

Tips to add design appeal to your home



(StatePoint) Want to set your home apart? You can add character and beauty to your home by learning more about your house's architectural style and adding design elements to complement the look.

"With the right knowledge, it's easy to transform any room of your home as well as the exterior," says Niki Decker, senior product and marketing manager with Fypon, which creates synthetic millwork products.

The experts at Fypon are offering some tips and guidelines to achieve an authentic, coordinated look throughout your home -- inside and out.

- Proportions matter. If you're going to be adding shutters to your exterior, do a bit of math. The width of shutters used in pairs on a window should be half the width of the window, and should be the same height as the window.

- The higher the ceiling, the taller the baseboard should be. Additionally, the height of your baseboard moulding should always be larger than the casing, which is the frame around a door or window.

- Make a room feel taller by placing a chair rail -- the moulding used to prevent the backs of chairs from rubbing against the wall -- one-third of the way up from the floor. Chair rails should be 1/2 or one inch narrower than casings.

- If you have a classic Georgian style home, characterized by strict symmetry and a centered and paneled front door, cap the front door panel with an elaborate crown supported by decorative pillars.

- Enhance your Victorian style home with ornamental spindlework on the porches and patterned shingles on the roof. Offset the complexity with simple surrounds for windows.

- For country style cottages, consider clapboard shingles for siding, or wood shake for siding and roofing, and wide white trim or shutters around windows.

- Complete the look and feel of your Mediterranean-style home, rich with such decorative accents as round columns, tile and stone, by planting lush gardens and installing an ornate fountain.
- Maintain a

traditional look with innovative, updated building material that lasts longer and with less upkeep. For example, polyurethane pieces are a lightweight alternative to wood. The pieces are easy to install and resist insects, moisture and weather conditions. Manufacturers like Fypon, which creates thousands of millwork pieces, offer products that come both textured and smooth. A new line of Classic Woodgrain decorative millwork offers a refined woodgrain texture suitable for staining or painting, and complements home styles such as Arts & Crafts and Mediterranean.

To learn more about enhancing your home's architectural style, you can download Fypon's free Style Guide at www.fypon.com/literature/catalog.asp.

Don't just update your house haphazardly. Do a bit of research so you can complement your home's architectural style authentically and with sophisticated flair.

Things to consider when renovating a vacation home

Vacation homes may seem like a luxury only the very wealthy can afford, but many people purchase vacation homes as investments. Vacation homes give families a place to escape to where they can spend time together each summer or winter, but such homes also help homeowners generate income, and some homeowners even find the height of vacation season generates enough rental income to pay for the second home year-round.

Personal style goes a long way toward determining how to renovate a primary residence. But men and women who own vacation homes they hope to rent out should not allow their own personal styles to dictate a vacation home renovation project. The following are some additional things homeowners should consider before renovating their vacation homes.

- Curb appeal: When renovating a vacation property, relatively minor updates can dramatically improve curb appeal, which may bear more weight with prospective renters than it would prospective buyers. Potential buyers are making a substantial financial commitment when they buy a home, so they will go over a home with a fine tooth comb. But vacation renters are making a much smaller financial commitment, so curb appeal can go a long way toward encouraging vacationers to rent your property. Repaint a home in a more vibrant color or replace old siding with newer material. Hire a local landscaping service to tend to the property throughout vacation season, and be sure to include updated



photos of your property with online listings.

- Connectivity: While vacation was once a respite from all aspects of our everyday lives, nowadays vacationers want to maintain at least some connection to the outside world. If your vacation home is not up-to-date with its wireless technology, upgrade to a faster network that offers high speed Internet. Such connectivity can and likely will prove attractive to prospective renters who have grown accustomed to relying on the Internet, even when they are on vacation.

- Appliances: A vacation rental may not need the latest and greatest appliances, but homeowners may find it easier to attract renters (and charge more in rent) if the home is not filled with outdated appliances reminiscent of a long forgotten era. Upgrade especially outdated appliances, but make sure any upgrades fit with the theme of your rental. For example, stainless steel

appliances may look great in your primary residence, but such appliances are costly and may not be what renters hoping to find a beachside bungalow are looking for.

- Accessibility: Some people want a vacation home far off the beaten path, but that does not mean the home has to be inaccessible. If your vacation home is in a wooded area far off the road, consider paving the access road prospective renters will use to get to and from the property. This relatively small touch may appeal to potential renters who want some seclusion but don't want to put their vehicles through the ringer every time they leave the property.

Renovating a vacation home is a great way to generate extra rental income from the property, and there are several ways homeowners can make their vacation homes more attractive to renters without breaking the bank.

■ MetroCreative Connection

Warm weather insects

Homeowners know that the arrival of spring also marks the re-emergence of insects. While not every insect is harmful, if an infestation grows considerably or if insects begin to move from the outdoors into a home, it may be time for homeowners to call in a professional.

The Entomological Society of America points out that homeowners cannot count on bitterly cold winters to help control the numbers of insects in their yards. Insect ecology is affected by various factors and is not solely dependent on temperature.

Furthermore, what occurred one year certainly may not be repeated the next, as homeowners who have had various insect infestations in their yards can attest. One year a yard may be overcome with ants, while the next year it may suffer through an earwig infestation.

The first step homeowners looking to curtail insects in their yards can take is to determine if the insects they see are genuine threats to their lawns. Some bugs emerge and swarm early in the season, but then gradually disappear as spring turns into summer. Other insects may come out of hiding if a homeowner is doing a lot

of yard work or construction around a house. Practice a wait-and-see approach to determine if you really have an insect problem or just have stirred up activity.

Homeowners also must decide if it is bearable living with the insects. If insects are not doing any damage or if they can be controlled relatively easily, then you might be able to avoid calling in the professionals. However, if critters like termites and certain species of wood-eating insects are invasive and damaging your yard, you may need to take action.

Anyone concerned with the side effects of pesticides and insecticides can first try to remedy the problem naturally. Sometimes it's just a matter of making a yard less hospitable to insects. Remove leaves and clean up debris close to the house, as these can both encourage infestations. Piles of rotting wood or leftover firewood can be a food or shelter source for a number of insects. Inspect water spigots for leaks and improve suspect drainage on your property, as these things can be welcoming to bugs

*Insects

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