a starting point. Find the midpoints of the two longest walls and draw a chalk line across the floor between these points. Repeat for the shorter walls but adjust the line so that it passes through the centre of the first line at right angles.
4. Lay tiles along the two lines to experiment with the layout and check if they look right from the doorway. If any gaps at the walls are less than half a tile wide, shift the line across to make more of a gap. Also, move the guide lines so that tiles around a dominant feature such as a bay window or a protruding wall are symmetrical and there are whole tiles at the doorway. Try to work with as many whole tiles as possible, even if it means adjusting the grout line width slightly.
5. Spread about one square metre of tile cement into one of the right angles made by the two crossing chalk lines. Scrape the notched edge of the trowel across the mix to form ridges of the same thickness.
6. Lay the first few tiles along the edge of the longest centre line. Gently press the tiles into place, making sure they also line up with the other centre line. Add plastic spacers at each corner to keep them exactly the same distance apart for grouting.
7. Work outwards from the middle of the room until you have laid all the whole tiles on one half of the floor. Use a spirit



Don't rush to grout. Even though all the tiles are down on the floor and set, don't start putting the grout down. Allow at least 24 hours for the tile cement to dry, otherwise you will damage the tiling job.

level to ensure the tiles are at the same level. Now move across to the other side of the longest centre line and add the rest of the whole tiles. Leave to set for 24 hours.

8. Use the tile cutter to trim the edge tiles to the right shape. Measure the space at both ends in case the walls are uneven and remember to allow for the grouting gap. Always wear goggles and gloves when cutting tiles.
9. Don't rush to grout. Even though all the tiles are down on the floor and set, don't start putting the grout down. Allow at least 24 hours for the tile cement to dry, otherwise you will damage the tiling job. Never trowel grout in a straight line. There are two types of grout: wall and floor grout. The main difference is that floor grout has sand in it and wall grout doesn't. Make sure the grout is the right consistency and trowel it diagonally to ensure an even application.

Bonus: When the trowel gets jammed, "butter" the tiles. When working in tight corners or edges, the trowel won't be able to fit inside that space. The easiest way to work around this problem is to put the tile cement on the back of the tiles.

You will need:

- Floor tiles
- Tile Cement
- Grout
- Diamond disc tile cutter
- Safety kit (goggles and heavy duty gloves)
- Spirit level
- Profile shaper
- Tile saw
- Pencil
- Tape measure
- Serrated trowel
- Spacers
- Chalk line
- Lint-free cloth
- Floor sealer
- Bucket
- Sponge



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Life & Design:

CREATIVE ACCENTING

By Sheree-Ann McDonald

An accent is a distinct emphasis that brings prominence or highlights a particular feature in a room. In other words, it makes the room pop, separating dreary from interesting and exciting. The fun part is that the accents do not necessarily need to serve any particular purpose; they can be simply something you were absolutely thrilled to see in a store that made you stop and say wow! One note of caution though, just make sure the object fits with the general size and proportions of the room as well as the other objects in it. A life-sized statue is wonderful but not in a 10x10 room with other furniture.

USING COLOUR

One of the most exciting features I have seen recently is the new-look front door, fancily painted with a bright and exciting colour and finished with upscale finishings. This is definitely one way to make a statement.

Using a colour which contrasts or complements your wall colour will definitely cause items to come to the fore. For example, using throw pillows and vases of distinct colours which contrast with the general wall colour can be refreshing.

USING METALLIC OBJECTS

The use of metals for mirror frames, accessories such as vases, wall art and even entire surfaces not only adds a shine to a space but certainly can provide a nice textured surface as well. Gold and brass are shining once again and are now quite trendy.







The use of different light sources has become almost standard in any newly constructed house, especially in the kitchen.

USING DRAMATIC LIGHTING AND LIGHT SOURCES

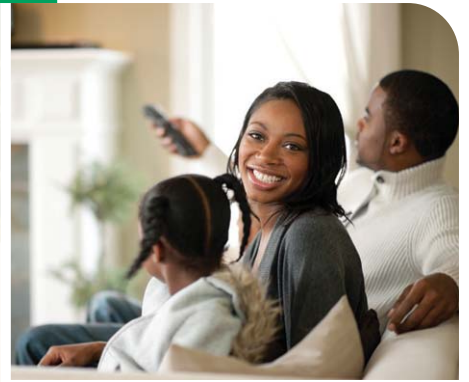
The use of different light sources has become almost standard in any newly constructed house, especially in the kitchen. There is plenty of room for you to add spotlights, track lights and picture lights to a space in order to improve the general ambience; this also gives you the opportunity to move from a more public setting to an intimate one using the same space. The lighting fixture itself is now also an accent. There is no end to the chandeliers, lamp shapes and bulb shapes that you may find at the hardware or lighting store.

L'OBJET WITH A DIFFERENCE

Simply put, the very object itself can be your accent. Here are some examples:

- The old rocker belonging to your grandmother which has no match but definitely adds a certain quality to the room.
- The sweet paintings your children created nicely framed.
- The two-dollar find at last week's yard sale.
- The unusual rocks discovered at the beach.

As usual, at the end of the day, your design must represent you and who you are – accents included.



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10 TIPS FOR CLEANING WITHOUT CHEMICALS

By Tyson Henry

The clean scent that you always strove to achieve when cleaning is actually not as good for you as you thought. The truth is that cleaning your home can negatively affect your health if you aren't wary of the ingredients in the cleaning agents you use. Cancer-causing chemicals in the air, an asthma attack from fumes or serious skin burns from an accidental spill are a few of the many mishaps that can occur when we set out to clean our homes.

While baking soda has long been an ingredient in food recipes, it has also been regaining popularity as a cleaning alternative, as more people look for non-toxic and biodegradable cleaning solutions for the home. Baking soda is a key ingredient in many do-it-yourself beauty and cleaning products, thanks to its gentle abrasiveness, odour fighting properties and ability to absorb oils.

What could be safer than a cleaning potion that's also edible? Below, you'll find ten Smart Homes tips for using baking soda to clean everything from a clogged drain to your linens.

A photograph of a wooden surface with various items: a glass of water, a yellow sponge, a bowl of white powder, and a sliced orange. The text is overlaid on the upper right portion of the image.

While baking soda has long been an ingredient in food recipes, it has also been regaining popularity as a cleaning alternative, as more people look for non-toxic and biodegradable cleaning solutions for the home.



1. UNCLOG DRAINS

Drano is really toxic stuff, but you don't have to take our word for it – just read the warning label on the back of the bottle. The next time you have a clogged drain, pour a cup of baking soda, followed by a cup of white vinegar down your drain. Then plug the drain with the stopper or a rag and let it work for at least 15 minutes. If the issue isn't fixed, you can always rinse and repeat with no fear of harsh chemicals backing up in your sink or tub.

2. CLEAN POTS WITHOUT SCRUBBING

Fill your pot with a few inches of water and add two tablespoons of baking soda. Let it soak for 15 minutes and then scrape whatever crusty stuff is left with a wooden spoon.

3. KILL BAD ODOURS

Many bad or musty odours are the result of slightly acidic molecules, which is why baking soda's pH-balancing properties help to get rid of stench. Keeping an open container of baking soda in your fridge, cabinets or closet will reduce unpleasant smells.

Tip: It's good to replace the soda about once every six months.

4. FRESHEN YOUR MATTRESS

You can put baking soda's odour fighting properties to work on your bed. Just sprinkle the powder on your mattress and make the bed. When next you change the sheets, vacuum the baking soda.

5. CARPETS/RUGS

If your carpet is just a little musty, you can sprinkle baking soda and then vacuum (similar to the mattress trick). However, you can also scrub out carpet stains using baking soda and water. After the powder dries, you can still just vacuum it.

6. CLEAN THE OVEN AND THE FRIDGE

Mix up a paste of water and baking soda and spread it over the interior of the fridge or oven. Let it sit overnight or for about 12 hours. Then using a spatula, gently scrape all the dried paste and wipe any remaining residue with a rag.

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FOR WHAT MATTERS.



7. COUNTERS, TILES AND LINOLEUM FLOORS

A similar water and baking soda paste also makes a great scrub for all kinds of surfaces around the house. Use it to clean tiles, marble, countertops and linoleum floors.

8. GROUT

Use an old toothbrush and baking soda to get residue and grime off of grout. Get more green tips on cleaning grout at www.mnn.com.

9. TOILETS

Just sprinkle, scrub and flush. Baking soda's abrasive qualities are great for cleaning porcelain.

10. WHITEN YOUR LINENS

Mix equal parts of baking soda and lemon juice to make your white towels, sheets and clothing whiter. This mixture works as a mild bleaching agent. Baking soda helps to balance the pH of water and can be used to effectively clean, freshen, brighten and soften laundry. After adding laundry to the washing machine, add liquid or powder laundry detergent as usual and then pour one cup of baking soda directly over the clothes.

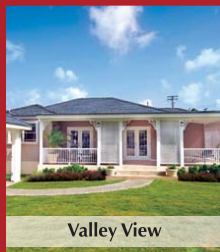
Adding baking soda to the washing machine also helps to neutralise the smell of musty towels and bathing suits that have been sitting in the hamper or that smell like chlorine.

To remove the musty odour from laundry that was left wet in the washing machine for too long, rerun the washing cycle with a cup of baking soda to refresh them.

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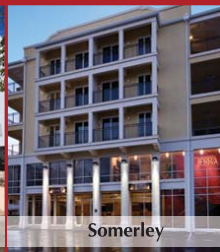
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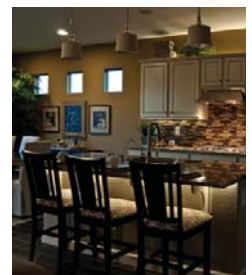
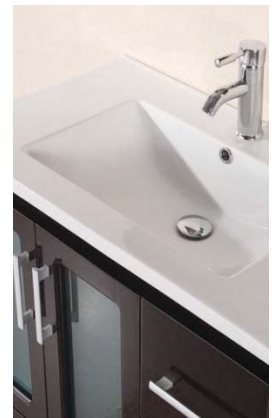
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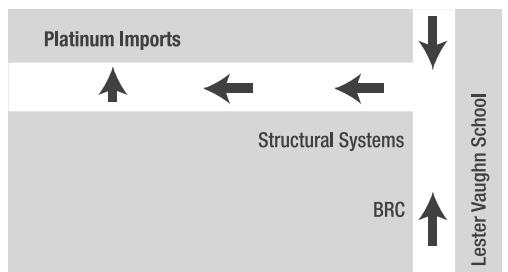
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SMART WAYS TO RECYCLE

TIPS FOR REDUCING AND REUSING AT HOME

By Coretta Joe

In addition to saving energy, reducing waste products in landfills, helping to mitigate global warming and reducing pollution, recycling actually helps homeowners save money.

Making simple changes at home in terms of recycling has many great advantages. In addition to saving energy, reducing waste products in landfills, helping to mitigate global warming and reducing pollution, recycling actually helps homeowners save money. One viable option is selling recyclable materials to organisations willing to buy. However, at home, there are genius ways to reduce and reuse in order to do your part in making your home a little more eco-friendly.

MICROFIBRE CLOTHS

These handy towels can take the place of 60 paper towel rolls before they need replacing. Microfibre cloths are gentle enough to use on nearly all surfaces and are even great for cleaning spectacles and mirrors. Use them to quickly absorb spills, wipe down counters and many other household needs. This will save you quite a few dollars when you consider how much you spend on quality paper towel rolls.





BUY IN BULK

Some food items such as margarine and yogurt are packaged in containers that are hard to recycle. To beat this, purchase these items in the largest container available and put them into smaller reusable containers as needed. Use these containers for freezing leftovers, stashing odds and ends and as plant pots for herbs.

CLEANING PRODUCTS

Purchase cleaning products in large containers and decant into smaller spray bottles. Be on the lookout for concentrated cleaner refills, this way you can reuse the old spray bottle and just add water. Also, get ultra-strength detergents which save packaging so that you get more laundry loads out of the container.

PORTABLE POWER

Many recycling programmes do not accept single-use batteries. However, rechargeable batteries can and should be recycled. When you buy rechargeable batteries, you are actually buying less since you can charge up quite a few times before they need replacing.

SAVE GLASS JARS

Who needs mason jars when you can recycle the jars from your pasta sauce, jams and seasonings for that same purpose? These jars can be used for your green juices, smoothies and other home-made concoctions.

REUSE SCRAP PAPER

For your home office, print on both sides of the sheets or let your children draw and colour on the back of the used sheets.

SWITCH TO PLASTIC

Milk and juice cartons are not recyclable. If you don't mind switching brands, opt for the ones that come in plastic so that you can reuse them for storage.

CABINET DOORS

WHAT'S YOUR STYLE?

By Tyson Henry

With a plethora of sales at local hardware and home appliance stores ongoing, now is the time for inspired thinking. To assist, we've compiled a diverse array of design styles to spark your imagination and inspire your creative passion as you seek to build, renovate or refurbish your

kitchen space.

Picture yourself in a rustic, wood grain-filled cooking area, or surrounded by the clean lines and symmetry of a contemporary kitchen that you, your family and guests will adore. Use our tips as a guide and find the style that best suits you. Your canvas awaits.

Shaker doors, despite their age, are the quintessential examples of fusing the geometric elements of modernity, with the bold, gilded frames associated with traditional design. This door is the most common door style in kitchens today because it lends itself to any décor. This five-piece flat-panel style has a frame made from four pieces and a single flat centre panel for the fifth piece.

Flat doors are simple but stylish, and void of any expensive details. Their hard lines and simple form make them a great fit for contemporary interiors, as they are smooth with no panels, contours or accents.

This style delicately threads the line between minimal utilitarianism and modern elegance, to create a functional space with clean lines.

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Tip: Laminate tends to be more budget friendly and offers a greater variety of colours and sheens.

Louvered doors are characterised in by horizontal wood slats similar to those typically used in olden Caribbean days on windows and shutters, but they add a distinct architectural style to kitchen cabinetry. Due to the need for craftsmanship, be very wary that this style of door will come with a high price tag!

Tip: Many louvered doors have spaces between each slat, making them great for cabinets that require ventilation. The downside to this is that they can be tedious to clean thoroughly.

Woven rattan inserts for cabinet doors add texture and interest. In our tropical climate, doors with woven rattan, or wicker as it is also known, promote air flow and can be used as an accent. The art of weaving is quickly becoming obscure, but if you can source a tradesman, your kitchen will be adorned with a colonial-inspired style that is sure to add texture and character.

Inset styled doors tend to be expensive to construct, because of the high levels of craftsmanship and time required to construct them. The saving grace is that when built correctly, the style will lend your kitchen a classic look that'll last for generations.

The inset door gets its name because it is set inside of the cabinet frame, whereas conversely, more commonly built cabinet doors rest on the outside of the frame. The door is designed and constructed with extremely precise measurements so that it nests inside the frame and

opens and closes properly, even when the wood expands and contracts. Beadboard doors hearken to the colonial-styled homes that epitomized grandeur. Beadboard was used in the distant past as a decorative wall treatment, but has since been adapted for use in cabinetry as the centre panel for doors.

Tip: While all-white beadboard cabinetry can give your kitchen a bright and clean feel, all the seams and crevices on this door style can collect dust over time, so be wary of this when selecting paint colour and type. Choose a paint that will withstand being wiped with a damp cloth over time.

French styled kitchen cabinet doors, with their classic tones and checkerboard designs, will envelop your family and guests in warmth that is reminiscent of simpler times. French Doors complement any kitchen, and are primarily used for upper display cabinets and/or pantries.

Though traditional, this style exudes a modern elegance when paired with natural stone countertops (see page __) and simple, contemporary backsplashes..

Bonus: Pickled/Distressed refers more to a finish than a door style, but it is worth mentioning. These finishes are for the homeowner that dreams of having an antique-styled kitchen with traditional details and craftsmanship. Adorning your cabinets with a worn look calls for more work than most people imagine.



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SPRUCING UP YOUR KITCHEN ON A BUDGET

By Tyson Henry

The kitchen is the one room in the home where families spend the most time together.



In Barbados, kitchens are more than just where we prepare meals. The kitchen is the one room in the home where families spend the most time together. If you're looking for a way to spruce up the space and an overhaul isn't in the budget, try one of these easy kitchen cabinet upgrades.

A makeover doesn't necessarily mean replacing your outdated cabinets with all new ones. As long as the frames and doors are structurally sound, you can clean them up and brush on a different colour of paint. Within a weekend, your kitchen will be transformed from dreary to sunny. For this job you will need sandpaper, a paintbrush, and some good old elbow grease. What you don't need is a whole lot of money, as the transformation will cost you a fraction of even the cheapest new cabinets.

Editor's tip: Try painting your top tier cabinets with a colour that is complementary to the colour you use on the base cabinets, or use a contrasting accent colour on the inside of the cabinets.

Instead of spending thousands on new cabinets, save yourself

the expense and reface the ones you have for a fraction of the cost. It is amazing what a little veneer and some new doors can do to brighten an ageing space. Both are readily available here in Barbados and some hardware stores sell peel-and-stick veneer to make the task simpler. Just be sure to measure twice and cut once. Work carefully, and your kitchen will look brand-new in no time.

Make the most of your kitchen's existing storage space by installing a pull-out shelf in one – or all – of the base cabinets. The shelf resembles a shallow drawer that glides out for easy access to items stored in the back of the cabinet.

If you already own colourful dishes and plates, this is probably the cheapest suggestion. Add a plate rack that will allow you to show off your collection while adding a splash of vibrancy to the room.

Nothing screams quality and attention to detail, like crown moulding. Adding this trim to the top of your cabinet frames will transform your kitchen into a seamless design.

SPOTLIGHT ON COUNTERTOPS

By Cara Briggs

Let's talk about one of the most popular rooms when renovations are considered; the kitchen. Whether your project entails updating an existing kitchen or a complete overhaul to create the contemporary culinary capital of your dreams, one of the main focuses during the remodeling process will be the countertop.

The countertop is one of the most important elements in a kitchen's layout. A great countertop should possess at least four traits: functionality, durability, value for money and possibly most importantly, an undeniable contribution to the aesthetics of your new and improved kitchen.

With the increased attention to these characteristics over the years, it's no surprise that granite is currently the most in demand material for countertops, beating out other available choices such as: ceramic tiles, laminate, wood, concrete and acrylic, epoxy or polyester resins.

Granite is made of interlocking crystals of quartz and potassium and/or plagioclase feldspar, which rank in the top tier of the hardest naturally occurring minerals.





Granite is able to withstand high-traffic, scribbles by young children, clumsy partners and houseguests, heat from cooking apparatus and even bacteria, with minimal maintenance while maintaining its luster and integrity.

The varying amounts of quartz and feldspar, as well as smaller mineral deposits of amphibole, mica and other trace minerals are responsible for granite's naturally attractive colouration. The random arrangement the minerals also means that no two counter tops will be alike, which adds unmatched character, value and uniqueness to your kitchen.

Granite is able to withstand high-traffic, scribbles by young children, clumsy partners and houseguests, heat from cooking apparatus and even bacteria, with minimal maintenance while maintaining its luster and integrity. Its mineral structure, coupled with the use of sealant, makes it a tough task for the usual sources of stains such as red wine, acidic liquids, oil, coffee, tea, rust, mildew, ink, scratches and even scorch marks to set in and become a permanent fixture of the countertop, and allows most of these faux-pas to be easily cleaned with a simple solution of soap and water.

When it comes to food safety and general hygiene, granite is again a safe bet based on its low porosity when sealed. In comparison, materials such as concrete, wood and ceramic tiles because of the grout used to secure are extremely permeable to liquids and general moisture.

Concrete is especially vulnerable to acidic liquids especially vinegar and lime juice which can cause etches in the surface; be careful while seasoning that meat for Sunday lunch! It is also an extremely heavy material to work with, which usually results in higher costs for labour during installation.

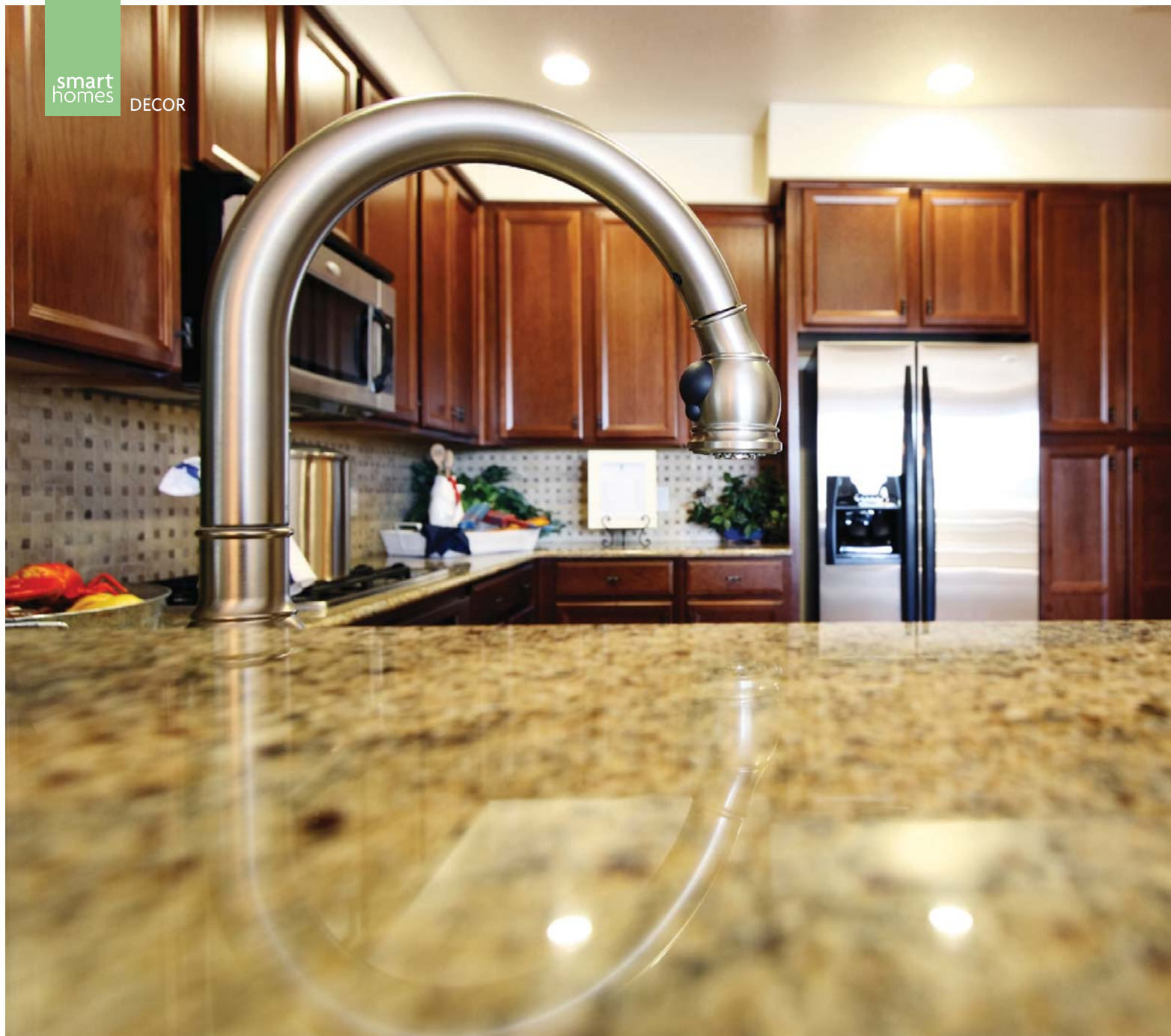
Wood requires constant vigilance; regular resealing and varnishing with a non-toxic material to maintain its impermeability and to avoid warping and swelling of the material.

The absorption of moisture and liquids over time by these materials can lead to imbedded stains, which are difficult to reverse and may require the replacement of the grout or in extreme cases, the entire stained counter surface. The continuous presence of moisture and liquids encourages the growth of bacterial colonies and creates a potential health hazard for you, your family and anyone who is present in or consumes anything prepared in your kitchen.

Synthetic materials such as polyester and acrylic resin, as well as laminate, are non-porous, so they score high marks in the food safety and stain-resistance category, however they can be very easily damaged by heat from cooking apparatus and utensils. They are also more vulnerable to scratches, scuffs and discoloration from general wear and tear, and as a result require a lot more maintenance than countertop materials with comparable positive attributes.

Epoxy resin is notably more resilient than its polyester counterpart, and a lot more customizable than most of the aforementioned countertop materials. However, acquiring high quality resin based countertop material is usually pricier than purchasing natural stone materials like granite.

Finally, the value of investing in a new countertop is



a pressing issue in the mind of most homeowners considering a remodeling project. Is this countertop worth the money spent on it? How long will it last? If I want to sell my home will the asking price be bolstered by the type of countertop in my kitchen?

Returns on kitchen remodeling and upgrades when looking to sell a house can be as much as eighty-six cents of every dollar spent, if high quality and in demand materials such as granite are used in the construction of the countertop and maintenance is a regular occurrence.

To put this into perspective, consider the remodeling of a simple, L-shaped 40 sq ft counter space in a kitchen and its maintenance over ten years. If an acrylic-based resin, one of the more affordable and hygienic choices is used, the total installation cost is approximately \$5500. With granite replacing resin as the material of choice, the installation cost becomes approximately \$2000 more.

Maintenance costs must also be considered. Depending on the

level of activity occurring in this kitchen, regular maintenance of the resin countertop becomes necessary. In fact, most local manufacturers said homeowners usually refinish their resin countertops annually, usually around the Yuletide season. This results in approximately \$400 being spent annually on maintenance, which, over a decade drives the total cost of the resin countertop way past the more durable granite, which can have a shelf life of up to 25 years with adequate attention.

Emerging trends and products will always be mitigating factors when kitchen remodeling is considered. Attention should be paid to the engineered stone countertop movement, spearheaded by lavastone and quartz, which is slowly gaining momentum in some construction and interior design circles. Unfortunately, the retail and installation costs are a roadblock to most potential remodelers. As interest grows and more manufacturers of engineered stone emerge, costs should become less of a mitigating factor, but it's pretty safe to crown granite the most popular choice when it comes to stone countertops.



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HOME DECOR

EQUALS HAUTE COUTURE

By Natalia Nunes

Which well heeled woman finds dressing herself smartly a chore tantamount to doing the dishes? The answer to that would be – none! The parallels between couture and interior decorating are surprisingly quite strong. For instance, women wear accessories, rooms have accessories. We know that colour, or the lack thereof, is a similarity; and apparel is like furniture. As a woman, I cannot but bring attention to our feet as many of us share the same addiction to shoes. Carpets, rugs or whatever we stand on, be it hardwood or tiles, would be equal to our Jimmy Choos or those coveted Christian Louboutin red soles.

Just as we plan how we look, whether to please ourselves or for any other reason, we plan how our homes look. And just as we tire of our wardrobes, we tire of our decor. Waking up with the thought, “Hmmm . . . what shall I wear today?” is no different to, “How can I change this living room?” or any other room for that matter. So we can plan to revamp a room as deliciously as we plan a new wardrobe.

Here’s my version of a parable. A woman woke up one morning and walked into her living room en route to the kitchen for a cup of tea. She glanced at the pleasant but tired decor and thought, “Today, I shall give you a facelift.” After dressing herself quite smartly, she drove to the paint store and stood in front of the paint swatches for about two hours with notebook and pencil in hand. Pictures of her living room, tucked into her notebook, were taken out and placed beside the different colours as she planned the decor smartly.







Just as we prepare ourselves for a big night by bathing, having a manicure and pedicure, going to the hairdresser and maybe having a make-up artist transform our faces, we must also prepare our room's canvas – the walls.

Ideas floated in her head like blouses on a clothing rack. She wrote down some and matched them with others, all the while, bearing in mind the delightful palette of paints that stood before her. When she settled on a few colours, knowing that she wanted to create a dramatic accent wall in her living room, she then discussed the different types of paint with the salesman. The importance of selecting the correct type of paint is paramount. This woman was actually painting a picture, creating the illusion of a brick wall on a blank, beige wall. There was the correct colour red to choose along with different tints to make the bricks seem real. Then there was the grouting between the bricks which would appear to be mortar.

Not only would this woman require paints, tints and spray sealant but painter's tape to make the grout lines straight. After all, she wasn't recreating the Leaning Tower of Pisa. With materials in hand, the woman drove back home to become the inner artist that lay dormant only the day before.

Just as we prepare ourselves for a big night by bathing, having a manicure and pedicure, going to the hairdresser and maybe having a make-up artist transform our faces, we must also prepare our room's canvas – the walls. The walls were cobwebbed and primed, presenting a clean slate. Then the lady went to work measuring the spaces for the faux bricks. The painter's tape was used to cover what would later become the grout lines.

Not much different to applying make-up, painting the bricks and using the tint to create shadows as well as areas of interest with sponges that actually were make-up sponges, along with sea sponges, the woman worked tirelessly on her wall. Driven by sheer pleasure in dressing this accent wall which would spark so much interest in her guests, she finished her masterpiece with complete contentment.

The moral of this story is that we have the ability to change our decor almost as easily as we change our clothing. We must have an inspiration and a proper plan and then go about it with the knowledge that paint is only paint. It can be done and redone, again and again. Find your inner Michelangelo and have a blast doing it!

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Creative Container Homes

By Nick Nunes

Property is something that rarely loses value, utilizing the space you've got is important regardless of how extravagant your dream design home is planned to be. In Barbados, the majority of large land plots are taken up by farms and for commercial use. But, buying a small piece of property should deter you from dreaming big when it comes to home design. Likewise, there is always a creative and cost effective solution to any hurdle in the process of perfecting your dream home.

Barbados is no stranger to the use of shipping containers as offices. There are huge upsides to the use of shipping containers. They are modular, coming in a wide range of sizes, provide a pre-manufactured structure, and, as far as a mobile building goes, shipping containers are relatively easy to transport.

You may be thinking that a shipping container home would be ugly, chunky, or impractical, and you would be wrong. The limits of shipping container home designs are only fettered by your own, or your architect's, creativity.

The great thing about shipping containers is that the modular form and the array of sizes allows for multiple configurations. Though you could make a space that is simple and functional, many have gone beyond convention and created living spaces that could very well double as modern art. With containers ranging from 10' by 8', 20' by 8', and 40' by 8', the doubling up and combining of modules can create innovations as interesting as any other construction project.

Once a level foundation is set for the building area, the container blocks could very well come to life as building blocks or Lego bricks would, with a lot more sophistication. With hanging edges, spaces that open up, and even foldable decks, the layouts of shipping container construction leave you to imagine a structure of uniqueness all to yourself.

The inherent strength, wide availability, and relatively low expense of shipping container homes and offices have exploded due to the adaptability of using these intermodal steel structures as a base for artistic architectural expression. There is even a shipping container hotel in Antwerpen, Belgium.





From Hong Kong to Detroit and China to Belgium, shipping container hotels can be set up in record time and with a surprising amount of luxury. It's not often you hear of a two story 3000sq2 ft home being built for under \$40, 000. With the right amount of ingenuity and a little resourcefulness, you could have a gorgeous shipping container home created in less than a year and have the whole process done in an eco-friendly way by use of reclaimed materials.

From stacking to hanging and perpendicular placement to parallel bridged units, there's no end to the exotic designs possible for creating a comfort zone that is entirely unlike any other home. More than just creating a solid frame for a home, the ridged containers are made to be durable for high stacking and weathering storms when sent across oceans. The steel ridging can also give character to ceilings,

or just as easily be covered up to the point where the original container isn't even recognizable.

With shipping containers, scale is never the problem. Two forty foot containers will give you 640 square feet of living space. Add another floor by placing a twenty foot container on top and you have a cool 800 square feet of already constructed living space. The only need is to cut windows, dedicated doors, ventilation, plumbing, and electrical work. The hard and long labour intensive part of construction is already taken care of at a cost far below the regular price of brick and mortar or even wood construction.

The welding and cutting of steel is considered to be specialized labour and can increase construction expenses, yet overall it is still lower than conventional construction. Unlike timber-frame construction,

attachments must be welded or drilled to the outer skin, which is more time consuming and requires different job site equipment.

Many used containers are available at an amount that is low compared to a finished structure built by other labour-intensive means which also require larger, more expensive foundations. Construction involves very little labour and used shipping containers require only simple modifications can be purchased from major transport companies for as little as US \$1,200 each. Even when purchased brand new they are seldom more than US \$6000.

The dream of these designs goes even further. A few bold free-thinkers have gone above and beyond in the creation of veritable colossal container mansions that boggle the mind. Your home should be something to you can be proud of and with the ease and efficiency of shipping container construction you can showcase your quirks as creatively or modestly as an artistic reflection of your personality.

It's easy to find inspiration for design. A quick google search shows a myriad of module made homes. Maybe even sit down with your child and have a go at some Lego creations to see what dreams can be sparked from a little playtime. Many of the container homes emit ideals of adult fancy connecting with the inner child to create a space that is gorgeous, functional, and based in flights of fantasy.



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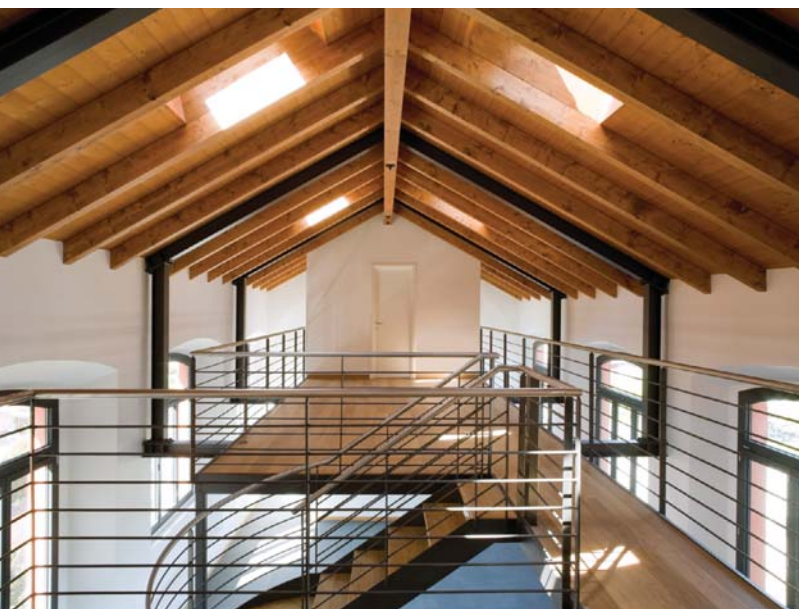
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LOFTED LIVING

By Nick Nunes



Whether you wish to convert your upper storey or attic space into a loft, or simply add a half storey to your house, a loft affords an adaptable open space for any purpose.

The purpose of your loft is the first thing you need to consider before beginning a conversion. If you're just looking for a bit of extra storage space, then the need for supports must be considered depending on the weight you intend to place in your new space. The type of traffic your loft will see is extremely important in maintaining the integrity of your house's overall structure.

A one-storey building that could be considered a studio can be greatly improved by the addition of a lofted bedroom. Or a single-storey house could have an elevated living space to add to the square footage of the property. With high ceilings, a loft can be the perfect area for a study, spare bedroom, lounge or even a studio depending on your proclivities.

Take a measurement from the bottom of the ridge timber to the top of the ceiling joist; the useable part of the roof should be greater than 2.2 metres. The higher the pitch angle, the higher the central head height is likely to be; if dormers are used or the roof is redesigned, then the floor area can be increased.

Converting an attic space into a loft can pose the most effort for the creation of a loft, especially if the roof is trussed rather than having a single solid support frame to distribute the weight of the roof. Removing trusses and installing dedicated support beams is definitely an engineer's area of expertise to configure, as you wouldn't want the whole roof to cave in from poor weight dispersal.

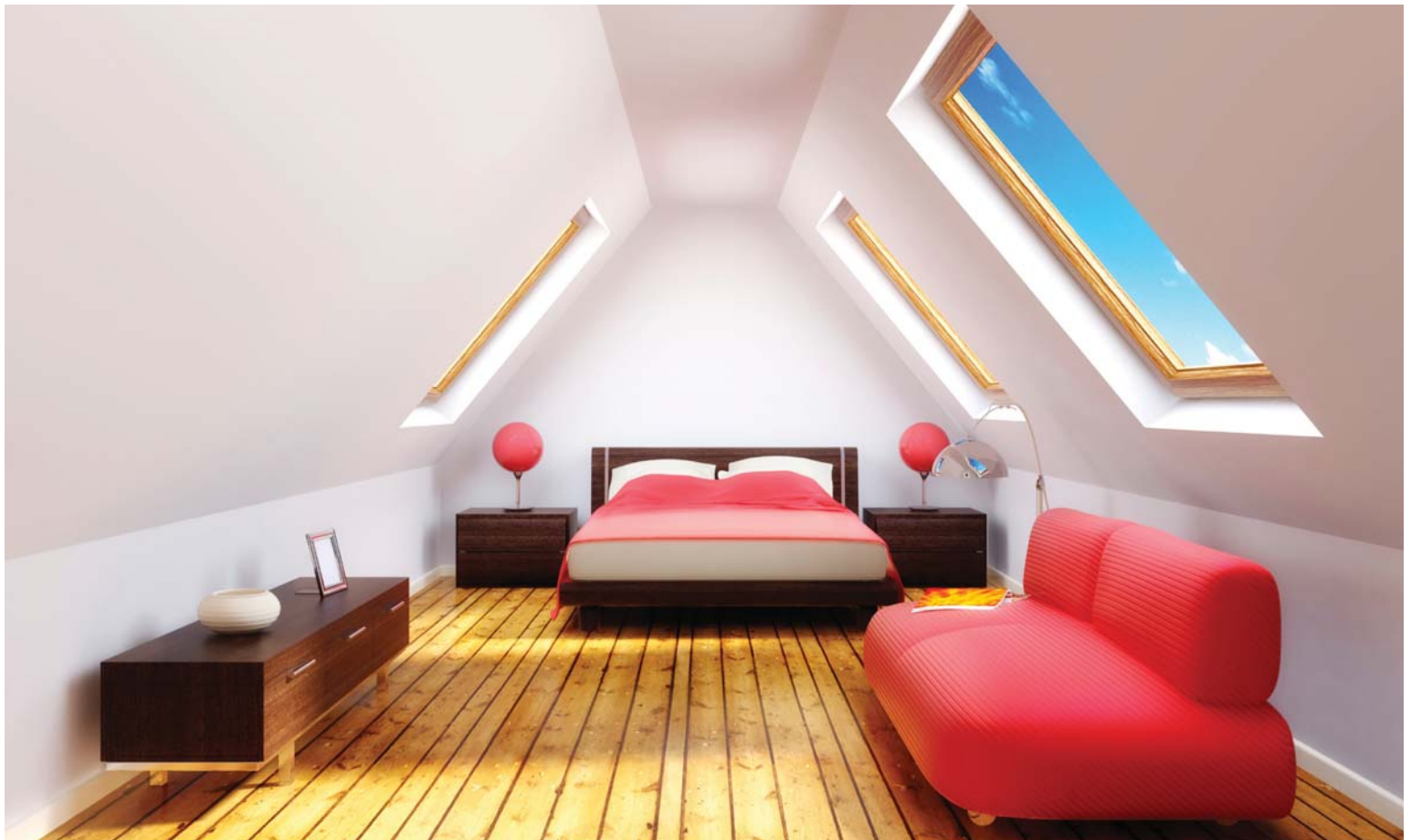
Beyond fitting the supports and investigating and reinforcing the structures of the roof, for the installation of a loft, it's best to have a roof with a higher pitch angle as it allows for more central headspace when the loft is completed and useable. An angle above 50° is ideal.

Going past the suitability of your roof angle and the structural support needed to maintain the integrity of the home, regular ceiling supports are not made to handle walking spaces or living areas. If you're converting an attic, an engineer must be consulted prior to any do-it-yourself projects, including the addition of windows and ventilation, every aspect of the conversion should be sorted in detail before tackling your home transformation.

Furthermore, there could be zoning issues that are Government regulated. It's best to know the ins and outs of what you can and cannot do to your property before embarking on the search for additional space.

When it comes to home updates, everyone is interested in the most economical improvements that can serve multiple uses. Adding extra space to your home can make a vast difference to the property value as well as opening up an area for comfort. A loft can be categorised as a converted space of a building directly under the roof.

Whether you wish to convert your upper storey or attic space into a loft, or simply add a half storey to your house, a loft affords an adaptable open space for any purpose. The majority of Barbadian residences utilise hip and gable roofing styles which are perfect for the addition of a half storey.



Most ceiling bases make use of planks ranging from 2x4 and 2x6 to 2x8 wood supports, whereas a load-bearing floor should be structured with hardier materials like 2x10 or 2x12 and above. Once the zoning issues, roof supports, floor layout and ventilation are completed, it is time to wrestle with the issue of wiring and plan plumbing if desired.

The ideal location for a staircase to land is in line with the roof ridge. This makes for the best use of available height above the staircase. In practice, the actual position will depend upon the layout of the floor below. Where necessary, the available height can be achieved using a dormer or adding a roof light above the staircase or, if appropriate, converting a hip roof end to a gable.

The best loft conversions should be done above pre-existing bedroom and bathroom areas to facilitate an easier running of necessities to your new upper level. In older buildings, some attics and sub-roof crawl spaces may already have electrical outlets installed, but they could be damaged by many things from humidity and salt to simply the passage of time. It's best to go ahead and update everything when it comes to your modern remaking.

Natural light and ventilation are very important, especially with the humidity and salt air of the Caribbean winds that blow throughout the island. While insulation should not be a huge problem, it is imperative to consider fire and hurricane safety when making any home improvements.

Cost, of course, will depend on the size and extent of work needed for your personal preference of loft creation. It could run anywhere from a few thousand dollars to tens of thousands depending on the simplicity or extravagance desired. The addition of extra living space to your home doesn't just add digits to the worth of the building but will also invite a creative intrigue in the design and innovative use and creative creation of space.

Whether a full attic conversion or a half-storey hanging loft, the time and effort you put into invigorating your home could be well worth the pennies and processes. The addition of a light and breezy area of your home, a small study for seclusion, an extra living room or bedroom will give a jump to your property value and a new lease on loving the space you're in.



6 Best Herbs

FOR CONTAINER GARDENING

By Coretta Joe

The amazing thing about herbs is that you don't actually need garden space. Whether you plant them from seedlings or you transplant starter plants, potted herbs are the way to go.

Having access to fresh herbs right outside your kitchen is a great advantage that will save some money off your food bill. The amazing thing about herbs is that you don't actually need garden space. Whether you plant them from seedlings or you transplant starter plants, potted herbs are the way to go. Most herbs are perfect for container gardening and will flourish beautifully on your patio, front step or kitchen window. **Smart Homes** compiled a list of the six best herbs for growing in containers.

BASIL – Garden enthusiasts agree that basil is one of the most rewarding herbs to grow in a container. Basil is especially susceptible to mildew, so growing this herb in a container ensures that it gets plenty of airflow. Be sure to give it plenty of water and keep pinching off the flower heads so that the plant will keep growing new leaves year-round.

ROSEMARY – Rosemary is fantastic when used fresh or dried, that's a win-win. This fragrant herb thrives in at least six hours of sun daily – morning sun and afternoon shade. The trick is to ensure that the container in which you plant the rosemary has at least one drainage hole since it does not do well sitting in water, but likes to dry out between watering.

MINT – This culinary delight is one herb that definitely needs to be contained. Mint is quite notorious for spreading and lots of cross-pollination occurs as a result. Because it grows by underground root runners, mint spreads easily and quickly. A 12- to 16-inch pot is recommended to give it adequate space. Mint thrives in rich, well drained soil and adapts to many soil types. To keep mint plants looking attractive, cut frequently and remove flowers as they appear.



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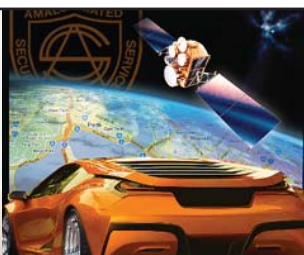
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THYME – Thyme is one of the more low-maintenance of all the herbs and one of the most used. It only requires minimal watering. All varieties of thyme, including English thyme and lemon thyme, grow best in full sun and well drained soil.

Tip: Thyme tends to get woody after a few years, so growing it in containers makes it easier to replace when that time comes.

CHIVES – Chives are a beautiful and sensible addition to any container garden. This plant is versatile and easy growing, needing to be watered only when the soil has dried out. Snip the leaves regularly, leaving approximately two to three inches of leaves on each plant. This ensures a continual supply of leaves throughout the year.

CILANTRO – Also known as coriander, cilantro demands its own space, so growing it in a container is a wise idea. However, cilantro grows best from seeds since it does not transplant well. Plant the seeds about an inch deep and the cilantro will be up in no time.



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A neat, well organised closet speaks volumes about your home. Even if you do not have the luxury of a spacious walk-in closet, these easy and inexpensive do-it-yourself tips will ensure that you maximise space without compromising the aesthetic quality of your bedroom.

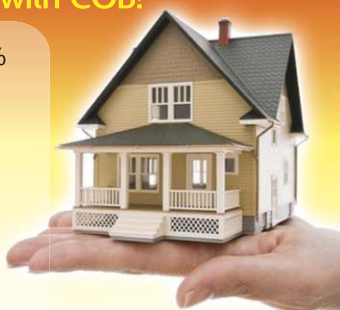
CLOSET ORGANISATION TIPS

By Coretta Joe

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DECLUTTER – Before you begin to organise, it is wise to donate clothing, shoes and other items you no longer wear. One smart way to do this is to turn all hangers so that the hooks are pointing towards you. When you wear something, put the hanger back in the opposite direction. In six months, any hanger still unchanged is holding an item you haven't worn, which means it's time to start packing.

DOUBLE ROD – No need to call the handyman or get a power drill, simply get a hanging rod that hooks over the existing rod and use this to hang short hanging clothes.

HANGING SHOE ORGANISER – Shoes are often the No. 1 cause of a messy closet. Instead of leaving shoes scattered on the floor, get an inexpensive hanging shoe organiser that could easily fit two to three pairs of shoes in each compartment. Use your new floor space for storage by purchasing inexpensive containers.

SODA CAN TABS – Maximise hanging space by looping a soda can tab on a coat hanger, letting it fall all the way down to the neck. Next, loop the top of the second hanger through the other side of the tab. You can also use chains and s-hooks for this same purpose.

SHOWER CURTAIN RINGS – Use shower curtain rings to hang your bags and purses. This way, you're saving space and maintaining the shape of your bags and purses at the same time.

TIE HANGER – If you have a tie hanger and multiple tank tops, turn the tie hanger into a hub of organisation by hanging those tops on every available space.

USE DOOR SPACE CREATIVELY – Hang catch-alls on the inside of closet doors and use these to store practically anything – from jewellery to purses and stockings.

RAIN GUTTER GUARD – A rain gutter guard and 3M command hooks are all you need to enjoy an organisational system for your earrings, since having them in a random basket in your closet or strewn on your dresser is just too messy. Install the gutter guard in your closet and enjoy all your dangly earrings at eye level.

SHOEBOXES – If your closet comes with built-in drawers, you can use old shoeboxes to organise the items you put into the drawers so that you can make use of precious space. This eliminates the need to pile everything into your drawers.

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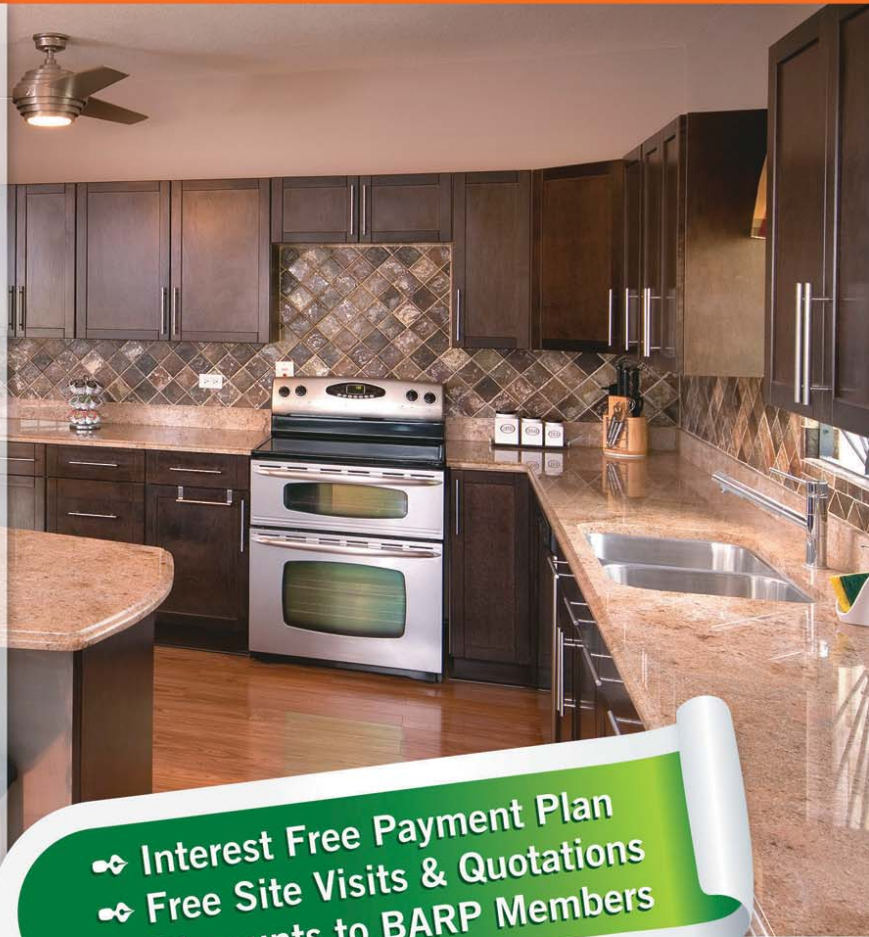
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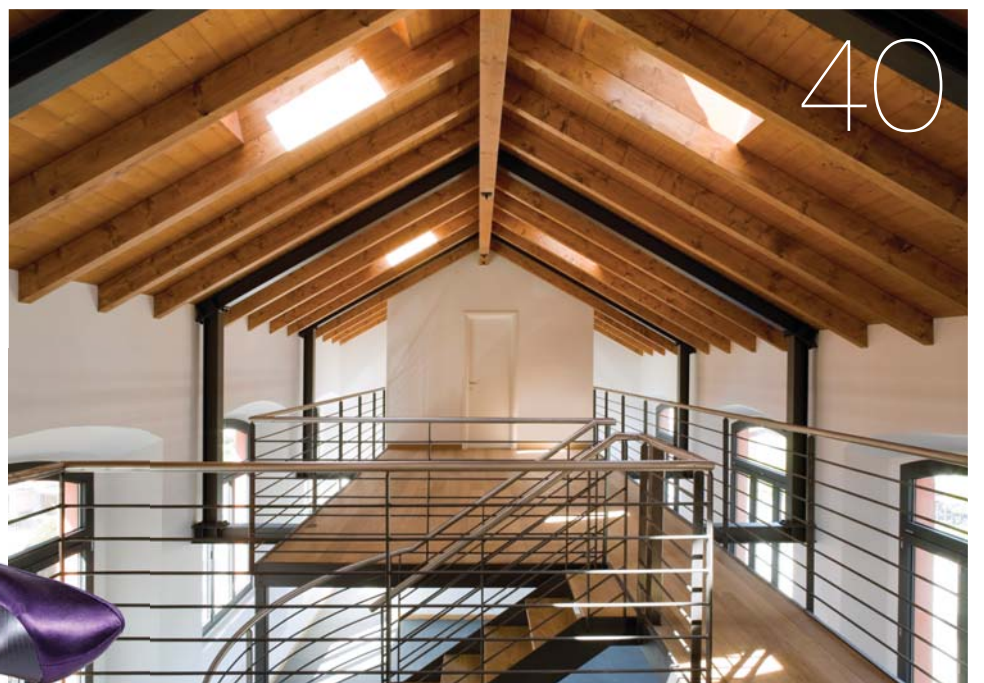
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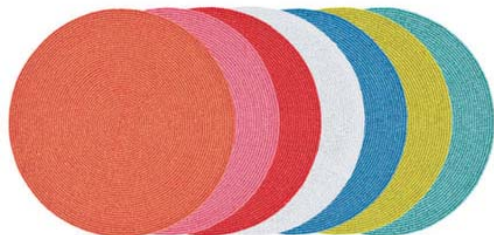
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10 DIY FLOOR TILING TIPS

By Tyson Henry

Tiles are sold in packs and the size and number of tiles they contain will determine the area of floor that they will cover.

There are many types of floor tiles, ranging from ceramic, clay and natural stone. Here in Barbados, most home builders install tiles over a mortar base, but it is not uncommon to layer new tiles on top of existing ones.

Below are ten tips to help you deliver a job good enough to be envied by the pros.

1. Tiles are sold in packs and the size and number of tiles they contain will determine the area of floor that they will cover. Round up the total to the nearest whole number to establish the number of packs of tiles you'll need. Always buy ten per cent more tiles than you need, to allow for breakages.
2. Seal before tiling. Always waterproof showers and water prone areas before tiling them. Even with the greatest diligence when installing and grouting, tiles are still not waterproof or moisture-proof. They are designed to make cleaning easier and protect the surface below them. There is a good range of waterproofing materials available that are easy to apply on the surface before you begin tiling.
3. Find a starting point. Find the midpoints of the two longest walls and draw a chalk line across the floor between these points. Repeat for the shorter walls but adjust the line so that it passes through the centre of the first line at right angles.
4. Lay tiles along the two lines to experiment with the layout and check if they look right from the doorway. If any gaps at the walls are less than half a tile wide, shift the line across to make more of a gap. Also, move the guide lines so that tiles around a dominant feature such as a bay window or a protruding wall are symmetrical and there are whole tiles at the doorway. Try to work with as many whole tiles as possible, even if it means adjusting the grout line width slightly.
5. Spread about one square metre of tile cement into one of the right angles made by the two crossing chalk lines. Scrape the notched edge of the trowel across the mix to form ridges of the same thickness.
6. Lay the first few tiles along the edge of the longest centre line. Gently press the tiles into place, making sure they also line up with the other centre line. Add plastic spacers at each corner to keep them exactly the same distance apart for grouting.
7. Work outwards from the middle of the room until you have laid all the whole tiles on one half of the floor. Use a spirit



Don't rush to grout. Even though all the tiles are down on the floor and set, don't start putting the grout down. Allow at least 24 hours for the tile cement to dry, otherwise you will damage the tiling job.

level to ensure the tiles are at the same level. Now move across to the other side of the longest centre line and add the rest of the whole tiles. Leave to set for 24 hours.

8. Use the tile cutter to trim the edge tiles to the right shape. Measure the space at both ends in case the walls are uneven and remember to allow for the grouting gap. Always wear goggles and gloves when cutting tiles.
9. Don't rush to grout. Even though all the tiles are down on the floor and set, don't start putting the grout down. Allow at least 24 hours for the tile cement to dry, otherwise you will damage the tiling job. Never trowel grout in a straight line. There are two types of grout: wall and floor grout. The main difference is that floor grout has sand in it and wall grout doesn't. Make sure the grout is the right consistency and trowel it diagonally to ensure an even application.

Bonus: When the trowel gets jammed, "butter" the tiles. When working in tight corners or edges, the trowel won't be able to fit inside that space. The easiest way to work around this problem is to put the tile cement on the back of the tiles.

You will need:

- Floor tiles
- Tile Cement
- Grout
- Diamond disc tile cutter
- Safety kit (goggles and heavy duty gloves)
- Spirit level
- Profile shaper
- Tile saw
- Pencil
- Tape measure
- Serrated trowel
- Spacers
- Chalk line
- Lint-free cloth
- Floor sealer
- Bucket
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Life & Design:

CREATIVE ACCENTING

By Sheree-Ann McDonald

An accent is a distinct emphasis that brings prominence or highlights a particular feature in a room. In other words, it makes the room pop, separating dreary from interesting and exciting. The fun part is that the accents do not necessarily need to serve any particular purpose; they can be simply something you were absolutely thrilled to see in a store that made you stop and say wow! One note of caution though, just make sure the object fits with the general size and proportions of the room as well as the other objects in it. A life-sized statue is wonderful but not in a 10x10 room with other furniture.

USING COLOUR

One of the most exciting features I have seen recently is the new-look front door, fancily painted with a bright and exciting colour and finished with upscale finishings. This is definitely one way to make a statement.

Using a colour which contrasts or complements your wall colour will definitely cause items to come to the fore. For example, using throw pillows and vases of distinct colours which contrast with the general wall colour can be refreshing.

USING METALLIC OBJECTS

The use of metals for mirror frames, accessories such as vases, wall art and even entire surfaces not only adds a shine to a space but certainly can provide a nice textured surface as well. Gold and brass are shining once again and are now quite trendy.







The use of different light sources has become almost standard in any newly constructed house, especially in the kitchen.

USING DRAMATIC LIGHTING AND LIGHT SOURCES

The use of different light sources has become almost standard in any newly constructed house, especially in the kitchen. There is plenty of room for you to add spotlights, track lights and picture lights to a space in order to improve the general ambience; this also gives you the opportunity to move from a more public setting to an intimate one using the same space. The lighting fixture itself is now also an accent. There is no end to the chandeliers, lamp shapes and bulb shapes that you may find at the hardware or lighting store.

L'OBJET WITH A DIFFERENCE

Simply put, the very object itself can be your accent. Here are some examples:

- The old rocker belonging to your grandmother which has no match but definitely adds a certain quality to the room.
- The sweet paintings your children created nicely framed.
- The two-dollar find at last week's yard sale.
- The unusual rocks discovered at the beach.

As usual, at the end of the day, your design must represent you and who you are – accents included.



10 TIPS FOR CLEANING WITHOUT CHEMICALS

By Tyson Henry

The clean scent that you always strove to achieve when cleaning is actually not as good for you as you thought. The truth is that cleaning your home can negatively affect your health if you aren't wary of the ingredients in the cleaning agents you use. Cancer-causing chemicals in the air, an asthma attack from fumes or serious skin burns from an accidental spill are a few of the many mishaps that can occur when we set out to clean our homes.

While baking soda has long been an ingredient in food recipes, it has also been regaining popularity as a cleaning alternative, as more people look for non-toxic and biodegradable cleaning solutions for the home. Baking soda is a key ingredient in many do-it-yourself beauty and cleaning products, thanks to its gentle abrasiveness, odour fighting properties and ability to absorb oils.

What could be safer than a cleaning potion that's also edible? Below, you'll find ten Smart Homes tips for using baking soda to clean everything from a clogged drain to your linens.

A photograph of a wooden surface. In the foreground, a sliced orange sits on a grey plate. To the left, a glass bowl contains white powder. In the background, a yellow sponge and a glass of water are visible.

While baking soda has long been an ingredient in food recipes, it has also been regaining popularity as a cleaning alternative, as more people look for non-toxic and biodegradable cleaning solutions for the home.



1. UNCLOG DRAINS

Drano is really toxic stuff, but you don't have to take our word for it – just read the warning label on the back of the bottle. The next time you have a clogged drain, pour a cup of baking soda, followed by a cup of white vinegar down your drain. Then plug the drain with the stopper or a rag and let it work for at least 15 minutes. If the issue isn't fixed, you can always rinse and repeat with no fear of harsh chemicals backing up in your sink or tub.

2. CLEAN POTS WITHOUT SCRUBBING

Fill your pot with a few inches of water and add two tablespoons of baking soda. Let it soak for 15 minutes and then scrape whatever crusty stuff is left with a wooden spoon.

3. KILL BAD ODOURS

Many bad or musty odours are the result of slightly acidic molecules, which is why baking soda's pH-balancing properties help to get rid of stench. Keeping an open container of baking soda in your fridge, cabinets or closet will reduce unpleasant smells.

Tip: It's good to replace the soda about once every six months.

4. FRESHEN YOUR MATTRESS

You can put baking soda's odour fighting properties to work on your bed. Just sprinkle the powder on your mattress and make the bed. When next you change the sheets, vacuum the baking soda.

5. CARPETS/RUGS

If your carpet is just a little musty, you can sprinkle baking soda and then vacuum (similar to the mattress trick). However, you can also scrub out carpet stains using baking soda and water. After the powder dries, you can still just vacuum it.

6. CLEAN THE OVEN AND THE FRIDGE

Mix up a paste of water and baking soda and spread it over the interior of the fridge or oven. Let it sit overnight or for about 12 hours. Then using a spatula, gently scrape all the dried paste and wipe any remaining residue with a rag.

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7. COUNTERS, TILES AND LINOLEUM FLOORS

A similar water and baking soda paste also makes a great scrub for all kinds of surfaces around the house. Use it to clean tiles, marble, countertops and linoleum floors.

8. GROUT

Use an old toothbrush and baking soda to get residue and grime off of grout. Get more green tips on cleaning grout at www.mnn.com.

9. TOILETS

Just sprinkle, scrub and flush. Baking soda's abrasive qualities are great for cleaning porcelain.

10. WHITEN YOUR LINENS

Mix equal parts of baking soda and lemon juice to make your white towels, sheets and clothing whiter. This mixture works as a mild bleaching agent. Baking soda helps to balance the pH of water and can be used to effectively clean, freshen, brighten and soften laundry. After adding laundry to the washing machine, add liquid or powder laundry detergent as usual and then pour one cup of baking soda directly over the clothes.

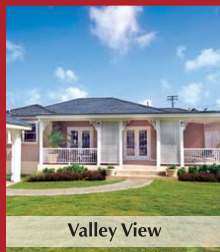
Adding baking soda to the washing machine also helps to neutralise the smell of musty towels and bathing suits that have been sitting in the hamper or that smell like chlorine.

To remove the musty odour from laundry that was left wet in the washing machine for too long, rerun the washing cycle with a cup of baking soda to refresh them.

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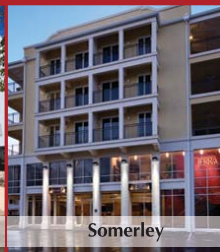
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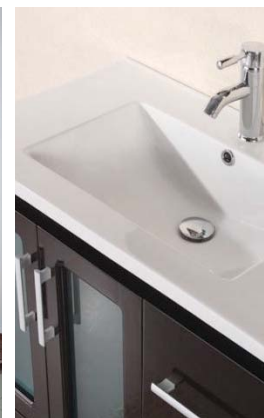
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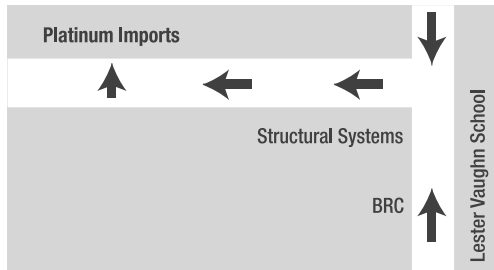
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SMART WAYS TO RECYCLE

TIPS FOR REDUCING AND REUSING AT HOME

By Coretta Joe

In addition to saving energy, reducing waste products in landfills, helping to mitigate global warming and reducing pollution, recycling actually helps homeowners save money.

Making simple changes at home in terms of recycling has many great advantages. In addition to saving energy, reducing waste products in landfills, helping to mitigate global warming and reducing pollution, recycling actually helps homeowners save money. One viable option is selling recyclable materials to organisations willing to buy. However, at home, there are genius ways to reduce and reuse in order to do your part in making your home a little more eco-friendly.

MICROFIBRE CLOTHS

These handy towels can take the place of 60 paper towel rolls before they need replacing. Microfibre cloths are gentle enough to use on nearly all surfaces and are even great for cleaning spectacles and mirrors. Use them to quickly absorb spills, wipe down counters and many other household needs. This will save you quite a few dollars when you consider how much you spend on quality paper towel rolls.





BUY IN BULK

Some food items such as margarine and yogurt are packaged in containers that are hard to recycle. To beat this, purchase these items in the largest container available and put them into smaller reusable containers as needed. Use these containers for freezing leftovers, stashing odds and ends and as plant pots for herbs.

CLEANING PRODUCTS

Purchase cleaning products in large containers and decant into smaller spray bottles. Be on the lookout for concentrated cleaner refills, this way you can reuse the old spray bottle and just add water. Also, get ultra-strength detergents which save packaging so that you get more laundry loads out of the container.

PORTABLE POWER

Many recycling programmes do not accept single-use batteries. However, rechargeable batteries can and should be recycled. When you buy rechargeable batteries, you are actually buying less since you can charge up quite a few times before they need replacing.

SAVE GLASS JARS

Who needs mason jars when you can recycle the jars from your pasta sauce, jams and seasonings for that same purpose? These jars can be used for your green juices, smoothies and other home-made concoctions.

REUSE SCRAP PAPER

For your home office, print on both sides of the sheets or let your children draw and colour on the back of the used sheets.

SWITCH TO PLASTIC

Milk and juice cartons are not recyclable. If you don't mind switching brands, opt for the ones that come in plastic so that you can reuse them for storage.

CABINET DOORS

WHAT'S YOUR STYLE?

By Tyson Henry

With a plethora of sales at local hardware and home appliance stores ongoing, now is the time for inspired thinking. To assist, we've compiled a diverse array of design styles to spark your imagination and inspire your creative passion as you seek to build, renovate or refurbish your kitchen space.

Picture yourself in a rustic, wood grain-filled cooking area, or surrounded by the clean lines and symmetry of a contemporary kitchen that you, your family and guests will adore. Use our tips as a guide and find the style that best suits you. Your canvas awaits.

Shaker doors, despite their age, are the quintessential examples of fusing the geometric elements of modernity, with the bold, gilded frames associated with traditional design. This door is the most common door style in kitchens today because it lends itself to any décor. This five-piece flat-panel style has a frame made from four pieces and a single flat centre panel for the fifth piece.

Flat doors are simple but stylish, and void of any expensive details. Their hard lines and simple form make them a great fit for contemporary interiors, as they are smooth with no panels, contours or accents.

This style delicately threads the line between minimal utilitarianism and modern elegance, to create a functional space with clean lines.

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Tip: Laminate tends to be more budget friendly and offers a greater variety of colours and sheens.

Louvered doors are characterised in by horizontal wood slats similar to those typically used in olden Caribbean days on windows and shutters, but they add a distinct architectural style to kitchen cabinetry. Due to the need for craftsmanship, be very wary that this style of door will come with a high price tag!

Tip: Many louvered doors have spaces between each slat, making them great for cabinets that require ventilation. The downside to this is that they can be tedious to clean thoroughly.

Woven rattan inserts for cabinet doors add texture and interest. In our tropical climate, doors with woven rattan, or wicker as it is also known, promote air flow and can be used as an accent. The art of weaving is quickly becoming obscure, but if you can source a tradesman, your kitchen will be adorned with a colonial-inspired style that is sure to add texture and character.

Inset styled doors tend to be expensive to construct, because of the high levels of craftsmanship and time required to construct them. The saving grace is that when built correctly, the style will lend your kitchen a classic look that'll last for generations.

The inset door gets its name because it is set inside of the cabinet frame, whereas conversely, more commonly built cabinet doors rest on the outside of the frame. The door is designed and constructed with extremely precise measurements so that it nests inside the frame and

opens and closes properly, even when the wood expands and contracts. Beadboard doors hearken to the colonial-styled homes that epitomized grandeur. Beadboard was used in the distant past as a decorative wall treatment, but has since been adapted for use in cabinetry as the centre panel for doors.

Tip: While all-white beadboard cabinetry can give your kitchen a bright and clean feel, all the seams and crevices on this door style can collect dust over time, so be wary of this when selecting paint colour and type. Choose a paint that will withstand being wiped with a damp cloth over time.

French styled kitchen cabinet doors, with their classic tones and checkerboard designs, will envelop your family and guests in warmth that is reminiscent of simpler times. French Doors complement any kitchen, and are primarily used for upper display cabinets and/or pantries.

Though traditional, this style exudes a modern elegance when paired with natural stone countertops (see page __) and simple, contemporary backsplashes..

Bonus: Pickled/Distressed refers more to a finish than a door style, but it is worth mentioning. These finishes are for the homeowner that dreams of having an antique-styled kitchen with traditional details and craftsmanship. Adorning your cabinets with a worn look calls for more work than most people imagine.



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SPRUCING UP YOUR KITCHEN ON A BUDGET

By Tyson Henry

The kitchen is the one room in the home where families spend the most time together.



In Barbados, kitchens are more than just where we prepare meals. The kitchen is the one room in the home where families spend the most time together. If you're looking for a way to spruce up the space and an overhaul isn't in the budget, try one of these easy kitchen cabinet upgrades.

A makeover doesn't necessarily mean replacing your outdated cabinets with all new ones. As long as the frames and doors are structurally sound, you can clean them up and brush on a different colour of paint. Within a weekend, your kitchen will be transformed from dreary to sunny. For this job you will need sandpaper, a paintbrush, and some good old elbow grease. What you don't need is a whole lot of money, as the transformation will cost you a fraction of even the cheapest new cabinets.

Editor's tip: Try painting your top tier cabinets with a colour that is complementary to the colour you use on the base cabinets, or use a contrasting accent colour on the inside of the cabinets.

Instead of spending thousands on new cabinets, save yourself

the expense and reface the ones you have for a fraction of the cost. It is amazing what a little veneer and some new doors can do to brighten an ageing space. Both are readily available here in Barbados and some hardware stores sell peel-and-stick veneer to make the task simpler. Just be sure to measure twice and cut once. Work carefully, and your kitchen will look brand-new in no time.

Make the most of your kitchen's existing storage space by installing a pull-out shelf in one – or all – of the base cabinets. The shelf resembles a shallow drawer that glides out for easy access to items stored in the back of the cabinet.

If you already own colourful dishes and plates, this is probably the cheapest suggestion. Add a plate rack that will allow you to show off your collection while adding a splash of vibrancy to the room.

Nothing screams quality and attention to detail, like crown moulding. Adding this trim to the top of your cabinet frames will transform your kitchen into a seamless design.



Granite is able to withstand high-traffic, scribbles by young children, clumsy partners and houseguests, heat from cooking apparatus and even bacteria, with minimal maintenance while maintaining its luster and integrity.

The varying amounts of quartz and feldspar, as well as smaller mineral deposits of amphibole, mica and other trace minerals are responsible for granite's naturally attractive colouration. The random arrangement the minerals also means that no two counter tops will be alike, which adds unmatched character, value and uniqueness to your kitchen.

Granite is able to withstand high-traffic, scribbles by young children, clumsy partners and houseguests, heat from cooking apparatus and even bacteria, with minimal maintenance while maintaining its luster and integrity. Its mineral structure, coupled with the use of sealant, makes it a tough task for the usual sources of stains such as red wine, acidic liquids, oil, coffee, tea, rust, mildew, ink, scratches and even scorch marks to set in and become a permanent fixture of the countertop, and allows most of these faux-pas to be easily cleaned with a simple solution of soap and water.

When it comes to food safety and general hygiene, granite is again a safe bet based on its low porosity when sealed. In comparison, materials such as concrete, wood and ceramic tiles because of the grout used to secure are extremely permeable to liquids and general moisture.

Concrete is especially vulnerable to acidic liquids especially vinegar and lime juice which can cause etches in the surface; be careful while seasoning that meat for Sunday lunch! It is also an extremely heavy material to work with, which usually results in higher costs for labour during installation.

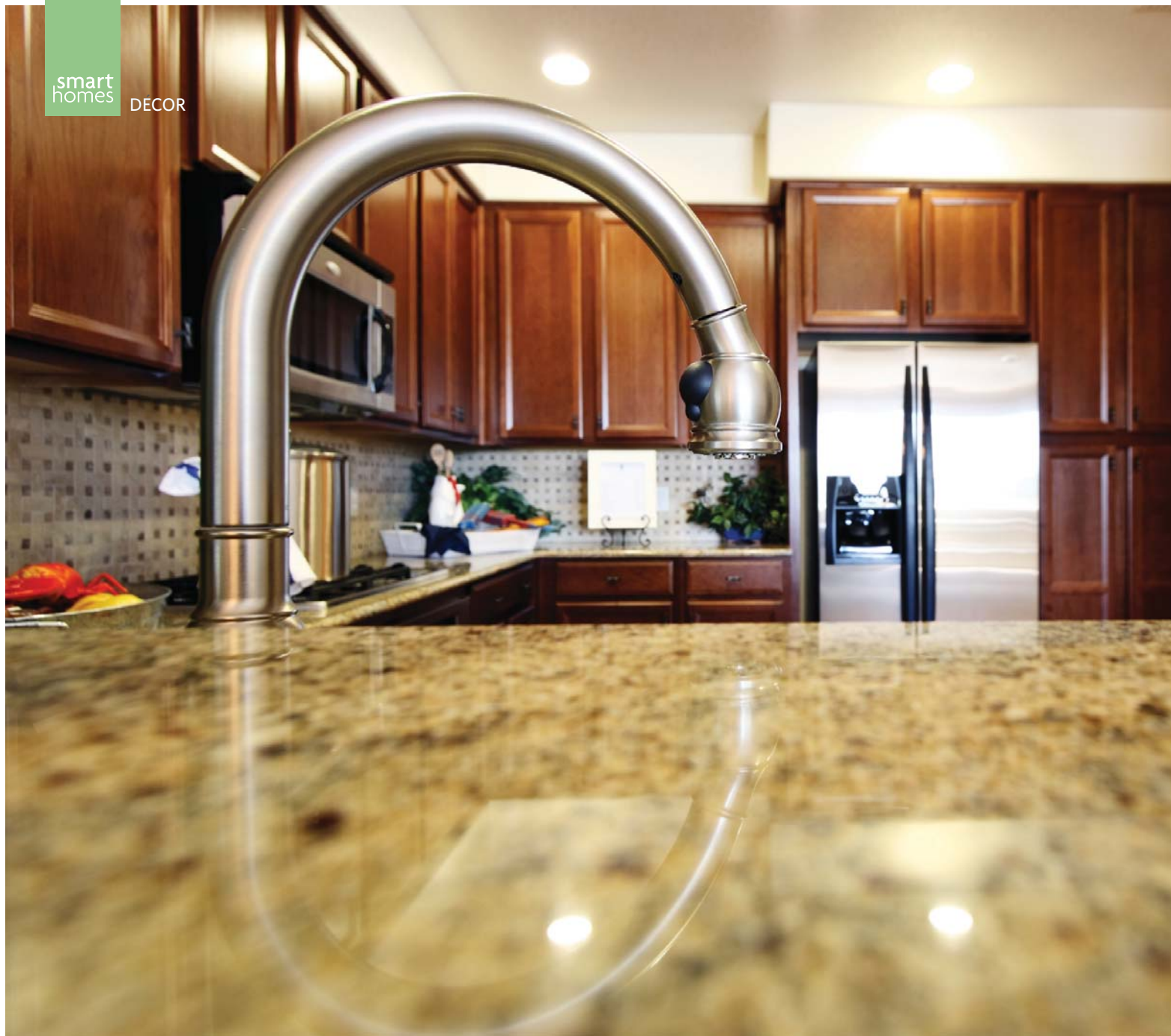
Wood requires constant vigilance; regular resealing and varnishing with a non-toxic material to maintain its impermeability and to avoid warping and swelling of the material.

The absorption of moisture and liquids over time by these materials can lead to imbedded stains, which are difficult to reverse and may require the replacement of the grout or in extreme cases, the entire stained counter surface. The continuous presence of moisture and liquids encourages the growth of bacterial colonies and creates a potential health hazard for you, your family and anyone who is present in or consumes anything prepared in your kitchen.

Synthetic materials such as polyester and acrylic resin, as well as laminate, are non-porous, so they score high marks in the food safety and stain-resistance category, however they can be very easily damaged by heat from cooking apparatus and utensils. They are also more vulnerable to scratches, scuffs and discoloration from general wear and tear, and as a result require a lot more maintenance than countertop materials with comparable positive attributes.

Epoxy resin is notably more resilient than its polyester counterpart, and a lot more customizable than most of the aforementioned countertop materials. However, acquiring high quality resin based countertop material is usually pricier than purchasing natural stone materials like granite.

Finally, the value of investing in a new countertop is



a pressing issue in the mind of most homeowners considering a remodeling project. Is this countertop worth the money spent on it? How long will it last? If I want to sell my home will the asking price be bolstered by the type of countertop in my kitchen?

Returns on kitchen remodeling and upgrades when looking to sell a house can be as much as eighty-six cents of every dollar spent, if high quality and in demand materials such as granite are used in the construction of the countertop and maintenance is a regular occurrence.

To put this into perspective, consider the remodeling of a simple, L-shaped 40 sq ft counter space in a kitchen and its maintenance over ten years. If an acrylic-based resin, one of the more affordable and hygienic choices is used, the total installation cost is approximately \$5500. With granite replacing resin as the material of choice, the installation cost becomes approximately \$2000 more.

Maintenance costs must also be considered. Depending on the

level of activity occurring in this kitchen, regular maintenance of the resin countertop becomes necessary. In fact, most local manufacturers said homeowners usually refinish their resin countertops annually, usually around the Yuletide season. This results in approximately \$400 being spent annually on maintenance, which, over a decade drives the total cost of the resin countertop way past the more durable granite, which can have a shelf life of up to 25 years with adequate attention.

Emerging trends and products will always be mitigating factors when kitchen remodeling is considered. Attention should be paid to the engineered stone countertop movement, spearheaded by lavastone and quartz, which is slowly gaining momentum in some construction and interior design circles. Unfortunately, the retail and installation costs are a roadblock to most potential remodelers. As interest grows and more manufacturers of engineered stone emerge, costs should become less of a mitigating factor, but it's pretty safe to crown granite the most popular choice when it comes to stone countertops.



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HOME DECOR

EQUALS HAUTE COUTURE

By Natalia Nunes

Which well heeled woman finds dressing herself smartly a chore tantamount to doing the dishes? The answer to that would be – none! The parallels between couture and interior decorating are surprisingly quite strong. For instance, women wear accessories, rooms have accessories. We know that colour, or the lack thereof, is a similarity; and apparel is like furniture. As a woman, I cannot but bring attention to our feet as many of us share the same addiction to shoes. Carpets, rugs or whatever we stand on, be it hardwood or tiles, would be equal to our Jimmy Choos or those coveted Christian Louboutin red soles.

Just as we plan how we look, whether to please ourselves or for any other reason, we plan how our homes look. And just as we tire of our wardrobes, we tire of our decor. Waking up with the thought, “Hmmm . . . what shall I wear today?” is no different to, “How can I change this living room?” or any other room for that matter. So we can plan to revamp a room as deliciously as we plan a new wardrobe.

Here’s my version of a parable. A woman woke up one morning and walked into her living room en route to the kitchen for a cup of tea. She glanced at the pleasant but tired decor and thought, “Today, I shall give you a facelift.” After dressing herself quite smartly, she drove to the paint store and stood in front of the paint swatches for about two hours with notebook and pencil in hand. Pictures of her living room, tucked into her notebook, were taken out and placed beside the different colours as she planned the decor smartly.







Just as we prepare ourselves for a big night by bathing, having a manicure and pedicure, going to the hairdresser and maybe having a make-up artist transform our faces, we must also prepare our room's canvas – the walls.

Ideas floated in her head like blouses on a clothing rack. She wrote down some and matched them with others, all the while, bearing in mind the delightful palette of paints that stood before her. When she settled on a few colours, knowing that she wanted to create a dramatic accent wall in her living room, she then discussed the different types of paint with the salesman. The importance of selecting the correct type of paint is paramount. This woman was actually painting a picture, creating the illusion of a brick wall on a blank, beige wall. There was the correct colour red to choose along with different tints to make the bricks seem real. Then there was the grouting between the bricks which would appear to be mortar.

Not only would this woman require paints, tints and spray sealant but painter's tape to make the grout lines straight. After all, she wasn't recreating the Leaning Tower of Pisa. With materials in hand, the woman drove back home to become the inner artist that lay dormant only the day before.

Just as we prepare ourselves for a big night by bathing, having a manicure and pedicure, going to the hairdresser and maybe having a make-up artist transform our faces, we must also prepare our room's canvas – the walls. The walls were cobwebbed and primed, presenting a clean slate. Then the lady went to work measuring the spaces for the faux bricks. The painter's tape was used to cover what would later become the grout lines.

Not much different to applying make-up, painting the bricks and using the tint to create shadows as well as areas of interest with sponges that actually were make-up sponges, along with sea sponges, the woman worked tirelessly on her wall. Driven by sheer pleasure in dressing this accent wall which would spark so much interest in her guests, she finished her masterpiece with complete contentment.

The moral of this story is that we have the ability to change our decor almost as easily as we change our clothing. We must have an inspiration and a proper plan and then go about it with the knowledge that paint is only paint. It can be done and redone, again and again. Find your inner Michelangelo and have a blast doing it!

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Creative Container Homes

By Nick Nunes

Property is something that rarely loses value, utilizing the space you've got is important regardless of how extravagant your dream design home is planned to be. In Barbados, the majority of large land plots are taken up by farms and for commercial use. But, buying a small piece of property should deter you from dreaming big when it comes to home design. Likewise, there is always a creative and cost effective solution to any hurdle in the process of perfecting your dream home.

Barbados is no stranger to the use of shipping containers as offices. There are huge upsides to the use of shipping containers. They are modular, coming in a wide range of sizes, provide a pre-manufactured structure, and, as far as a mobile building goes, shipping containers are relatively easy to transport.

You may be thinking that a shipping container home would be ugly, chunky, or impractical, and you would be wrong. The limits of shipping container home designs are only fettered by your own, or your architect's, creativity.

The great thing about shipping containers is that the modular form and the array of sizes allows for multiple configurations. Though you could make a space that is simple and functional, many have gone beyond convention and created living spaces that could very well double as modern art. With containers ranging from 10' by 8', 20' by 8', and 40' by 8', the doubling up and combining of modules can create innovations as interesting as any other construction project.

Once a level foundation is set for the building area, the container blocks could very well come to life as building blocks or Lego bricks would, with a lot more sophistication. With hanging edges, spaces that open up, and even foldable decks, the layouts of shipping container construction leave you to imagine a structure of uniqueness all to yourself.

The inherent strength, wide availability, and relatively low expense of shipping container homes and offices have exploded due to the adaptability of using these intermodal steel structures as a base for artistic architectural expression. There is even a shipping container hotel in Antwerpen, Belgium.





From Hong Kong to Detroit and China to Belgium, shipping container hotels can be set up in record time and with a surprising amount of luxury. It's not often you hear of a two story 3000sq2 ft home being built for under \$40, 000. With the right amount of ingenuity and a little resourcefulness, you could have a gorgeous shipping container home created in less than a year and have the whole process done in an eco-friendly way by use of reclaimed materials.

From stacking to hanging and perpendicular placement to parallel bridged units, there's no end to the exotic designs possible for creating a comfort zone that is entirely unlike any other home. More than just creating a solid frame for a home, the ridged containers are made to be durable for high stacking and weathering storms when sent across oceans. The steel ridging can also give character to ceilings,

or just as easily be covered up to the point where the original container isn't even recognizable.

With shipping containers, scale is never the problem. Two forty foot containers will give you 640 square feet of living space. Add another floor by placing a twenty foot container on top and you have a cool 800 square feet of already constructed living space. The only need is to cut windows, dedicated doors, ventilation, plumbing, and electrical work. The hard and long labour intensive part of construction is already taken care of at a cost far below the regular price of brick and mortar or even wood construction.

The welding and cutting of steel is considered to be specialized labour and can increase construction expenses, yet overall it is still lower than conventional construction. Unlike timber-frame construction,

attachments must be welded or drilled to the outer skin, which is more time consuming and requires different job site equipment.

Many used containers are available at an amount that is low compared to a finished structure built by other labour-intensive means which also require larger, more expensive foundations. Construction involves very little labour and used shipping containers require only simple modifications can be purchased from major transport companies for as little as US \$1,200 each. Even when purchased brand new they are seldom more than US \$6000.

The dream of these designs goes even further. A few bold free-thinkers have gone above and beyond in the creation of veritable colossal container mansions that boggle the mind. Your home should be something to you can be proud of and with the ease and efficiency of shipping container construction you can showcase your quirks as creatively or modestly as an artistic reflection of your personality.

It's easy to find inspiration for design. A quick google search shows a myriad of module made homes. Maybe even sit down with your child and have a go at some Lego creations to see what dreams can be sparked from a little playtime. Many of the container homes emit ideals of adult fancy connecting with the inner child to create a space that is gorgeous, functional, and based in flights of fantasy.



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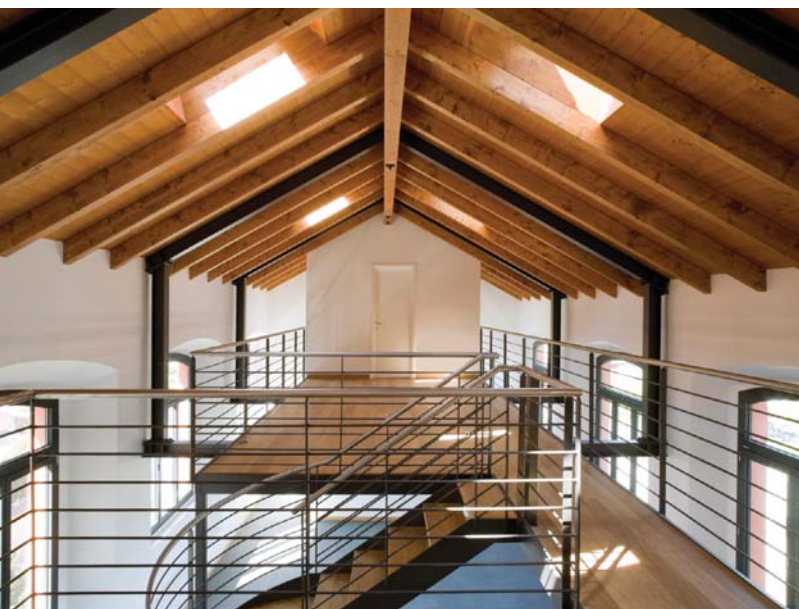
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LOFTED LIVING

By Nick Nunes



Whether you wish to convert your upper storey or attic space into a loft, or simply add a half storey to your house, a loft affords an adaptable open space for any purpose.

The purpose of your loft is the first thing you need to consider before beginning a conversion. If you're just looking for a bit of extra storage space, then the need for supports must be considered depending on the weight you intend to place in your new space. The type of traffic your loft will see is extremely important in maintaining the integrity of your house's overall structure.

A one-storey building that could be considered a studio can be greatly improved by the addition of a lofted bedroom. Or a single-storey house could have an elevated living space to add to the square footage of the property. With high ceilings, a loft can be the perfect area for a study, spare bedroom, lounge or even a studio depending on your proclivities.

Take a measurement from the bottom of the ridge timber to the top of the ceiling joist; the useable part of the roof should be greater than 2.2 metres. The higher the pitch angle, the higher the central head height is likely to be; if dormers are used or the roof is redesigned, then the floor area can be increased.

Converting an attic space into a loft can pose the most effort for the creation of a loft, especially if the roof is trussed rather than having a single solid support frame to distribute the weight of the roof. Removing trusses and installing dedicated support beams is definitely an engineer's area of expertise to configure, as you wouldn't want the whole roof to cave in from poor weight dispersal.

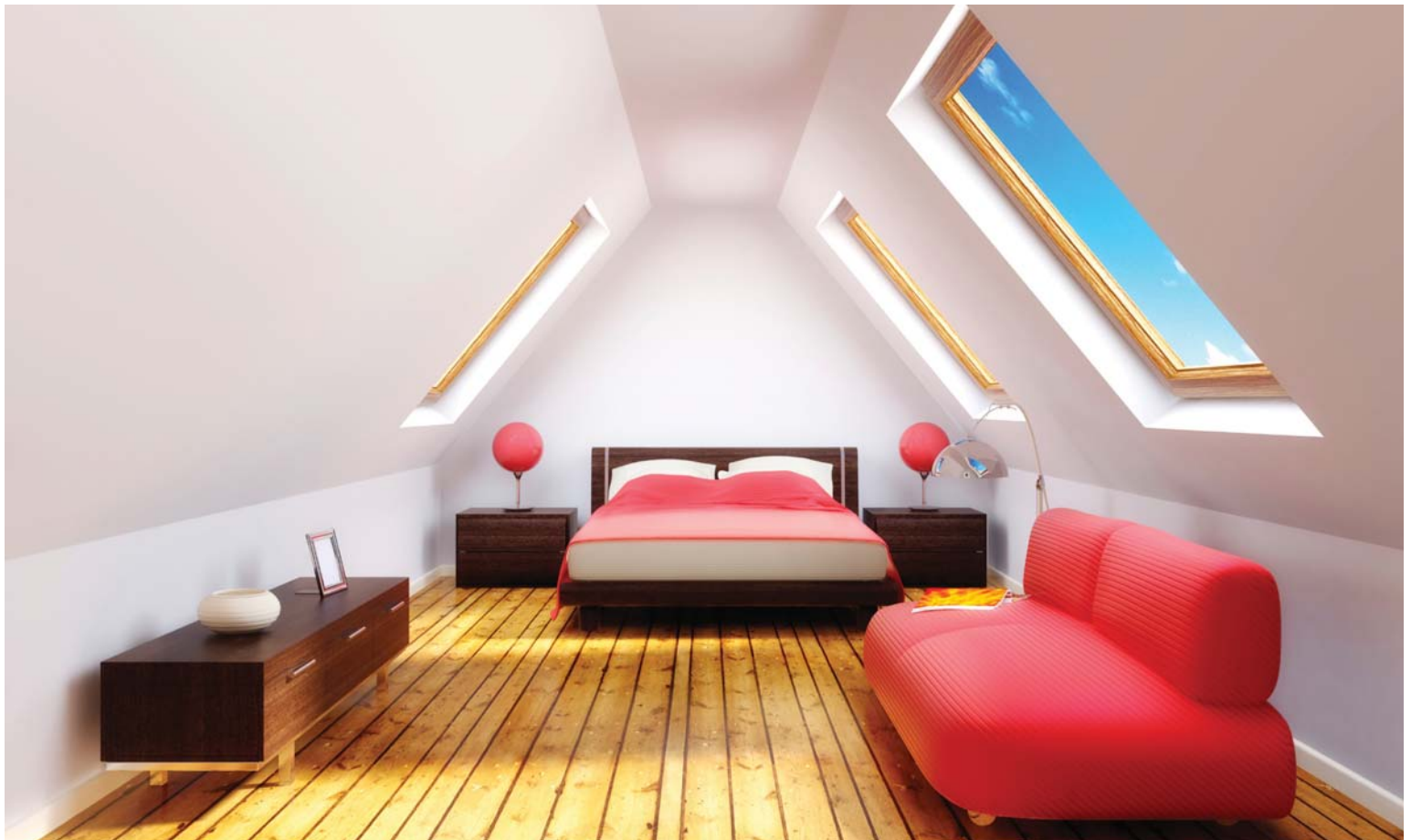
Beyond fitting the supports and investigating and reinforcing the structures of the roof, for the installation of a loft, it's best to have a roof with a higher pitch angle as it allows for more central headspace when the loft is completed and useable. An angle above 50° is ideal.

Going past the suitability of your roof angle and the structural support needed to maintain the integrity of the home, regular ceiling supports are not made to handle walking spaces or living areas. If you're converting an attic, an engineer must be consulted prior to any do-it-yourself projects, including the addition of windows and ventilation, every aspect of the conversion should be sorted in detail before tackling your home transformation.

Furthermore, there could be zoning issues that are Government regulated. It's best to know the ins and outs of what you can and cannot do to your property before embarking on the search for additional space.

When it comes to home updates, everyone is interested in the most economical improvements that can serve multiple uses. Adding extra space to your home can make a vast difference to the property value as well as opening up an area for comfort. A loft can be categorised as a converted space of a building directly under the roof.

Whether you wish to convert your upper storey or attic space into a loft, or simply add a half storey to your house, a loft affords an adaptable open space for any purpose. The majority of Barbadian residences utilise hip and gable roofing styles which are perfect for the addition of a half storey.



Most ceiling bases make use of planks ranging from 2x4 and 2x6 to 2x8 wood supports, whereas a load-bearing floor should be structured with hardier materials like 2x10 or 2x12 and above. Once the zoning issues, roof supports, floor layout and ventilation are completed, it is time to wrestle with the issue of wiring and plan plumbing if desired.

The ideal location for a staircase to land is in line with the roof ridge. This makes for the best use of available height above the staircase. In practice, the actual position will depend upon the layout of the floor below. Where necessary, the available height can be achieved using a dormer or adding a roof light above the staircase or, if appropriate, converting a hip roof end to a gable.

The best loft conversions should be done above pre-existing bedroom and bathroom areas to facilitate an easier running of necessities to your new upper level. In older buildings, some attics and sub-roof crawl spaces may already have electrical outlets installed, but they could be damaged by many things from humidity and salt to simply the passage of time. It's best to go ahead and update everything when it comes to your modern remaking.

Natural light and ventilation are very important, especially with the humidity and salt air of the Caribbean winds that blow throughout the island. While insulation should not be a huge problem, it is imperative to consider fire and hurricane safety when making any home improvements.

Cost, of course, will depend on the size and extent of work needed for your personal preference of loft creation. It could run anywhere from a few thousand dollars to tens of thousands depending on the simplicity or extravagance desired. The addition of extra living space to your home doesn't just add digits to the worth of the building but will also invite a creative intrigue in the design and innovative use and creative creation of space.

Whether a full attic conversion or a half-storey hanging loft, the time and effort you put into invigorating your home could be well worth the pennies and processes. The addition of a light and breezy area of your home, a small study for seclusion, an extra living room or bedroom will give a jump to your property value and a new lease on loving the space you're in.



6 Best Herbs

FOR CONTAINER GARDENING

By Coretta Joe

The amazing thing about herbs is that you don't actually need garden space. Whether you plant them from seedlings or you transplant starter plants, potted herbs are the way to go.



Having access to fresh herbs right outside your kitchen is a great advantage that will save some money off your food bill. The amazing thing about herbs is that you don't actually need garden space. Whether you plant them from seedlings or you transplant starter plants, potted herbs are the way to go. Most herbs are perfect for container gardening and will flourish beautifully on your patio, front step or kitchen window. **Smart Homes** compiled a list of the six best herbs for growing in containers.

BASIL – Garden enthusiasts agree that basil is one of the most rewarding herbs to grow in a container. Basil is especially susceptible to mildew, so growing this herb in a container ensures that it gets plenty of airflow. Be sure to give it plenty of water and keep pinching off the flower heads so that the plant will keep growing new leaves year-round.

ROSEMARY – Rosemary is fantastic when used fresh or dried, that's a win-win. This fragrant herb thrives in at least six hours of sun daily – morning sun and afternoon shade. The trick is to ensure that the container in which you plant the rosemary has at least one drainage hole since it does not do well sitting in water, but likes to dry out between watering.

MINT – This culinary delight is one herb that definitely needs to be contained. Mint is quite notorious for spreading and lots of cross-pollination occurs as a result. Because it grows by underground root runners, mint spreads easily and quickly. A 12- to 16-inch pot is recommended to give it adequate space. Mint thrives in rich, well drained soil and adapts to many soil types. To keep mint plants looking attractive, cut frequently and remove flowers as they appear.

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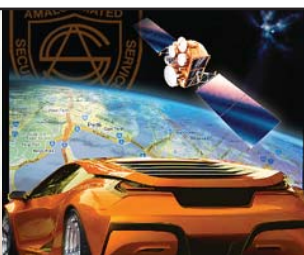
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THYME – Thyme is one of the more low-maintenance of all the herbs and one of the most used. It only requires minimal watering. All varieties of thyme, including English thyme and lemon thyme, grow best in full sun and well drained soil.

Tip: Thyme tends to get woody after a few years, so growing it in containers makes it easier to replace when that time comes.

CHIVES – Chives are a beautiful and sensible addition to any container garden. This plant is versatile and easy growing, needing to be watered only when the soil has dried out. Snip the leaves regularly, leaving approximately two to three inches of leaves on each plant. This ensures a continual supply of leaves throughout the year.

CILANTRO – Also known as coriander, cilantro demands its own space, so growing it in a container is a wise idea. However, cilantro grows best from seeds since it does not transplant well. Plant the seeds about an inch deep and the cilantro will be up in no time.



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A neat, well organised closet speaks volumes about your home. Even if you do not have the luxury of a spacious walk-in closet, these easy and inexpensive do-it-yourself tips will ensure that you maximise space without compromising the aesthetic quality of your bedroom.

CLOSET ORGANISATION TIPS

By Coretta Joe

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DECLUTTER – Before you begin to organise, it is wise to donate clothing, shoes and other items you no longer wear. One smart way to do this is to turn all hangers so that the hooks are pointing towards you. When you wear something, put the hanger back in the opposite direction. In six months, any hanger still unchanged is holding an item you haven't worn, which means it's time to start packing.

DOUBLE ROD – No need to call the handyman or get a power drill, simply get a hanging rod that hooks over the existing rod and use this to hang short hanging clothes.

HANGING SHOE ORGANISER – Shoes are often the No. 1 cause of a messy closet. Instead of leaving shoes scattered on the floor, get an inexpensive hanging shoe organiser that could easily fit two to three pairs of shoes in each compartment. Use your new floor space for storage by purchasing inexpensive containers.

SODA CAN TABS – Maximise hanging space by looping a soda can tab on a coat hanger, letting it fall all the way down to the neck. Next, loop the top of the second hanger through the other side of the tab. You can also use chains and s-hooks for this same purpose.

SHOWER CURTAIN RINGS – Use shower curtain rings to hang your bags and purses. This way, you're saving space and maintaining the shape of your bags and purses at the same time.

TIE HANGER – If you have a tie hanger and multiple tank tops, turn the tie hanger into a hub of organisation by hanging those tops on every available space.

USE DOOR SPACE CREATIVELY – Hang catch-alls on the inside of closet doors and use these to store practically anything – from jewellery to purses and stockings.

RAIN GUTTER GUARD – A rain gutter guard and 3M command hooks are all you need to enjoy an organisational system for your earrings, since having them in a random basket in your closet or strewn on your dresser is just too messy. Install the gutter guard in your closet and enjoy all your dangly earrings at eye level.

SHOEBOXES – If your closet comes with built-in drawers, you can use old shoeboxes to organise the items you put into the drawers so that you can make use of precious space. This eliminates the need to pile everything into your drawers.

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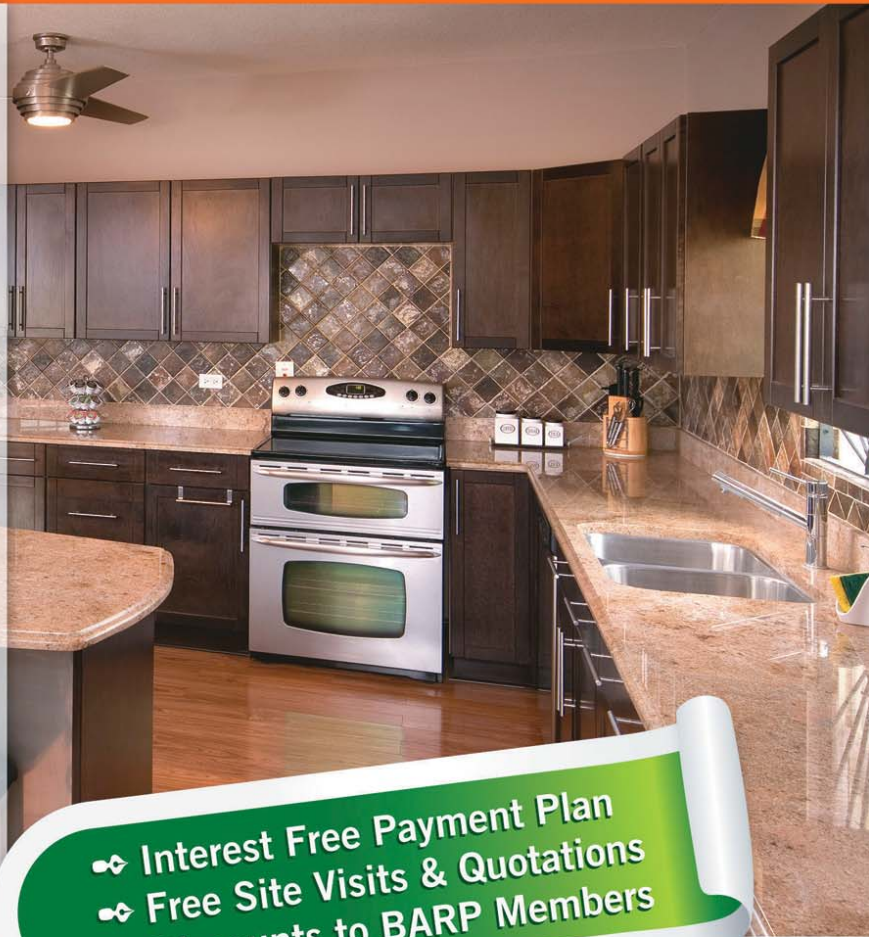
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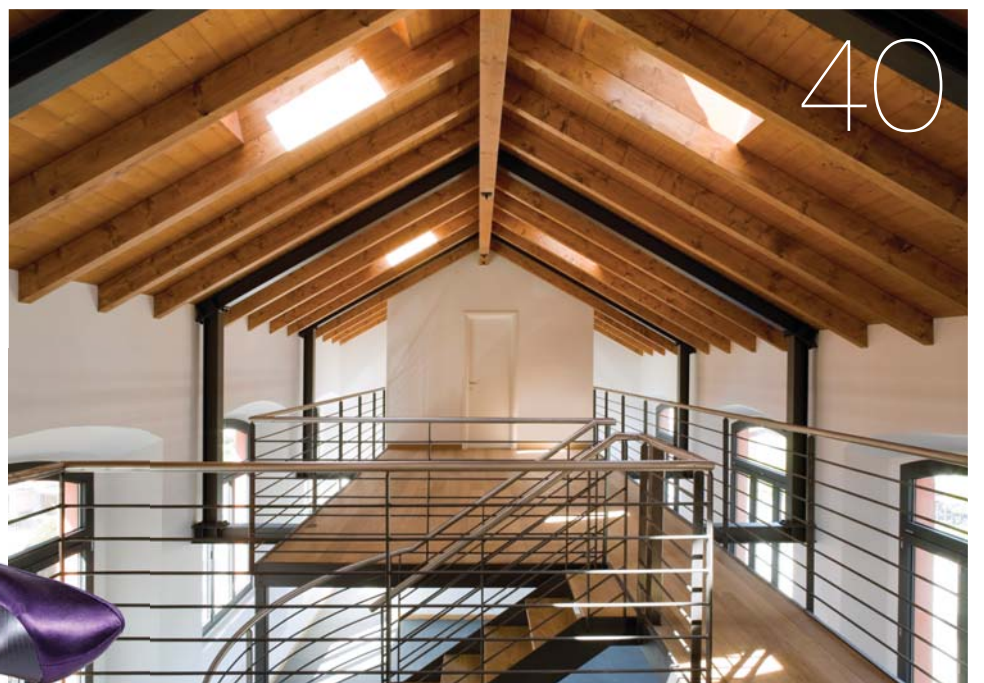
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10 DIY FLOOR TILING TIPS

By Tyson Henry

Tiles are sold in packs and the size and number of tiles they contain will determine the area of floor that they will cover.

There are many types of floor tiles, ranging from ceramic, clay and natural stone. Here in Barbados, most home builders install tiles over a mortar base, but it is not uncommon to layer new tiles on top of existing ones.

Below are ten tips to help you deliver a job good enough to be envied by the pros.

1. Tiles are sold in packs and the size and number of tiles they contain will determine the area of floor that they will cover. Round up the total to the nearest whole number to establish the number of packs of tiles you'll need. Always buy ten per cent more tiles than you need, to allow for breakages.
2. Seal before tiling. Always waterproof showers and water prone areas before tiling them. Even with the greatest diligence when installing and grouting, tiles are still not waterproof or moisture-proof. They are designed to make cleaning easier and protect the surface below them. There is a good range of waterproofing materials available that are easy to apply on the surface before you begin tiling.
3. Find a starting point. Find the midpoints of the two longest walls and draw a chalk line across the floor between these points. Repeat for the shorter walls but adjust the line so that it passes through the centre of the first line at right angles.
4. Lay tiles along the two lines to experiment with the layout and check if they look right from the doorway. If any gaps at the walls are less than half a tile wide, shift the line across to make more of a gap. Also, move the guide lines so that tiles around a dominant feature such as a bay window or a protruding wall are symmetrical and there are whole tiles at the doorway. Try to work with as many whole tiles as possible, even if it means adjusting the grout line width slightly.
5. Spread about one square metre of tile cement into one of the right angles made by the two crossing chalk lines. Scrape the notched edge of the trowel across the mix to form ridges of the same thickness.
6. Lay the first few tiles along the edge of the longest centre line. Gently press the tiles into place, making sure they also line up with the other centre line. Add plastic spacers at each corner to keep them exactly the same distance apart for grouting.
7. Work outwards from the middle of the room until you have laid all the whole tiles on one half of the floor. Use a spirit



Don't rush to grout. Even though all the tiles are down on the floor and set, don't start putting the grout down. Allow at least 24 hours for the tile cement to dry, otherwise you will damage the tiling job.

level to ensure the tiles are at the same level. Now move across to the other side of the longest centre line and add the rest of the whole tiles. Leave to set for 24 hours.

8. Use the tile cutter to trim the edge tiles to the right shape. Measure the space at both ends in case the walls are uneven and remember to allow for the grouting gap. Always wear goggles and gloves when cutting tiles.
9. Don't rush to grout. Even though all the tiles are down on the floor and set, don't start putting the grout down. Allow at least 24 hours for the tile cement to dry, otherwise you will damage the tiling job. Never trowel grout in a straight line. There are two types of grout: wall and floor grout. The main difference is that floor grout has sand in it and wall grout doesn't. Make sure the grout is the right consistency and trowel it diagonally to ensure an even application.

Bonus: When the trowel gets jammed, "butter" the tiles. When working in tight corners or edges, the trowel won't be able to fit inside that space. The easiest way to work around this problem is to put the tile cement on the back of the tiles.

You will need:

- Floor tiles
- Tile Cement
- Grout
- Diamond disc tile cutter
- Safety kit (goggles and heavy duty gloves)
- Spirit level
- Profile shaper
- Tile saw
- Pencil
- Tape measure
- Serrated trowel
- Spacers
- Chalk line
- Lint-free cloth
- Floor sealer
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Life & Design:

CREATIVE ACCENTING

By Sheree-Ann McDonald

An accent is a distinct emphasis that brings prominence or highlights a particular feature in a room. In other words, it makes the room pop, separating dreary from interesting and exciting. The fun part is that the accents do not necessarily need to serve any particular purpose; they can be simply something you were absolutely thrilled to see in a store that made you stop and say wow! One note of caution though, just make sure the object fits with the general size and proportions of the room as well as the other objects in it. A life-sized statue is wonderful but not in a 10x10 room with other furniture.

USING COLOUR

One of the most exciting features I have seen recently is the new-look front door, fancily painted with a bright and exciting colour and finished with upscale finishings. This is definitely one way to make a statement.

Using a colour which contrasts or complements your wall colour will definitely cause items to come to the fore. For example, using throw pillows and vases of distinct colours which contrast with the general wall colour can be refreshing.

USING METALLIC OBJECTS

The use of metals for mirror frames, accessories such as vases, wall art and even entire surfaces not only adds a shine to a space but certainly can provide a nice textured surface as well. Gold and brass are shining once again and are now quite trendy.







The use of different light sources has become almost standard in any newly constructed house, especially in the kitchen.

USING DRAMATIC LIGHTING AND LIGHT SOURCES

The use of different light sources has become almost standard in any newly constructed house, especially in the kitchen. There is plenty of room for you to add spotlights, track lights and picture lights to a space in order to improve the general ambience; this also gives you the opportunity to move from a more public setting to an intimate one using the same space. The lighting fixture itself is now also an accent. There is no end to the chandeliers, lamp shapes and bulb shapes that you may find at the hardware or lighting store.

L'OBJET WITH A DIFFERENCE

Simply put, the very object itself can be your accent. Here are some examples:

- The old rocker belonging to your grandmother which has no match but definitely adds a certain quality to the room.
- The sweet paintings your children created nicely framed.
- The two-dollar find at last week's yard sale.
- The unusual rocks discovered at the beach.

As usual, at the end of the day, your design must represent you and who you are – accents included.



10 TIPS FOR CLEANING WITHOUT CHEMICALS

By Tyson Henry

The clean scent that you always strove to achieve when cleaning is actually not as good for you as you thought. The truth is that cleaning your home can negatively affect your health if you aren't wary of the ingredients in the cleaning agents you use. Cancer-causing chemicals in the air, an asthma attack from fumes or serious skin burns from an accidental spill are a few of the many mishaps that can occur when we set out to clean our homes.

While baking soda has long been an ingredient in food recipes, it has also been regaining popularity as a cleaning alternative, as more people look for non-toxic and biodegradable cleaning solutions for the home. Baking soda is a key ingredient in many do-it-yourself beauty and cleaning products, thanks to its gentle abrasiveness, odour fighting properties and ability to absorb oils.

What could be safer than a cleaning potion that's also edible? Below, you'll find ten Smart Homes tips for using baking soda to clean everything from a clogged drain to your linens.

A photograph of a wooden surface. In the foreground, a sliced orange sits on a grey plate. To the left, a glass bowl contains white powder. In the background, a yellow sponge and a glass of water are visible.

While baking soda has long been an ingredient in food recipes, it has also been regaining popularity as a cleaning alternative, as more people look for non-toxic and biodegradable cleaning solutions for the home.



1. UNCLOG DRAINS

Drano is really toxic stuff, but you don't have to take our word for it – just read the warning label on the back of the bottle. The next time you have a clogged drain, pour a cup of baking soda, followed by a cup of white vinegar down your drain. Then plug the drain with the stopper or a rag and let it work for at least 15 minutes. If the issue isn't fixed, you can always rinse and repeat with no fear of harsh chemicals backing up in your sink or tub.

2. CLEAN POTS WITHOUT SCRUBBING

Fill your pot with a few inches of water and add two tablespoons of baking soda. Let it soak for 15 minutes and then scrape whatever crusty stuff is left with a wooden spoon.

3. KILL BAD ODOURS

Many bad or musty odours are the result of slightly acidic molecules, which is why baking soda's pH-balancing properties help to get rid of stench. Keeping an open container of baking soda in your fridge, cabinets or closet will reduce unpleasant smells.

Tip: It's good to replace the soda about once every six months.

4. FRESHEN YOUR MATTRESS

You can put baking soda's odour fighting properties to work on your bed. Just sprinkle the powder on your mattress and make the bed. When next you change the sheets, vacuum the baking soda.

5. CARPETS/RUGS

If your carpet is just a little musty, you can sprinkle baking soda and then vacuum (similar to the mattress trick). However, you can also scrub out carpet stains using baking soda and water. After the powder dries, you can still just vacuum it.

6. CLEAN THE OVEN AND THE FRIDGE

Mix up a paste of water and baking soda and spread it over the interior of the fridge or oven. Let it sit overnight or for about 12 hours. Then using a spatula, gently scrape all the dried paste and wipe any remaining residue with a rag.

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7. COUNTERS, TILES AND LINOLEUM FLOORS

A similar water and baking soda paste also makes a great scrub for all kinds of surfaces around the house. Use it to clean tiles, marble, countertops and linoleum floors.

8. GROUT

Use an old toothbrush and baking soda to get residue and grime off of grout. Get more green tips on cleaning grout at www.mnn.com.

9. TOILETS

Just sprinkle, scrub and flush. Baking soda's abrasive qualities are great for cleaning porcelain.

10. WHITEN YOUR LINENS

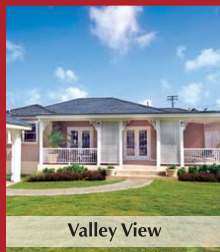
Mix equal parts of baking soda and lemon juice to make your white towels, sheets and clothing whiter. This mixture works as a mild bleaching agent. Baking soda helps to balance the pH of water and can be used to effectively clean, freshen, brighten and soften laundry. After adding laundry to the washing machine, add liquid or powder laundry detergent as usual and then pour one cup of baking soda directly over the clothes.

Adding baking soda to the washing machine also helps to neutralise the smell of musty towels and bathing suits that have been sitting in the hamper or that smell like chlorine.

To remove the musty odour from laundry that was left wet in the washing machine for too long, rerun the washing cycle with a cup of baking soda to refresh them.

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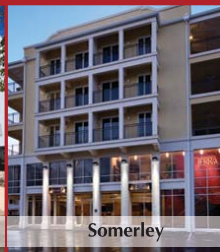
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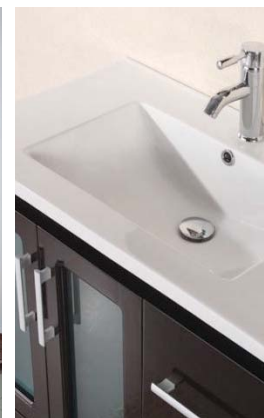
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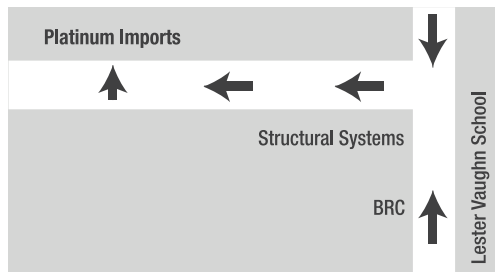
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SMART WAYS TO RECYCLE

TIPS FOR REDUCING AND REUSING AT HOME

By Coretta Joe

In addition to saving energy, reducing waste products in landfills, helping to mitigate global warming and reducing pollution, recycling actually helps homeowners save money.

Making simple changes at home in terms of recycling has many great advantages. In addition to saving energy, reducing waste products in landfills, helping to mitigate global warming and reducing pollution, recycling actually helps homeowners save money. One viable option is selling recyclable materials to organisations willing to buy. However, at home, there are genius ways to reduce and reuse in order to do your part in making your home a little more eco-friendly.

MICROFIBRE CLOTHS

These handy towels can take the place of 60 paper towel rolls before they need replacing. Microfibre cloths are gentle enough to use on nearly all surfaces and are even great for cleaning spectacles and mirrors. Use them to quickly absorb spills, wipe down counters and many other household needs. This will save you quite a few dollars when you consider how much you spend on quality paper towel rolls.





BUY IN BULK

Some food items such as margarine and yogurt are packaged in containers that are hard to recycle. To beat this, purchase these items in the largest container available and put them into smaller reusable containers as needed. Use these containers for freezing leftovers, stashing odds and ends and as plant pots for herbs.

CLEANING PRODUCTS

Purchase cleaning products in large containers and decant into smaller spray bottles. Be on the lookout for concentrated cleaner refills, this way you can reuse the old spray bottle and just add water. Also, get ultra-strength detergents which save packaging so that you get more laundry loads out of the container.

PORTABLE POWER

Many recycling programmes do not accept single-use batteries. However, rechargeable batteries can and should be recycled. When you buy rechargeable batteries, you are actually buying less since you can charge up quite a few times before they need replacing.

SAVE GLASS JARS

Who needs mason jars when you can recycle the jars from your pasta sauce, jams and seasonings for that same purpose? These jars can be used for your green juices, smoothies and other home-made concoctions.

REUSE SCRAP PAPER

For your home office, print on both sides of the sheets or let your children draw and colour on the back of the used sheets.

SWITCH TO PLASTIC

Milk and juice cartons are not recyclable. If you don't mind switching brands, opt for the ones that come in plastic so that you can reuse them for storage.

CABINET DOORS

WHAT'S YOUR STYLE?

By Tyson Henry

With a plethora of sales at local hardware and home appliance stores ongoing, now is the time for inspired thinking. To assist, we've compiled a diverse array of design styles to spark your imagination and inspire your creative passion as you seek to build, renovate or refurbish your kitchen space.

Picture yourself in a rustic, wood grain-filled cooking area, or surrounded by the clean lines and symmetry of a contemporary kitchen that you, your family and guests will adore. Use our tips as a guide and find the style that best suits you. Your canvas awaits.

Shaker doors, despite their age, are the quintessential examples of fusing the geometric elements of modernity, with the bold, gilded frames associated with traditional design. This door is the most common door style in kitchens today because it lends itself to any décor. This five-piece flat-panel style has a frame made from four pieces and a single flat centre panel for the fifth piece.

Flat doors are simple but stylish, and void of any expensive details. Their hard lines and simple form make them a great fit for contemporary interiors, as they are smooth with no panels, contours or accents.

This style delicately threads the line between minimal utilitarianism and modern elegance, to create a functional space with clean lines.

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Tip: Laminate tends to be more budget friendly and offers a greater variety of colours and sheens.

Louvered doors are characterised in by horizontal wood slats similar to those typically used in olden Caribbean days on windows and shutters, but they add a distinct architectural style to kitchen cabinetry. Due to the need for craftsmanship, be very wary that this style of door will come with a high price tag!

Tip: Many louvered doors have spaces between each slat, making them great for cabinets that require ventilation. The downside to this is that they can be tedious to clean thoroughly.

Woven rattan inserts for cabinet doors add texture and interest. In our tropical climate, doors with woven rattan, or wicker as it is also known, promote air flow and can be used as an accent. The art of weaving is quickly becoming obscure, but if you can source a tradesman, your kitchen will be adorned with a colonial-inspired style that is sure to add texture and character.

Inset styled doors tend to be expensive to construct, because of the high levels of craftsmanship and time required to construct them. The saving grace is that when built correctly, the style will lend your kitchen a classic look that'll last for generations.

The inset door gets its name because it is set inside of the cabinet frame, whereas conversely, more commonly built cabinet doors rest on the outside of the frame. The door is designed and constructed with extremely precise measurements so that it nests inside the frame and

opens and closes properly, even when the wood expands and contracts. Beadboard doors hearken to the colonial-styled homes that epitomized grandeur. Beadboard was used in the distant past as a decorative wall treatment, but has since been adapted for use in cabinetry as the centre panel for doors.

Tip: While all-white beadboard cabinetry can give your kitchen a bright and clean feel, all the seams and crevices on this door style can collect dust over time, so be wary of this when selecting paint colour and type. Choose a paint that will withstand being wiped with a damp cloth over time.

French styled kitchen cabinet doors, with their classic tones and checkerboard designs, will envelop your family and guests in warmth that is reminiscent of simpler times. French Doors complement any kitchen, and are primarily used for upper display cabinets and/or pantries.

Though traditional, this style exudes a modern elegance when paired with natural stone countertops (see page __) and simple, contemporary backsplashes..

Bonus: Pickled/Distressed refers more to a finish than a door style, but it is worth mentioning. These finishes are for the homeowner that dreams of having an antique-styled kitchen with traditional details and craftsmanship. Adorning your cabinets with a worn look calls for more work than most people imagine.



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SPRUCING UP YOUR KITCHEN ON A BUDGET

By Tyson Henry

The kitchen is the one room in the home where families spend the most time together.



In Barbados, kitchens are more than just where we prepare meals. The kitchen is the one room in the home where families spend the most time together. If you're looking for a way to spruce up the space and an overhaul isn't in the budget, try one of these easy kitchen cabinet upgrades.

A makeover doesn't necessarily mean replacing your outdated cabinets with all new ones. As long as the frames and doors are structurally sound, you can clean them up and brush on a different colour of paint. Within a weekend, your kitchen will be transformed from dreary to sunny. For this job you will need sandpaper, a paintbrush, and some good old elbow grease. What you don't need is a whole lot of money, as the transformation will cost you a fraction of even the cheapest new cabinets.

Editor's tip: Try painting your top tier cabinets with a colour that is complementary to the colour you use on the base cabinets, or use a contrasting accent colour on the inside of the cabinets.

Instead of spending thousands on new cabinets, save yourself

the expense and reface the ones you have for a fraction of the cost. It is amazing what a little veneer and some new doors can do to brighten an ageing space. Both are readily available here in Barbados and some hardware stores sell peel-and-stick veneer to make the task simpler. Just be sure to measure twice and cut once. Work carefully, and your kitchen will look brand-new in no time.

Make the most of your kitchen's existing storage space by installing a pull-out shelf in one – or all – of the base cabinets. The shelf resembles a shallow drawer that glides out for easy access to items stored in the back of the cabinet.

If you already own colourful dishes and plates, this is probably the cheapest suggestion. Add a plate rack that will allow you to show off your collection while adding a splash of vibrancy to the room.

Nothing screams quality and attention to detail, like crown moulding. Adding this trim to the top of your cabinet frames will transform your kitchen into a seamless design.



Granite is able to withstand high-traffic, scribbles by young children, clumsy partners and houseguests, heat from cooking apparatus and even bacteria, with minimal maintenance while maintaining its luster and integrity.

The varying amounts of quartz and feldspar, as well as smaller mineral deposits of amphibole, mica and other trace minerals are responsible for granite's naturally attractive colouration. The random arrangement the minerals also means that no two counter tops will be alike, which adds unmatched character, value and uniqueness to your kitchen.

Granite is able to withstand high-traffic, scribbles by young children, clumsy partners and houseguests, heat from cooking apparatus and even bacteria, with minimal maintenance while maintaining its luster and integrity. Its mineral structure, coupled with the use of sealant, makes it a tough task for the usual sources of stains such as red wine, acidic liquids, oil, coffee, tea, rust, mildew, ink, scratches and even scorch marks to set in and become a permanent fixture of the countertop, and allows most of these faux-pas to be easily cleaned with a simple solution of soap and water.

When it comes to food safety and general hygiene, granite is again a safe bet based on its low porosity when sealed. In comparison, materials such as concrete, wood and ceramic tiles because of the grout used to secure are extremely permeable to liquids and general moisture.

Concrete is especially vulnerable to acidic liquids especially vinegar and lime juice which can cause etches in the surface; be careful while seasoning that meat for Sunday lunch! It is also an extremely heavy material to work with, which usually results in higher costs for labour during installation.

Wood requires constant vigilance; regular resealing and varnishing with a non-toxic material to maintain its impermeability and to avoid warping and swelling of the material.

The absorption of moisture and liquids over time by these materials can lead to imbedded stains, which are difficult to reverse and may require the replacement of the grout or in extreme cases, the entire stained counter surface. The continuous presence of moisture and liquids encourages the growth of bacterial colonies and creates a potential health hazard for you, your family and anyone who is present in or consumes anything prepared in your kitchen.

Synthetic materials such as polyester and acrylic resin, as well as laminate, are non-porous, so they score high marks in the food safety and stain-resistance category, however they can be very easily damaged by heat from cooking apparatus and utensils. They are also more vulnerable to scratches, scuffs and discoloration from general wear and tear, and as a result require a lot more maintenance than countertop materials with comparable positive attributes.

Epoxy resin is notably more resilient than its polyester counterpart, and a lot more customizable than most of the aforementioned countertop materials. However, acquiring high quality resin based countertop material is usually pricier than purchasing natural stone materials like granite.

Finally, the value of investing in a new countertop is



a pressing issue in the mind of most homeowners considering a remodeling project. Is this countertop worth the money spent on it? How long will it last? If I want to sell my home will the asking price be bolstered by the type of countertop in my kitchen?

Returns on kitchen remodeling and upgrades when looking to sell a house can be as much as eighty-six cents of every dollar spent, if high quality and in demand materials such as granite are used in the construction of the countertop and maintenance is a regular occurrence.

To put this into perspective, consider the remodeling of a simple, L-shaped 40 sq ft counter space in a kitchen and its maintenance over ten years. If an acrylic-based resin, one of the more affordable and hygienic choices is used, the total installation cost is approximately \$5500. With granite replacing resin as the material of choice, the installation cost becomes approximately \$2000 more.

Maintenance costs must also be considered. Depending on the

level of activity occurring in this kitchen, regular maintenance of the resin countertop becomes necessary. In fact, most local manufacturers said homeowners usually refinish their resin countertops annually, usually around the Yuletide season. This results in approximately \$400 being spent annually on maintenance, which, over a decade drives the total cost of the resin countertop way past the more durable granite, which can have a shelf life of up to 25 years with adequate attention.

Emerging trends and products will always be mitigating factors when kitchen remodeling is considered. Attention should be paid to the engineered stone countertop movement, spearheaded by lavastone and quartz, which is slowly gaining momentum in some construction and interior design circles. Unfortunately, the retail and installation costs are a roadblock to most potential remodelers. As interest grows and more manufacturers of engineered stone emerge, costs should become less of a mitigating factor, but it's pretty safe to crown granite the most popular choice when it comes to stone countertops.



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HOME DECOR

EQUALS HAUTE COUTURE

By Natalia Nunes

Which well heeled woman finds dressing herself smartly a chore tantamount to doing the dishes? The answer to that would be – none! The parallels between couture and interior decorating are surprisingly quite strong. For instance, women wear accessories, rooms have accessories. We know that colour, or the lack thereof, is a similarity; and apparel is like furniture. As a woman, I cannot but bring attention to our feet as many of us share the same addiction to shoes. Carpets, rugs or whatever we stand on, be it hardwood or tiles, would be equal to our Jimmy Choos or those coveted Christian Louboutin red soles.

Just as we plan how we look, whether to please ourselves or for any other reason, we plan how our homes look. And just as we tire of our wardrobes, we tire of our decor. Waking up with the thought, “Hmmm . . . what shall I wear today?” is no different to, “How can I change this living room?” or any other room for that matter. So we can plan to revamp a room as deliciously as we plan a new wardrobe.

Here’s my version of a parable. A woman woke up one morning and walked into her living room en route to the kitchen for a cup of tea. She glanced at the pleasant but tired decor and thought, “Today, I shall give you a facelift.” After dressing herself quite smartly, she drove to the paint store and stood in front of the paint swatches for about two hours with notebook and pencil in hand. Pictures of her living room, tucked into her notebook, were taken out and placed beside the different colours as she planned the decor smartly.







Just as we prepare ourselves for a big night by bathing, having a manicure and pedicure, going to the hairdresser and maybe having a make-up artist transform our faces, we must also prepare our room's canvas – the walls.

Ideas floated in her head like blouses on a clothing rack. She wrote down some and matched them with others, all the while, bearing in mind the delightful palette of paints that stood before her. When she settled on a few colours, knowing that she wanted to create a dramatic accent wall in her living room, she then discussed the different types of paint with the salesman. The importance of selecting the correct type of paint is paramount. This woman was actually painting a picture, creating the illusion of a brick wall on a blank, beige wall. There was the correct colour red to choose along with different tints to make the bricks seem real. Then there was the grouting between the bricks which would appear to be mortar.

Not only would this woman require paints, tints and spray sealant but painter's tape to make the grout lines straight. After all, she wasn't recreating the Leaning Tower of Pisa. With materials in hand, the woman drove back home to become the inner artist that lay dormant only the day before.

Just as we prepare ourselves for a big night by bathing, having a manicure and pedicure, going to the hairdresser and maybe having a make-up artist transform our faces, we must also prepare our room's canvas – the walls. The walls were cobwebbed and primed, presenting a clean slate. Then the lady went to work measuring the spaces for the faux bricks. The painter's tape was used to cover what would later become the grout lines.

Not much different to applying make-up, painting the bricks and using the tint to create shadows as well as areas of interest with sponges that actually were make-up sponges, along with sea sponges, the woman worked tirelessly on her wall. Driven by sheer pleasure in dressing this accent wall which would spark so much interest in her guests, she finished her masterpiece with complete contentment.

The moral of this story is that we have the ability to change our decor almost as easily as we change our clothing. We must have an inspiration and a proper plan and then go about it with the knowledge that paint is only paint. It can be done and redone, again and again. Find your inner Michelangelo and have a blast doing it!

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Creative Container Homes

By Nick Nunes

Property is something that rarely loses value, utilizing the space you've got is important regardless of how extravagant your dream design home is planned to be. In Barbados, the majority of large land plots are taken up by farms and for commercial use. But, buying a small piece of property should deter you from dreaming big when it comes to home design. Likewise, there is always a creative and cost effective solution to any hurdle in the process of perfecting your dream home.

Barbados is no stranger to the use of shipping containers as offices. There are huge upsides to the use of shipping containers. They are modular, coming in a wide range of sizes, provide a pre-manufactured structure, and, as far as a mobile building goes, shipping containers are relatively easy to transport.

You may be thinking that a shipping container home would be ugly, chunky, or impractical, and you would be wrong. The limits of shipping container home designs are only fettered by your own, or your architect's, creativity.

The great thing about shipping containers is that the modular form and the array of sizes allows for multiple configurations. Though you could make a space that is simple and functional, many have gone beyond convention and created living spaces that could very well double as modern art. With containers ranging from 10' by 8', 20' by 8', and 40' by 8', the doubling up and combining of modules can create innovations as interesting as any other construction project.

Once a level foundation is set for the building area, the container blocks could very well come to life as building blocks or Lego bricks would, with a lot more sophistication. With hanging edges, spaces that open up, and even foldable decks, the layouts of shipping container construction leave you to imagine a structure of uniqueness all to yourself.

The inherent strength, wide availability, and relatively low expense of shipping container homes and offices have exploded due to the adaptability of using these intermodal steel structures as a base for artistic architectural expression. There is even a shipping container hotel in Antwerpen, Belgium.





From Hong Kong to Detroit and China to Belgium, shipping container hotels can be set up in record time and with a surprising amount of luxury. It's not often you hear of a two story 3000sq2 ft home being built for under \$40, 000. With the right amount of ingenuity and a little resourcefulness, you could have a gorgeous shipping container home created in less than a year and have the whole process done in an eco-friendly way by use of reclaimed materials.

From stacking to hanging and perpendicular placement to parallel bridged units, there's no end to the exotic designs possible for creating a comfort zone that is entirely unlike any other home. More than just creating a solid frame for a home, the ridged containers are made to be durable for high stacking and weathering storms when sent across oceans. The steel ridging can also give character to ceilings,

or just as easily be covered up to the point where the original container isn't even recognizable.

With shipping containers, scale is never the problem. Two forty foot containers will give you 640 square feet of living space. Add another floor by placing a twenty foot container on top and you have a cool 800 square feet of already constructed living space. The only need is to cut windows, dedicated doors, ventilation, plumbing, and electrical work. The hard and long labour intensive part of construction is already taken care of at a cost far below the regular price of brick and mortar or even wood construction.

The welding and cutting of steel is considered to be specialized labour and can increase construction expenses, yet overall it is still lower than conventional construction. Unlike timber-frame construction,

attachments must be welded or drilled to the outer skin, which is more time consuming and requires different job site equipment.

Many used containers are available at an amount that is low compared to a finished structure built by other labour-intensive means which also require larger, more expensive foundations. Construction involves very little labour and used shipping containers require only simple modifications can be purchased from major transport companies for as little as US \$1,200 each. Even when purchased brand new they are seldom more than US \$6000.

The dream of these designs goes even further. A few bold free-thinkers have gone above and beyond in the creation of veritable colossal container mansions that boggle the mind. Your home should be something to you can be proud of and with the ease and efficiency of shipping container construction you can showcase your quirks as creatively or modestly as an artistic reflection of your personality.

It's easy to find inspiration for design. A quick google search shows a myriad of module made homes. Maybe even sit down with your child and have a go at some Lego creations to see what dreams can be sparked from a little playtime. Many of the container homes emit ideals of adult fancy connecting with the inner child to create a space that is gorgeous, functional, and based in flights of fantasy.



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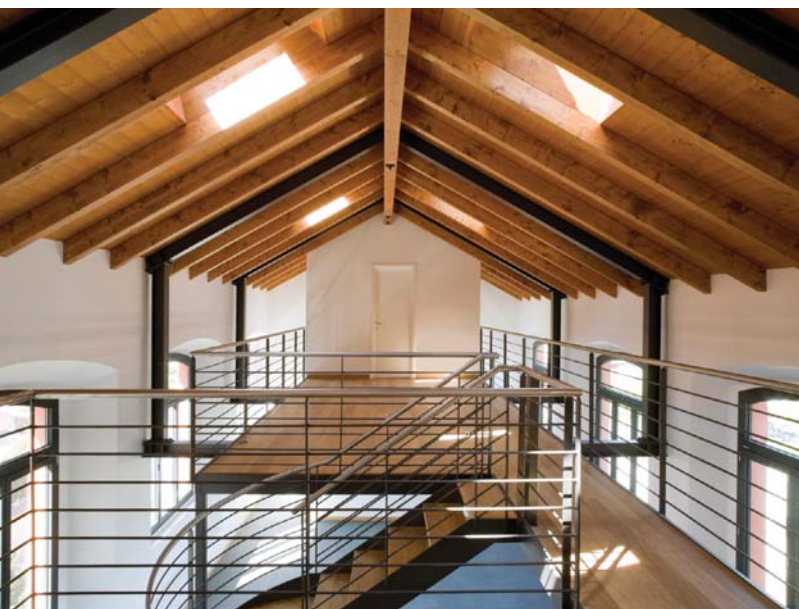
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LOFTED LIVING

By Nick Nunes



Whether you wish to convert your upper storey or attic space into a loft, or simply add a half storey to your house, a loft affords an adaptable open space for any purpose.

The purpose of your loft is the first thing you need to consider before beginning a conversion. If you're just looking for a bit of extra storage space, then the need for supports must be considered depending on the weight you intend to place in your new space. The type of traffic your loft will see is extremely important in maintaining the integrity of your house's overall structure.

A one-storey building that could be considered a studio can be greatly improved by the addition of a lofted bedroom. Or a single-storey house could have an elevated living space to add to the square footage of the property. With high ceilings, a loft can be the perfect area for a study, spare bedroom, lounge or even a studio depending on your proclivities.

Take a measurement from the bottom of the ridge timber to the top of the ceiling joist; the useable part of the roof should be greater than 2.2 metres. The higher the pitch angle, the higher the central head height is likely to be; if dormers are used or the roof is redesigned, then the floor area can be increased.

Converting an attic space into a loft can pose the most effort for the creation of a loft, especially if the roof is trussed rather than having a single solid support frame to distribute the weight of the roof. Removing trusses and installing dedicated support beams is definitely an engineer's area of expertise to configure, as you wouldn't want the whole roof to cave in from poor weight dispersal.

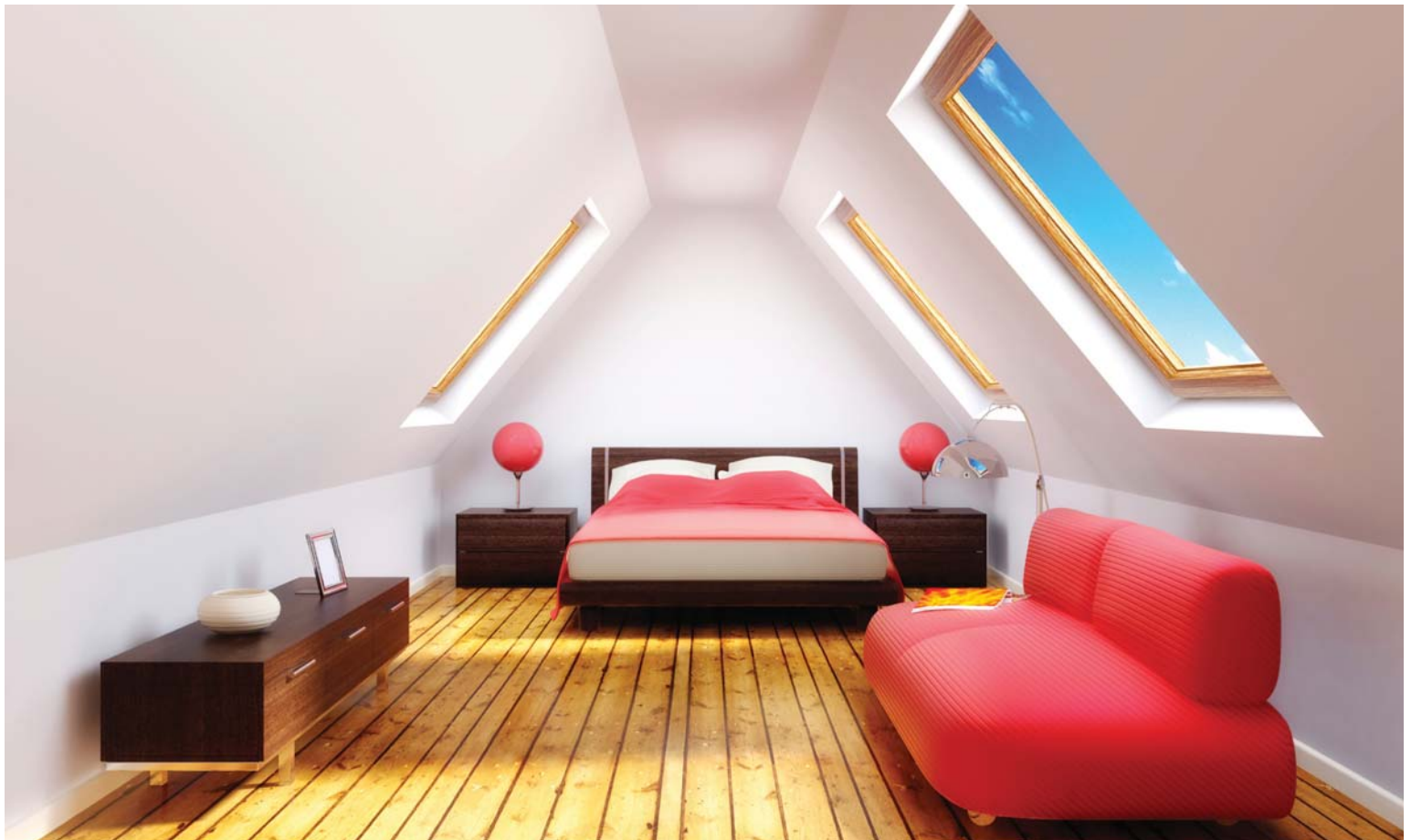
Beyond fitting the supports and investigating and reinforcing the structures of the roof, for the installation of a loft, it's best to have a roof with a higher pitch angle as it allows for more central headspace when the loft is completed and useable. An angle above 50° is ideal.

Going past the suitability of your roof angle and the structural support needed to maintain the integrity of the home, regular ceiling supports are not made to handle walking spaces or living areas. If you're converting an attic, an engineer must be consulted prior to any do-it-yourself projects, including the addition of windows and ventilation, every aspect of the conversion should be sorted in detail before tackling your home transformation.

Furthermore, there could be zoning issues that are Government regulated. It's best to know the ins and outs of what you can and cannot do to your property before embarking on the search for additional space.

When it comes to home updates, everyone is interested in the most economical improvements that can serve multiple uses. Adding extra space to your home can make a vast difference to the property value as well as opening up an area for comfort. A loft can be categorised as a converted space of a building directly under the roof.

Whether you wish to convert your upper storey or attic space into a loft, or simply add a half storey to your house, a loft affords an adaptable open space for any purpose. The majority of Barbadian residences utilise hip and gable roofing styles which are perfect for the addition of a half storey.



Most ceiling bases make use of planks ranging from 2x4 and 2x6 to 2x8 wood supports, whereas a load-bearing floor should be structured with hardier materials like 2x10 or 2x12 and above. Once the zoning issues, roof supports, floor layout and ventilation are completed, it is time to wrestle with the issue of wiring and plan plumbing if desired.

The ideal location for a staircase to land is in line with the roof ridge. This makes for the best use of available height above the staircase. In practice, the actual position will depend upon the layout of the floor below. Where necessary, the available height can be achieved using a dormer or adding a roof light above the staircase or, if appropriate, converting a hip roof end to a gable.

The best loft conversions should be done above pre-existing bedroom and bathroom areas to facilitate an easier running of necessities to your new upper level. In older buildings, some attics and sub-roof crawl spaces may already have electrical outlets installed, but they could be damaged by many things from humidity and salt to simply the passage of time. It's best to go ahead and update everything when it comes to your modern remaking.

Natural light and ventilation are very important, especially with the humidity and salt air of the Caribbean winds that blow throughout the island. While insulation should not be a huge problem, it is imperative to consider fire and hurricane safety when making any home improvements.

Cost, of course, will depend on the size and extent of work needed for your personal preference of loft creation. It could run anywhere from a few thousand dollars to tens of thousands depending on the simplicity or extravagance desired. The addition of extra living space to your home doesn't just add digits to the worth of the building but will also invite a creative intrigue in the design and innovative use and creative creation of space.

Whether a full attic conversion or a half-storey hanging loft, the time and effort you put into invigorating your home could be well worth the pennies and processes. The addition of a light and breezy area of your home, a small study for seclusion, an extra living room or bedroom will give a jump to your property value and a new lease on loving the space you're in.



6 Best Herbs

FOR CONTAINER GARDENING

By Coretta Joe

The amazing thing about herbs is that you don't actually need garden space. Whether you plant them from seedlings or you transplant starter plants, potted herbs are the way to go.

Having access to fresh herbs right outside your kitchen is a great advantage that will save some money off your food bill. The amazing thing about herbs is that you don't actually need garden space. Whether you plant them from seedlings or you transplant starter plants, potted herbs are the way to go. Most herbs are perfect for container gardening and will flourish beautifully on your patio, front step or kitchen window. **Smart Homes** compiled a list of the six best herbs for growing in containers.

BASIL – Garden enthusiasts agree that basil is one of the most rewarding herbs to grow in a container. Basil is especially susceptible to mildew, so growing this herb in a container ensures that it gets plenty of airflow. Be sure to give it plenty of water and keep pinching off the flower heads so that the plant will keep growing new leaves year-round.

ROSEMARY – Rosemary is fantastic when used fresh or dried, that's a win-win. This fragrant herb thrives in at least six hours of sun daily – morning sun and afternoon shade. The trick is to ensure that the container in which you plant the rosemary has at least one drainage hole since it does not do well sitting in water, but likes to dry out between watering.

MINT – This culinary delight is one herb that definitely needs to be contained. Mint is quite notorious for spreading and lots of cross-pollination occurs as a result. Because it grows by underground root runners, mint spreads easily and quickly. A 12- to 16-inch pot is recommended to give it adequate space. Mint thrives in rich, well drained soil and adapts to many soil types. To keep mint plants looking attractive, cut frequently and remove flowers as they appear.



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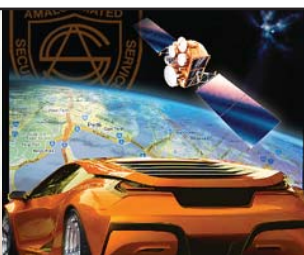
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THYME – Thyme is one of the more low-maintenance of all the herbs and one of the most used. It only requires minimal watering. All varieties of thyme, including English thyme and lemon thyme, grow best in full sun and well drained soil.

Tip: Thyme tends to get woody after a few years, so growing it in containers makes it easier to replace when that time comes.

CHIVES – Chives are a beautiful and sensible addition to any container garden. This plant is versatile and easy growing, needing to be watered only when the soil has dried out. Snip the leaves regularly, leaving approximately two to three inches of leaves on each plant. This ensures a continual supply of leaves throughout the year.

CILANTRO – Also known as coriander, cilantro demands its own space, so growing it in a container is a wise idea. However, cilantro grows best from seeds since it does not transplant well. Plant the seeds about an inch deep and the cilantro will be up in no time.



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A neat, well organised closet speaks volumes about your home. Even if you do not have the luxury of a spacious walk-in closet, these easy and inexpensive do-it-yourself tips will ensure that you maximise space without compromising the aesthetic quality of your bedroom.

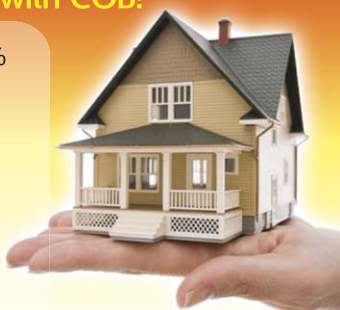
CLOSET ORGANISATION TIPS

By Coretta Joe

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DECLUTTER – Before you begin to organise, it is wise to donate clothing, shoes and other items you no longer wear. One smart way to do this is to turn all hangers so that the hooks are pointing towards you. When you wear something, put the hanger back in the opposite direction. In six months, any hanger still unchanged is holding an item you haven't worn, which means it's time to start packing.

DOUBLE ROD – No need to call the handyman or get a power drill, simply get a hanging rod that hooks over the existing rod and use this to hang short hanging clothes.

HANGING SHOE ORGANISER – Shoes are often the No. 1 cause of a messy closet. Instead of leaving shoes scattered on the floor, get an inexpensive hanging shoe organiser that could easily fit two to three pairs of shoes in each compartment. Use your new floor space for storage by purchasing inexpensive containers.

SODA CAN TABS – Maximise hanging space by looping a soda can tab on a coat hanger, letting it fall all the way down to the neck. Next, loop the top of the second hanger through the other side of the tab. You can also use chains and s-hooks for this same purpose.

SHOWER CURTAIN RINGS – Use shower curtain rings to hang your bags and purses. This way, you're saving space and maintaining the shape of your bags and purses at the same time.

TIE HANGER – If you have a tie hanger and multiple tank tops, turn the tie hanger into a hub of organisation by hanging those tops on every available space.

USE DOOR SPACE CREATIVELY – Hang catch-alls on the inside of closet doors and use these to store practically anything – from jewellery to purses and stockings.

RAIN GUTTER GUARD – A rain gutter guard and 3M command hooks are all you need to enjoy an organisational system for your earrings, since having them in a random basket in your closet or strewn on your dresser is just too messy. Install the gutter guard in your closet and enjoy all your dangly earrings at eye level.

SHOEBOXES – If your closet comes with built-in drawers, you can use old shoeboxes to organise the items you put into the drawers so that you can make use of precious space. This eliminates the need to pile everything into your drawers.

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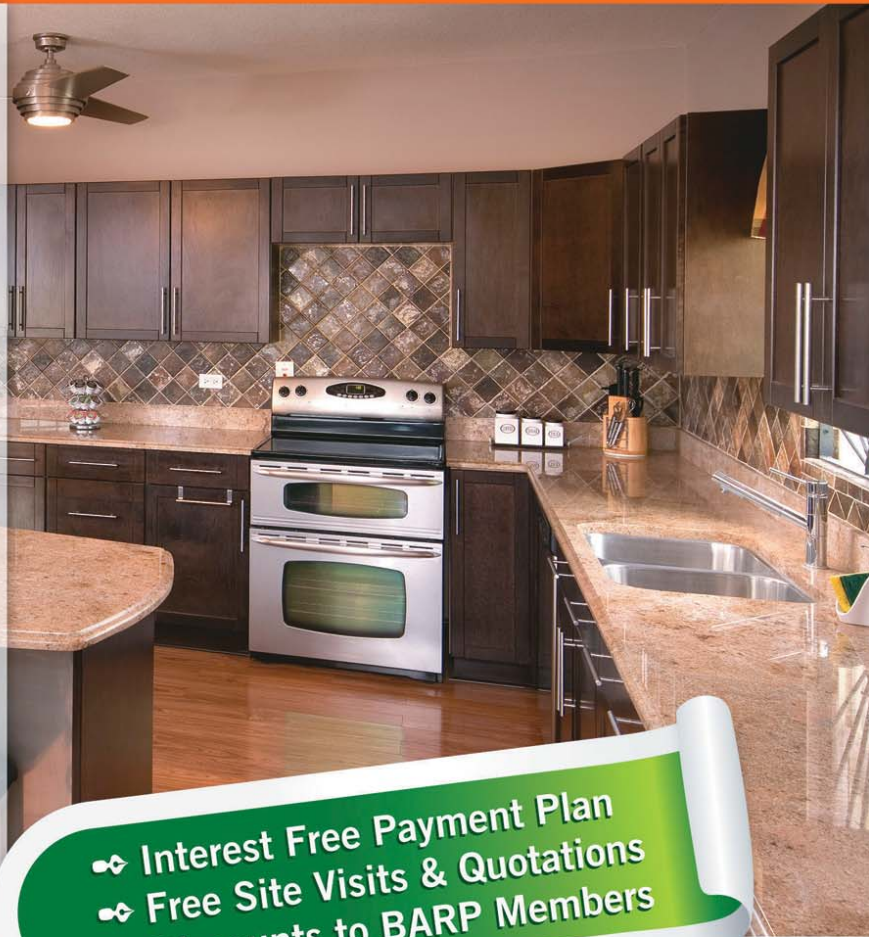
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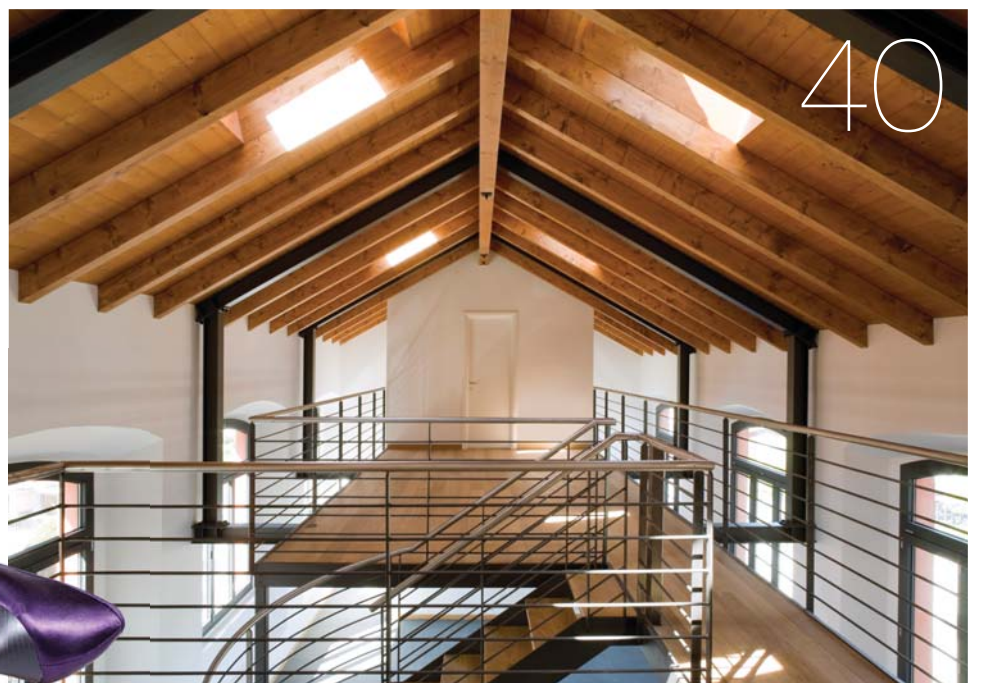
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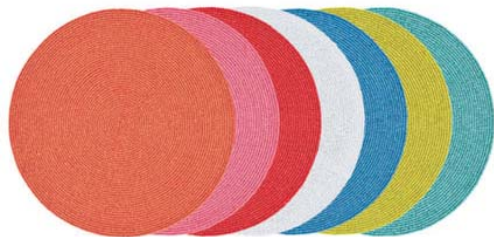
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10 DIY FLOOR TILING TIPS

By Tyson Henry

Tiles are sold in packs and the size and number of tiles they contain will determine the area of floor that they will cover.

There are many types of floor tiles, ranging from ceramic, clay and natural stone. Here in Barbados, most home builders install tiles over a mortar base, but it is not uncommon to layer new tiles on top of existing ones.

Below are ten tips to help you deliver a job good enough to be envied by the pros.

1. Tiles are sold in packs and the size and number of tiles they contain will determine the area of floor that they will cover. Round up the total to the nearest whole number to establish the number of packs of tiles you'll need. Always buy ten per cent more tiles than you need, to allow for breakages.
2. Seal before tiling. Always waterproof showers and water prone areas before tiling them. Even with the greatest diligence when installing and grouting, tiles are still not waterproof or moisture-proof. They are designed to make cleaning easier and protect the surface below them. There is a good range of waterproofing materials available that are easy to apply on the surface before you begin tiling.
3. Find a starting point. Find the midpoints of the two longest walls and draw a chalk line across the floor between these points. Repeat for the shorter walls but adjust the line so that it passes through the centre of the first line at right angles.
4. Lay tiles along the two lines to experiment with the layout and check if they look right from the doorway. If any gaps at the walls are less than half a tile wide, shift the line across to make more of a gap. Also, move the guide lines so that tiles around a dominant feature such as a bay window or a protruding wall are symmetrical and there are whole tiles at the doorway. Try to work with as many whole tiles as possible, even if it means adjusting the grout line width slightly.
5. Spread about one square metre of tile cement into one of the right angles made by the two crossing chalk lines. Scrape the notched edge of the trowel across the mix to form ridges of the same thickness.
6. Lay the first few tiles along the edge of the longest centre line. Gently press the tiles into place, making sure they also line up with the other centre line. Add plastic spacers at each corner to keep them exactly the same distance apart for grouting.
7. Work outwards from the middle of the room until you have laid all the whole tiles on one half of the floor. Use a spirit



Don't rush to grout. Even though all the tiles are down on the floor and set, don't start putting the grout down. Allow at least 24 hours for the tile cement to dry, otherwise you will damage the tiling job.

level to ensure the tiles are at the same level. Now move across to the other side of the longest centre line and add the rest of the whole tiles. Leave to set for 24 hours.

8. Use the tile cutter to trim the edge tiles to the right shape. Measure the space at both ends in case the walls are uneven and remember to allow for the grouting gap. Always wear goggles and gloves when cutting tiles.
9. Don't rush to grout. Even though all the tiles are down on the floor and set, don't start putting the grout down. Allow at least 24 hours for the tile cement to dry, otherwise you will damage the tiling job. Never trowel grout in a straight line. There are two types of grout: wall and floor grout. The main difference is that floor grout has sand in it and wall grout doesn't. Make sure the grout is the right consistency and trowel it diagonally to ensure an even application.

Bonus: When the trowel gets jammed, "butter" the tiles. When working in tight corners or edges, the trowel won't be able to fit inside that space. The easiest way to work around this problem is to put the tile cement on the back of the tiles.

You will need:

- Floor tiles
- Tile Cement
- Grout
- Diamond disc tile cutter
- Safety kit (goggles and heavy duty gloves)
- Spirit level
- Profile shaper
- Tile saw
- Pencil
- Tape measure
- Serrated trowel
- Spacers
- Chalk line
- Lint-free cloth
- Floor sealer
- Bucket
- Sponge



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Life & Design:

CREATIVE ACCENTING

By Sheree-Ann McDonald

An accent is a distinct emphasis that brings prominence or highlights a particular feature in a room. In other words, it makes the room pop, separating dreary from interesting and exciting. The fun part is that the accents do not necessarily need to serve any particular purpose; they can be simply something you were absolutely thrilled to see in a store that made you stop and say wow! One note of caution though, just make sure the object fits with the general size and proportions of the room as well as the other objects in it. A life-sized statue is wonderful but not in a 10x10 room with other furniture.

USING COLOUR

One of the most exciting features I have seen recently is the new-look front door, fancily painted with a bright and exciting colour and finished with upscale finishings. This is definitely one way to make a statement.

Using a colour which contrasts or complements your wall colour will definitely cause items to come to the fore. For example, using throw pillows and vases of distinct colours which contrast with the general wall colour can be refreshing.

USING METALLIC OBJECTS

The use of metals for mirror frames, accessories such as vases, wall art and even entire surfaces not only adds a shine to a space but certainly can provide a nice textured surface as well. Gold and brass are shining once again and are now quite trendy.







The use of different light sources has become almost standard in any newly constructed house, especially in the kitchen.

USING DRAMATIC LIGHTING AND LIGHT SOURCES

The use of different light sources has become almost standard in any newly constructed house, especially in the kitchen. There is plenty of room for you to add spotlights, track lights and picture lights to a space in order to improve the general ambience; this also gives you the opportunity to move from a more public setting to an intimate one using the same space. The lighting fixture itself is now also an accent. There is no end to the chandeliers, lamp shapes and bulb shapes that you may find at the hardware or lighting store.

L'OBJET WITH A DIFFERENCE

Simply put, the very object itself can be your accent. Here are some examples:

- The old rocker belonging to your grandmother which has no match but definitely adds a certain quality to the room.
- The sweet paintings your children created nicely framed.
- The two-dollar find at last week's yard sale.
- The unusual rocks discovered at the beach.

As usual, at the end of the day, your design must represent you and who you are – accents included.



10 TIPS FOR CLEANING WITHOUT CHEMICALS

By Tyson Henry

The clean scent that you always strove to achieve when cleaning is actually not as good for you as you thought. The truth is that cleaning your home can negatively affect your health if you aren't wary of the ingredients in the cleaning agents you use. Cancer-causing chemicals in the air, an asthma attack from fumes or serious skin burns from an accidental spill are a few of the many mishaps that can occur when we set out to clean our homes.

While baking soda has long been an ingredient in food recipes, it has also been regaining popularity as a cleaning alternative, as more people look for non-toxic and biodegradable cleaning solutions for the home. Baking soda is a key ingredient in many do-it-yourself beauty and cleaning products, thanks to its gentle abrasiveness, odour fighting properties and ability to absorb oils.

What could be safer than a cleaning potion that's also edible? Below, you'll find ten Smart Homes tips for using baking soda to clean everything from a clogged drain to your linens.

A photograph of a wooden surface. In the foreground, a sliced orange sits on a grey plate. To the left, a glass bowl contains white powder. In the background, a glass of water and a yellow sponge are visible.

While baking soda has long been an ingredient in food recipes, it has also been regaining popularity as a cleaning alternative, as more people look for non-toxic and biodegradable cleaning solutions for the home.



1. UNCLOG DRAINS

Drano is really toxic stuff, but you don't have to take our word for it – just read the warning label on the back of the bottle. The next time you have a clogged drain, pour a cup of baking soda, followed by a cup of white vinegar down your drain. Then plug the drain with the stopper or a rag and let it work for at least 15 minutes. If the issue isn't fixed, you can always rinse and repeat with no fear of harsh chemicals backing up in your sink or tub.

2. CLEAN POTS WITHOUT SCRUBBING

Fill your pot with a few inches of water and add two tablespoons of baking soda. Let it soak for 15 minutes and then scrape whatever crusty stuff is left with a wooden spoon.

3. KILL BAD ODOURS

Many bad or musty odours are the result of slightly acidic molecules, which is why baking soda's pH-balancing properties help to get rid of stench. Keeping an open container of baking soda in your fridge, cabinets or closet will reduce unpleasant smells.

Tip: It's good to replace the soda about once every six months.

4. FRESHEN YOUR MATTRESS

You can put baking soda's odour fighting properties to work on your bed. Just sprinkle the powder on your mattress and make the bed. When next you change the sheets, vacuum the baking soda.

5. CARPETS/RUGS

If your carpet is just a little musty, you can sprinkle baking soda and then vacuum (similar to the mattress trick). However, you can also scrub out carpet stains using baking soda and water. After the powder dries, you can still just vacuum it.

6. CLEAN THE OVEN AND THE FRIDGE

Mix up a paste of water and baking soda and spread it over the interior of the fridge or oven. Let it sit overnight or for about 12 hours. Then using a spatula, gently scrape all the dried paste and wipe any remaining residue with a rag.

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7. COUNTERS, TILES AND LINOLEUM FLOORS

A similar water and baking soda paste also makes a great scrub for all kinds of surfaces around the house. Use it to clean tiles, marble, countertops and linoleum floors.

8. GROUT

Use an old toothbrush and baking soda to get residue and grime off of grout. Get more green tips on cleaning grout at www.mnn.com.

9. TOILETS

Just sprinkle, scrub and flush. Baking soda's abrasive qualities are great for cleaning porcelain.

10. WHITEN YOUR LINENS

Mix equal parts of baking soda and lemon juice to make your white towels, sheets and clothing whiter. This mixture works as a mild bleaching agent. Baking soda helps to balance the pH of water and can be used to effectively clean, freshen, brighten and soften laundry. After adding laundry to the washing machine, add liquid or powder laundry detergent as usual and then pour one cup of baking soda directly over the clothes.

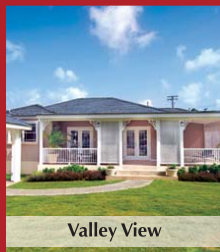
Adding baking soda to the washing machine also helps to neutralise the smell of musty towels and bathing suits that have been sitting in the hamper or that smell like chlorine.

To remove the musty odour from laundry that was left wet in the washing machine for too long, rerun the washing cycle with a cup of baking soda to refresh them.

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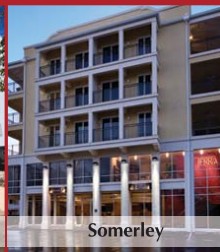
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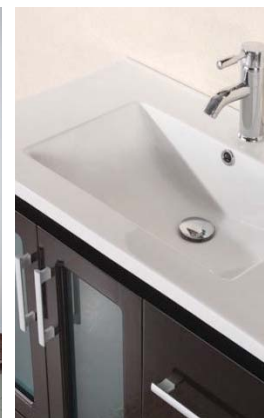
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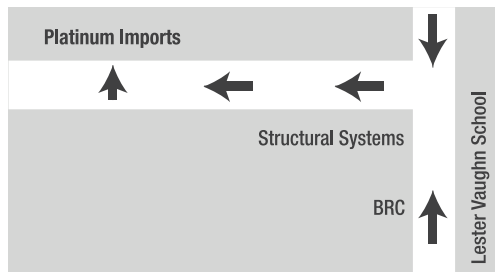
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SMART WAYS TO RECYCLE

TIPS FOR REDUCING AND REUSING AT HOME

By Coretta Joe

In addition to saving energy, reducing waste products in landfills, helping to mitigate global warming and reducing pollution, recycling actually helps homeowners save money.

Making simple changes at home in terms of recycling has many great advantages. In addition to saving energy, reducing waste products in landfills, helping to mitigate global warming and reducing pollution, recycling actually helps homeowners save money. One viable option is selling recyclable materials to organisations willing to buy. However, at home, there are genius ways to reduce and reuse in order to do your part in making your home a little more eco-friendly.

MICROFIBRE CLOTHS

These handy towels can take the place of 60 paper towel rolls before they need replacing. Microfibre cloths are gentle enough to use on nearly all surfaces and are even great for cleaning spectacles and mirrors. Use them to quickly absorb spills, wipe down counters and many other household needs. This will save you quite a few dollars when you consider how much you spend on quality paper towel rolls.





BUY IN BULK

Some food items such as margarine and yogurt are packaged in containers that are hard to recycle. To beat this, purchase these items in the largest container available and put them into smaller reusable containers as needed. Use these containers for freezing leftovers, stashing odds and ends and as plant pots for herbs.

CLEANING PRODUCTS

Purchase cleaning products in large containers and decant into smaller spray bottles. Be on the lookout for concentrated cleaner refills, this way you can reuse the old spray bottle and just add water. Also, get ultra-strength detergents which save packaging so that you get more laundry loads out of the container.

PORTABLE POWER

Many recycling programmes do not accept single-use batteries. However, rechargeable batteries can and should be recycled. When you buy rechargeable batteries, you are actually buying less since you can charge up quite a few times before they need replacing.

SAVE GLASS JARS

Who needs mason jars when you can recycle the jars from your pasta sauce, jams and seasonings for that same purpose? These jars can be used for your green juices, smoothies and other home-made concoctions.

REUSE SCRAP PAPER

For your home office, print on both sides of the sheets or let your children draw and colour on the back of the used sheets.

SWITCH TO PLASTIC

Milk and juice cartons are not recyclable. If you don't mind switching brands, opt for the ones that come in plastic so that you can reuse them for storage.

CABINET DOORS

WHAT'S YOUR STYLE?

By Tyson Henry

With a plethora of sales at local hardware and home appliance stores ongoing, now is the time for inspired thinking. To assist, we've compiled a diverse array of design styles to spark your imagination and inspire your creative passion as you seek to build, renovate or refurbish your

kitchen space.

Picture yourself in a rustic, wood grain-filled cooking area, or surrounded by the clean lines and symmetry of a contemporary kitchen that you, your family and guests will adore. Use our tips as a guide and find the style that best suits you. Your canvas awaits.

Shaker doors, despite their age, are the quintessential examples of fusing the geometric elements of modernity, with the bold, gilded frames associated with traditional design. This door is the most common door style in kitchens today because it lends itself to any décor. This five-piece flat-panel style has a frame made from four pieces and a single flat centre panel for the fifth piece.

Flat doors are simple but stylish, and void of any expensive details. Their hard lines and simple form make them a great fit for contemporary interiors, as they are smooth with no panels, contours or accents.

This style delicately threads the line between minimal utilitarianism and modern elegance, to create a functional space with clean lines.

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Tip: Laminate tends to be more budget friendly and offers a greater variety of colours and sheens.

Louvered doors are characterised in by horizontal wood slats similar to those typically used in olden Caribbean days on windows and shutters, but they add a distinct architectural style to kitchen cabinetry. Due to the need for craftsmanship, be very wary that this style of door will come with a high price tag!

Tip: Many louvered doors have spaces between each slat, making them great for cabinets that require ventilation. The downside to this is that they can be tedious to clean thoroughly.

Woven rattan inserts for cabinet doors add texture and interest. In our tropical climate, doors with woven rattan, or wicker as it is also known, promote air flow and can be used as an accent. The art of weaving is quickly becoming obscure, but if you can source a tradesman, your kitchen will be adorned with a colonial-inspired style that is sure to add texture and character.

Inset styled doors tend to be expensive to construct, because of the high levels of craftsmanship and time required to construct them. The saving grace is that when built correctly, the style will lend your kitchen a classic look that'll last for generations.

The inset door gets its name because it is set inside of the cabinet frame, whereas conversely, more commonly built cabinet doors rest on the outside of the frame. The door is designed and constructed with extremely precise measurements so that it nests inside the frame and

opens and closes properly, even when the wood expands and contracts. Beadboard doors hearken to the colonial-styled homes that epitomized grandeur. Beadboard was used in the distant past as a decorative wall treatment, but has since been adapted for use in cabinetry as the centre panel for doors.

Tip: While all-white beadboard cabinetry can give your kitchen a bright and clean feel, all the seams and crevices on this door style can collect dust over time, so be wary of this when selecting paint colour and type. Choose a paint that will withstand being wiped with a damp cloth over time.

French styled kitchen cabinet doors, with their classic tones and checkerboard designs, will envelop your family and guests in warmth that is reminiscent of simpler times. French Doors complement any kitchen, and are primarily used for upper display cabinets and/or pantries.

Though traditional, this style exudes a modern elegance when paired with natural stone countertops (see page __) and simple, contemporary backsplashes..

Bonus: Pickled/Distressed refers more to a finish than a door style, but it is worth mentioning. These finishes are for the homeowner that dreams of having an antique-styled kitchen with traditional details and craftsmanship. Adorning your cabinets with a worn look calls for more work than most people imagine.





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SPRUCING UP YOUR KITCHEN ON A BUDGET

By Tyson Henry

The kitchen is the one room in the home where families spend the most time together.



In Barbados, kitchens are more than just where we prepare meals. The kitchen is the one room in the home where families spend the most time together. If you're looking for a way to spruce up the space and an overhaul isn't in the budget, try one of these easy kitchen cabinet upgrades.

A makeover doesn't necessarily mean replacing your outdated cabinets with all new ones. As long as the frames and doors are structurally sound, you can clean them up and brush on a different colour of paint. Within a weekend, your kitchen will be transformed from dreary to sunny. For this job you will need sandpaper, a paintbrush, and some good old elbow grease. What you don't need is a whole lot of money, as the transformation will cost you a fraction of even the cheapest new cabinets.

Editor's tip: Try painting your top tier cabinets with a colour that is complementary to the colour you use on the base cabinets, or use a contrasting accent colour on the inside of the cabinets.

Instead of spending thousands on new cabinets, save yourself

the expense and reface the ones you have for a fraction of the cost. It is amazing what a little veneer and some new doors can do to brighten an ageing space. Both are readily available here in Barbados and some hardware stores sell peel-and-stick veneer to make the task simpler. Just be sure to measure twice and cut once. Work carefully, and your kitchen will look brand-new in no time.

Make the most of your kitchen's existing storage space by installing a pull-out shelf in one – or all – of the base cabinets. The shelf resembles a shallow drawer that glides out for easy access to items stored in the back of the cabinet.

If you already own colourful dishes and plates, this is probably the cheapest suggestion. Add a plate rack that will allow you to show off your collection while adding a splash of vibrancy to the room.

Nothing screams quality and attention to detail, like crown moulding. Adding this trim to the top of your cabinet frames will transform your kitchen into a seamless design.



Granite is able to withstand high-traffic, scribbles by young children, clumsy partners and houseguests, heat from cooking apparatus and even bacteria, with minimal maintenance while maintaining its luster and integrity.

The varying amounts of quartz and feldspar, as well as smaller mineral deposits of amphibole, mica and other trace minerals are responsible for granite's naturally attractive colouration. The random arrangement the minerals also means that no two counter tops will be alike, which adds unmatched character, value and uniqueness to your kitchen.

Granite is able to withstand high-traffic, scribbles by young children, clumsy partners and houseguests, heat from cooking apparatus and even bacteria, with minimal maintenance while maintaining its luster and integrity. Its mineral structure, coupled with the use of sealant, makes it a tough task for the usual sources of stains such as red wine, acidic liquids, oil, coffee, tea, rust, mildew, ink, scratches and even scorch marks to set in and become a permanent fixture of the countertop, and allows most of these faux-pas to be easily cleaned with a simple solution of soap and water.

When it comes to food safety and general hygiene, granite is again a safe bet based on its low porosity when sealed. In comparison, materials such as concrete, wood and ceramic tiles because of the grout used to secure are extremely permeable to liquids and general moisture.

Concrete is especially vulnerable to acidic liquids especially vinegar and lime juice which can cause etches in the surface; be careful while seasoning that meat for Sunday lunch! It is also an extremely heavy material to work with, which usually results in higher costs for labour during installation.

Wood requires constant vigilance; regular resealing and varnishing with a non-toxic material to maintain its impermeability and to avoid warping and swelling of the material.

The absorption of moisture and liquids over time by these materials can lead to imbedded stains, which are difficult to reverse and may require the replacement of the grout or in extreme cases, the entire stained counter surface. The continuous presence of moisture and liquids encourages the growth of bacterial colonies and creates a potential health hazard for you, your family and anyone who is present in or consumes anything prepared in your kitchen.

Synthetic materials such as polyester and acrylic resin, as well as laminate, are non-porous, so they score high marks in the food safety and stain-resistance category, however they can be very easily damaged by heat from cooking apparatus and utensils. They are also more vulnerable to scratches, scuffs and discoloration from general wear and tear, and as a result require a lot more maintenance than countertop materials with comparable positive attributes.

Epoxy resin is notably more resilient than its polyester counterpart, and a lot more customizable than most of the aforementioned countertop materials. However, acquiring high quality resin based countertop material is usually pricier than purchasing natural stone materials like granite.

Finally, the value of investing in a new countertop is



a pressing issue in the mind of most homeowners considering a remodeling project. Is this countertop worth the money spent on it? How long will it last? If I want to sell my home will the asking price be bolstered by the type of countertop in my kitchen?

Returns on kitchen remodeling and upgrades when looking to sell a house can be as much as eighty-six cents of every dollar spent, if high quality and in demand materials such as granite are used in the construction of the countertop and maintenance is a regular occurrence.

To put this into perspective, consider the remodeling of a simple, L-shaped 40 sq ft counter space in a kitchen and its maintenance over ten years. If an acrylic-based resin, one of the more affordable and hygienic choices is used, the total installation cost is approximately \$5500. With granite replacing resin as the material of choice, the installation cost becomes approximately \$2000 more.

Maintenance costs must also be considered. Depending on the

level of activity occurring in this kitchen, regular maintenance of the resin countertop becomes necessary. In fact, most local manufacturers said homeowners usually refinish their resin countertops annually, usually around the Yuletide season. This results in approximately \$400 being spent annually on maintenance, which, over a decade drives the total cost of the resin countertop way past the more durable granite, which can have a shelf life of up to 25 years with adequate attention.

Emerging trends and products will always be mitigating factors when kitchen remodeling is considered. Attention should be paid to the engineered stone countertop movement, spearheaded by lavastone and quartz, which is slowly gaining momentum in some construction and interior design circles. Unfortunately, the retail and installation costs are a roadblock to most potential remodelers. As interest grows and more manufacturers of engineered stone emerge, costs should become less of a mitigating factor, but it's pretty safe to crown granite the most popular choice when it comes to stone countertops.



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EQUALS HAUTE COUTURE

By Natalia Nunes

Which well heeled woman finds dressing herself smartly a chore tantamount to doing the dishes? The answer to that would be – none! The parallels between couture and interior decorating are surprisingly quite strong. For instance, women wear accessories, rooms have accessories. We know that colour, or the lack thereof, is a similarity; and apparel is like furniture. As a woman, I cannot but bring attention to our feet as many of us share the same addiction to shoes. Carpets, rugs or whatever we stand on, be it hardwood or tiles, would be equal to our Jimmy Choos or those coveted Christian Louboutin red soles.

Just as we plan how we look, whether to please ourselves or for any other reason, we plan how our homes look. And just as we tire of our wardrobes, we tire of our decor. Waking up with the thought, “Hmmm . . . what shall I wear today?” is no different to, “How can I change this living room?” or any other room for that matter. So we can plan to revamp a room as deliciously as we plan a new wardrobe.

Here’s my version of a parable. A woman woke up one morning and walked into her living room en route to the kitchen for a cup of tea. She glanced at the pleasant but tired decor and thought, “Today, I shall give you a facelift.” After dressing herself quite smartly, she drove to the paint store and stood in front of the paint swatches for about two hours with notebook and pencil in hand. Pictures of her living room, tucked into her notebook, were taken out and placed beside the different colours as she planned the decor smartly.







Just as we prepare ourselves for a big night by bathing, having a manicure and pedicure, going to the hairdresser and maybe having a make-up artist transform our faces, we must also prepare our room's canvas – the walls.

Ideas floated in her head like blouses on a clothing rack. She wrote down some and matched them with others, all the while, bearing in mind the delightful palette of paints that stood before her. When she settled on a few colours, knowing that she wanted to create a dramatic accent wall in her living room, she then discussed the different types of paint with the salesman. The importance of selecting the correct type of paint is paramount. This woman was actually painting a picture, creating the illusion of a brick wall on a blank, beige wall. There was the correct colour red to choose along with different tints to make the bricks seem real. Then there was the grouting between the bricks which would appear to be mortar.

Not only would this woman require paints, tints and spray sealant but painter's tape to make the grout lines straight. After all, she wasn't recreating the Leaning Tower of Pisa. With materials in hand, the woman drove back home to become the inner artist that lay dormant only the day before.

Just as we prepare ourselves for a big night by bathing, having a manicure and pedicure, going to the hairdresser and maybe having a make-up artist transform our faces, we must also prepare our room's canvas – the walls. The walls were cobwebbed and primed, presenting a clean slate. Then the lady went to work measuring the spaces for the faux bricks. The painter's tape was used to cover what would later become the grout lines.

Not much different to applying make-up, painting the bricks and using the tint to create shadows as well as areas of interest with sponges that actually were make-up sponges, along with sea sponges, the woman worked tirelessly on her wall. Driven by sheer pleasure in dressing this accent wall which would spark so much interest in her guests, she finished her masterpiece with complete contentment.

The moral of this story is that we have the ability to change our decor almost as easily as we change our clothing. We must have an inspiration and a proper plan and then go about it with the knowledge that paint is only paint. It can be done and redone, again and again. Find your inner Michelangelo and have a blast doing it!

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Creative Container Homes

By Nick Nunes

Property is something that rarely loses value, utilizing the space you've got is important regardless of how extravagant your dream design home is planned to be. In Barbados, the majority of large land plots are taken up by farms and for commercial use. But, buying a small piece of property should deter you from dreaming big when it comes to home design. Likewise, there is always a creative and cost effective solution to any hurdle in the process of perfecting your dream home.

Barbados is no stranger to the use of shipping containers as offices. There are huge upsides to the use of shipping containers. They are modular, coming in a wide range of sizes, provide a pre-manufactured structure, and, as far as a mobile building goes, shipping containers are relatively easy to transport.

You may be thinking that a shipping container home would be ugly, chunky, or impractical, and you would be wrong. The limits of shipping container home designs are only fettered by your own, or your architect's, creativity.

The great thing about shipping containers is that the modular form and the array of sizes allows for multiple configurations. Though you could make a space that is simple and functional, many have gone beyond convention and created living spaces that could very well double as modern art. With containers ranging from 10' by 8', 20' by 8', and 40' by 8', the doubling up and combining of modules can create innovations as interesting as any other construction project.

Once a level foundation is set for the building area, the container blocks could very well come to life as building blocks or Lego bricks would, with a lot more sophistication. With hanging edges, spaces that open up, and even foldable decks, the layouts of shipping container construction leave you to imagine a structure of uniqueness all to yourself.

The inherent strength, wide availability, and relatively low expense of shipping container homes and offices have exploded due to the adaptability of using these intermodal steel structures as a base for artistic architectural expression. There is even a shipping container hotel in Antwerpen, Belgium.





From Hong Kong to Detroit and China to Belgium, shipping container hotels can be set up in record time and with a surprising amount of luxury. It's not often you hear of a two story 3000sq2 ft home being built for under \$40, 000. With the right amount of ingenuity and a little resourcefulness, you could have a gorgeous shipping container home created in less than a year and have the whole process done in an eco-friendly way by use of reclaimed materials.

From stacking to hanging and perpendicular placement to parallel bridged units, there's no end to the exotic designs possible for creating a comfort zone that is entirely unlike any other home. More than just creating a solid frame for a home, the ridged containers are made to be durable for high stacking and weathering storms when sent across oceans. The steel ridging can also give character to ceilings,

or just as easily be covered up to the point where the original container isn't even recognizable.

With shipping containers, scale is never the problem. Two forty foot containers will give you 640 square feet of living space. Add another floor by placing a twenty foot container on top and you have a cool 800 square feet of already constructed living space. The only need is to cut windows, dedicated doors, ventilation, plumbing, and electrical work. The hard and long labour intensive part of construction is already taken care of at a cost far below the regular price of brick and mortar or even wood construction.

The welding and cutting of steel is considered to be specialized labour and can increase construction expenses, yet overall it is still lower than conventional construction. Unlike timber-frame construction,

attachments must be welded or drilled to the outer skin, which is more time consuming and requires different job site equipment.

Many used containers are available at an amount that is low compared to a finished structure built by other labour-intensive means which also require larger, more expensive foundations. Construction involves very little labour and used shipping containers require only simple modifications can be purchased from major transport companies for as little as US \$1,200 each. Even when purchased brand new they are seldom more than US \$6000.

The dream of these designs goes even further. A few bold free-thinkers have gone above and beyond in the creation of veritable colossal container mansions that boggle the mind. Your home should be something to you can be proud of and with the ease and efficiency of shipping container construction you can showcase your quirks as creatively or modestly as an artistic reflection of your personality.

It's easy to find inspiration for design. A quick google search shows a myriad of module made homes. Maybe even sit down with your child and have a go at some Lego creations to see what dreams can be sparked from a little playtime. Many of the container homes emit ideals of adult fancy connecting with the inner child to create a space that is gorgeous, functional, and based in flights of fantasy.



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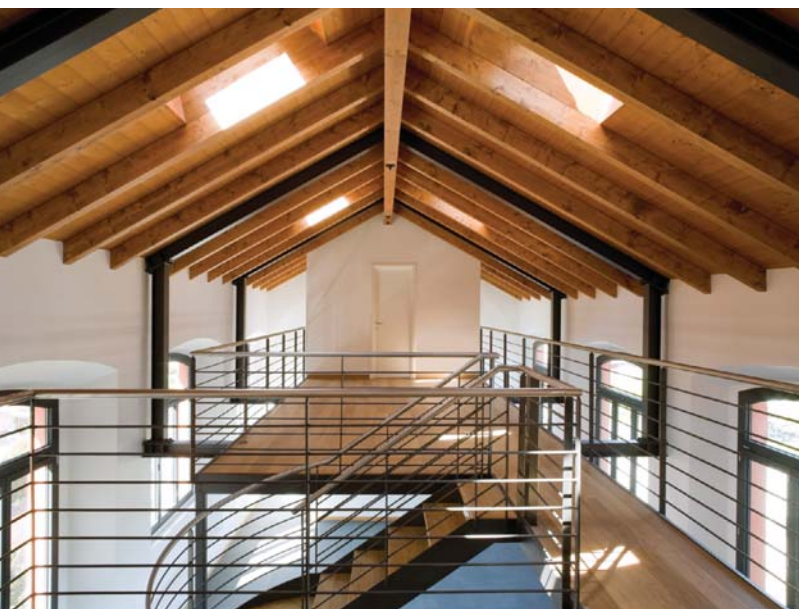
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LOFTED LIVING

By Nick Nunes



Whether you wish to convert your upper storey or attic space into a loft, or simply add a half storey to your house, a loft affords an adaptable open space for any purpose.

The purpose of your loft is the first thing you need to consider before beginning a conversion. If you're just looking for a bit of extra storage space, then the need for supports must be considered depending on the weight you intend to place in your new space. The type of traffic your loft will see is extremely important in maintaining the integrity of your house's overall structure.

A one-storey building that could be considered a studio can be greatly improved by the addition of a lofted bedroom. Or a single-storey house could have an elevated living space to add to the square footage of the property. With high ceilings, a loft can be the perfect area for a study, spare bedroom, lounge or even a studio depending on your proclivities.

Take a measurement from the bottom of the ridge timber to the top of the ceiling joist; the useable part of the roof should be greater than 2.2 metres. The higher the pitch angle, the higher the central head height is likely to be; if dormers are used or the roof is redesigned, then the floor area can be increased.

Converting an attic space into a loft can pose the most effort for the creation of a loft, especially if the roof is trussed rather than having a single solid support frame to distribute the weight of the roof. Removing trusses and installing dedicated support beams is definitely an engineer's area of expertise to configure, as you wouldn't want the whole roof to cave in from poor weight dispersal.

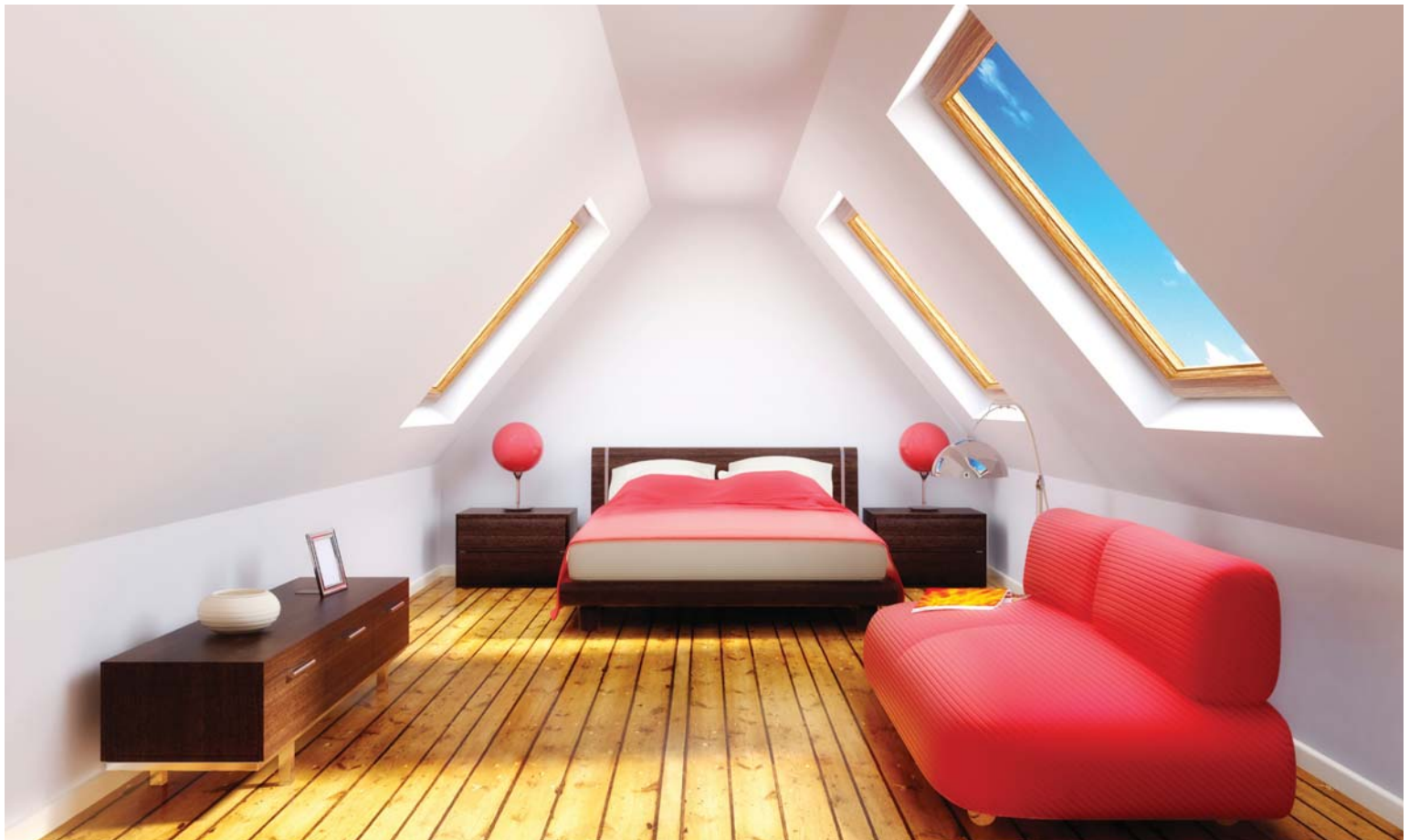
Beyond fitting the supports and investigating and reinforcing the structures of the roof, for the installation of a loft, it's best to have a roof with a higher pitch angle as it allows for more central headspace when the loft is completed and useable. An angle above 50° is ideal.

Going past the suitability of your roof angle and the structural support needed to maintain the integrity of the home, regular ceiling supports are not made to handle walking spaces or living areas. If you're converting an attic, an engineer must be consulted prior to any do-it-yourself projects, including the addition of windows and ventilation, every aspect of the conversion should be sorted in detail before tackling your home transformation.

Furthermore, there could be zoning issues that are Government regulated. It's best to know the ins and outs of what you can and cannot do to your property before embarking on the search for additional space.

When it comes to home updates, everyone is interested in the most economical improvements that can serve multiple uses. Adding extra space to your home can make a vast difference to the property value as well as opening up an area for comfort. A loft can be categorised as a converted space of a building directly under the roof.

Whether you wish to convert your upper storey or attic space into a loft, or simply add a half storey to your house, a loft affords an adaptable open space for any purpose. The majority of Barbadian residences utilise hip and gable roofing styles which are perfect for the addition of a half storey.



Most ceiling bases make use of planks ranging from 2x4 and 2x6 to 2x8 wood supports, whereas a load-bearing floor should be structured with hardier materials like 2x10 or 2x12 and above. Once the zoning issues, roof supports, floor layout and ventilation are completed, it is time to wrestle with the issue of wiring and plan plumbing if desired.

The ideal location for a staircase to land is in line with the roof ridge. This makes for the best use of available height above the staircase. In practice, the actual position will depend upon the layout of the floor below. Where necessary, the available height can be achieved using a dormer or adding a roof light above the staircase or, if appropriate, converting a hip roof end to a gable.

The best loft conversions should be done above pre-existing bedroom and bathroom areas to facilitate an easier running of necessities to your new upper level. In older buildings, some attics and sub-roof crawl spaces may already have electrical outlets installed, but they could be damaged by many things from humidity and salt to simply the passage of time. It's best to go ahead and update everything when it comes to your modern remaking.

Natural light and ventilation are very important, especially with the humidity and salt air of the Caribbean winds that blow throughout the island. While insulation should not be a huge problem, it is imperative to consider fire and hurricane safety when making any home improvements.

Cost, of course, will depend on the size and extent of work needed for your personal preference of loft creation. It could run anywhere from a few thousand dollars to tens of thousands depending on the simplicity or extravagance desired. The addition of extra living space to your home doesn't just add digits to the worth of the building but will also invite a creative intrigue in the design and innovative use and creative creation of space.

Whether a full attic conversion or a half-storey hanging loft, the time and effort you put into invigorating your home could be well worth the pennies and processes. The addition of a light and breezy area of your home, a small study for seclusion, an extra living room or bedroom will give a jump to your property value and a new lease on loving the space you're in.



6 Best Herbs

FOR CONTAINER GARDENING

By Coretta Joe

The amazing thing about herbs is that you don't actually need garden space. Whether you plant them from seedlings or you transplant starter plants, potted herbs are the way to go.



Having access to fresh herbs right outside your kitchen is a great advantage that will save some money off your food bill. The amazing thing about herbs is that you don't actually need garden space. Whether you plant them from seedlings or you transplant starter plants, potted herbs are the way to go. Most herbs are perfect for container gardening and will flourish beautifully on your patio, front step or kitchen window. **Smart Homes** compiled a list of the six best herbs for growing in containers.

BASIL – Garden enthusiasts agree that basil is one of the most rewarding herbs to grow in a container. Basil is especially susceptible to mildew, so growing this herb in a container ensures that it gets plenty of airflow. Be sure to give it plenty of water and keep pinching off the flower heads so that the plant will keep growing new leaves year-round.

ROSEMARY – Rosemary is fantastic when used fresh or dried, that's a win-win. This fragrant herb thrives in at least six hours of sun daily – morning sun and afternoon shade. The trick is to ensure that the container in which you plant the rosemary has at least one drainage hole since it does not do well sitting in water, but likes to dry out between watering.

MINT – This culinary delight is one herb that definitely needs to be contained. Mint is quite notorious for spreading and lots of cross-pollination occurs as a result. Because it grows by underground root runners, mint spreads easily and quickly. A 12- to 16-inch pot is recommended to give it adequate space. Mint thrives in rich, well drained soil and adapts to many soil types. To keep mint plants looking attractive, cut frequently and remove flowers as they appear.

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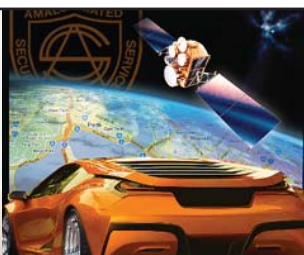
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THYME – Thyme is one of the more low-maintenance of all the herbs and one of the most used. It only requires minimal watering. All varieties of thyme, including English thyme and lemon thyme, grow best in full sun and well drained soil.

Tip: Thyme tends to get woody after a few years, so growing it in containers makes it easier to replace when that time comes.

CHIVES – Chives are a beautiful and sensible addition to any container garden. This plant is versatile and easy growing, needing to be watered only when the soil has dried out. Snip the leaves regularly, leaving approximately two to three inches of leaves on each plant. This ensures a continual supply of leaves throughout the year.

CILANTRO – Also known as coriander, cilantro demands its own space, so growing it in a container is a wise idea. However, cilantro grows best from seeds since it does not transplant well. Plant the seeds about an inch deep and the cilantro will be up in no time.



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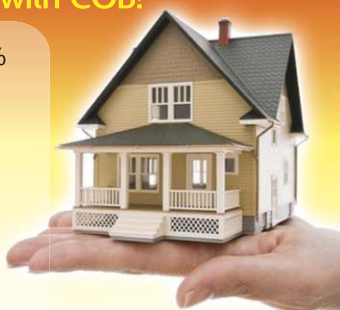
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By Coretta Joe

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DECLUTTER – Before you begin to organise, it is wise to donate clothing, shoes and other items you no longer wear. One smart way to do this is to turn all hangers so that the hooks are pointing towards you. When you wear something, put the hanger back in the opposite direction. In six months, any hanger still unchanged is holding an item you haven't worn, which means it's time to start packing.

DOUBLE ROD – No need to call the handyman or get a power drill, simply get a hanging rod that hooks over the existing rod and use this to hang short hanging clothes.

HANGING SHOE ORGANISER – Shoes are often the No. 1 cause of a messy closet. Instead of leaving shoes scattered on the floor, get an inexpensive hanging shoe organiser that could easily fit two to three pairs of shoes in each compartment. Use your new floor space for storage by purchasing inexpensive containers.

SODA CAN TABS – Maximise hanging space by looping a soda can tab on a coat hanger, letting it fall all the way down to the neck. Next, loop the top of the second hanger through the other side of the tab. You can also use chains and s-hooks for this same purpose.

SHOWER CURTAIN RINGS – Use shower curtain rings to hang your bags and purses. This way, you're saving space and maintaining the shape of your bags and purses at the same time.

TIE HANGER – If you have a tie hanger and multiple tank tops, turn the tie hanger into a hub of organisation by hanging those tops on every available space.

USE DOOR SPACE CREATIVELY – Hang catch-alls on the inside of closet doors and use these to store practically anything – from jewellery to purses and stockings.

RAIN GUTTER GUARD – A rain gutter guard and 3M command hooks are all you need to enjoy an organisational system for your earrings, since having them in a random basket in your closet or strewn on your dresser is just too messy. Install the gutter guard in your closet and enjoy all your dangly earrings at eye level.

SHOEBOXES – If your closet comes with built-in drawers, you can use old shoeboxes to organise the items you put into the drawers so that you can make use of precious space. This eliminates the need to pile everything into your drawers.

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We solve all roofing problems**

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- Weekly - Less than Container Load service to from North America to Barbados;
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• DESIGN • HARDWARE SELECTION • FRABRICATION • INSTALLATION

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Sunset Crest
419-8510

Speightstown
419-8500

Six Roads
416-8544

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431-6500

*Not exceeding \$10,000.

- Campaign runs from March 10th, 2014 to May 31st, 2014
- Special conditions apply. Subject to normal lending criteria.
- The cost of borrowing will be made available upon application.

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We will make your DREAM kitchen
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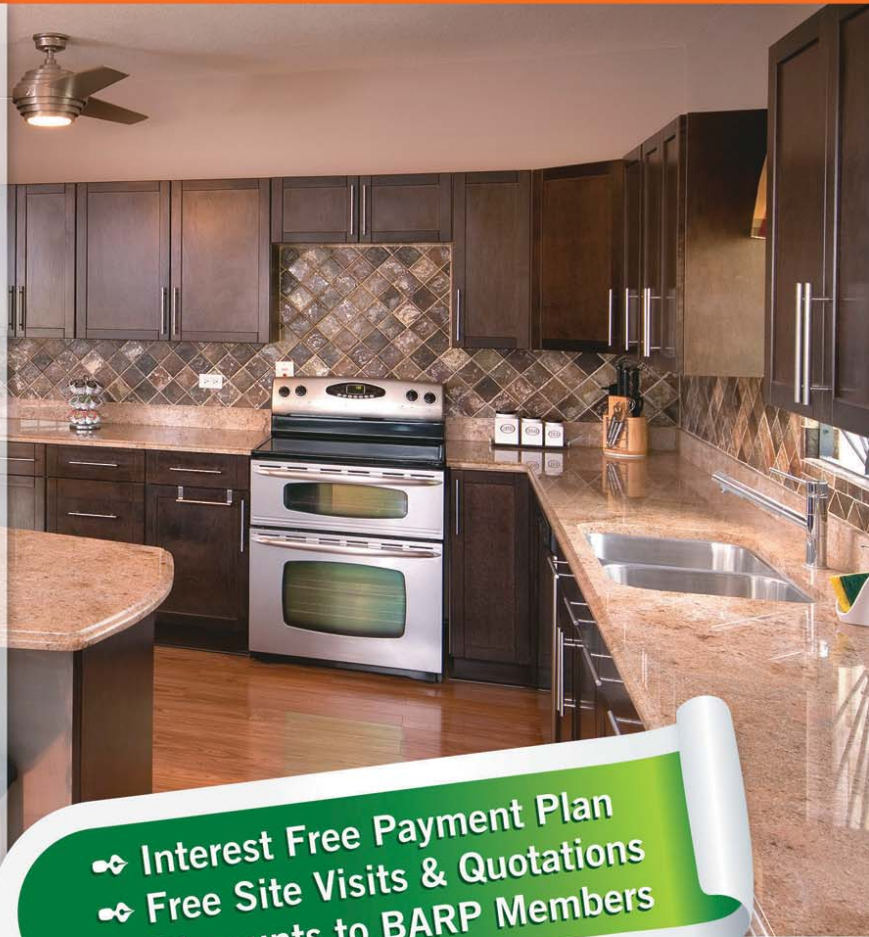
- Non-porous
- Easy to clean
- Low maintenance
- Seamless Joints
- Available in over 100 colours

Granite Natural Stone

- 1st Choice Granite
- Natural Beauty
- Durable
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- Heat Resistant
- Available in over 20 colours

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