

How do I declutter my home?



YANIC SIMARD THE DESIGN FEED

Designers will tell you — knowing what to edit out of your decor is just as important as knowing what to add in.

However, this skill is even trickier than it sounds, especially when your home is filled with sentimental pieces — and lots of good intentions. (Hello treadmill/laundry-rack!)

Here are my top tips to help you make tough decisions about what stays, and what makes room for good design.

Know your limits

Sometimes you need to start with absolute limits! For example, when trimming back your collection of photos, consider how many frames you would display if sentimental feelings weren't a factor.

Then choose strictly that

number of your very favourite pics, keeping the rest flat in a box until they rotate in. Starting with a limit lets you know how much you really need to cut.

Art and photos tend to be the number one way many people overfill their space. Remember that some patches of wall can be left empty, revealing a beautiful wall colour and giving the eye visual breaks. Create one or two feature displays, and let the rest of the room breathe.

Time will tell

The standard rule for clothing is that if you haven't worn it in a year, you should let it go; this rule can be applied to home decor and kitchen gadgets just the same.

To allow for seasonal items,

feel free to stretch this time to a full year — but set a limit somewhere so you aren't holding on to unused food processors and decorative trinkets in the backs of cupboards for decades.

The same rule is helpful for well-intentioned items like piled up books or gym equipment. If you haven't used it, be realistic with yourself and reclaim your space — after all, square footage is expensive!

You can always go for a good jog when you're back in the mood for some self improvement.

Don't add, upgrade

Rather than compulsively adding new pieces over time, try upgrading instead. For example, when you happen upon a new eye-catching trinket, rather than simply adding it to a shelf, swap it out for an existing piece. This keeps shelves from overloading and makes you question whether you really need each impulse purchase. Ask "is this item nicer than something I already have?"

Layered lighting is important, but often it is better to replace dim fixtures instead of simply



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adding more.

Use three to five significant light sources, rather than nearly a dozen weak table lamps and LED baubles.

Try replacing a flimsy floor lamp you bought in college with a multiple-bulb fixture, with a dimmer so you can go from bright to mood-light.

Pass it on

Some items will be better suited to another room — or sometimes another house. If a beloved piece isn't truly working with your decor (you'll know deep down), give it a good home with friends, family, or a charity.

In the end, your loved ones may not want that old dusty table lamp any more than you do, but at least you won't have to see it be thrown away!

Sometimes bringing in a friend can really help make dif-

ficult decor cuts. Find a friend with a clean, organized style you admire and let them be the 'bad cop' when it comes to tough decisions — just be willing to take their advice when the time comes.

— Need some design inspiration to motivate your decor weight loss? Visit tidg.ca to see Yanic's latest project photos and more. Find him on Twitter and Instagram @yanicsimard.

QUICK BITES

1. Photos and motivational knick-knacks can easily take over. Set a limit for how many pieces you want to display at a time, and then stick to it.
2. If you haven't used an item in six months to a year, you won't even notice that it's gone. Let it go!
3. Get self-improvement instant-gratification by

freeing your space from unused exercise equipment, diet books or magazines.

4. Upgrade instead of adding. Trade out unimpressive pieces for great new finds, rather than just piling on.

5. Let friends and family help, by bringing in a second opinion or giving away items you can't bear to toss.

Succulents thrive in the toughest of conditions



DENISE HODGINS GROWING CONCERNS

We all have that spot in our garden where nothing seems to grow. The area is usually very dry and often receives a ton of sun and very little water. It reminds you of a wasteland in your lush garden.

Well, don't give up. There are a group of perennials that will survive and thrive in this area.

Think cactus but better yet think succulents. There are a large selection of these plants ranging in size from ground covers to ones that are 75 centimetres tall, all of which

flower and come in a rainbow of leaf colours, too.

Let's start with Sedums that come in low mat-forming varieties that work wonderfully well for ground covers on hot dry slopes and other difficult sites.

The ground-over varieties bloom in midsummer and have interesting leaf structure from small round leaves to fleshy flat leaves. They provide a great low mat to the front of any garden.

Taller cultivars are superb in the late season border as they bloom in August and Sep-

tember and hold their flower heads right through winter.

The dried seed heads have great winter interest and the added bonus of attracting butterflies. The foliage colours include green, blue grey, purple, variegated green and white and the flowers can be pink, red, yellow or burgundy.

Stonecrops are fleshy, succulent plants, suited to the sunny rock gardens or borders. They are often referred to as hen's and chickens.

These plants offer an extensive choice of foliage types with clusters of starry flowers in many shades. The starry flowers rise up on short stems in the summer.

If you're familiar with the old green form, it may come as a surprise to know that there are hundreds of varieties. Their leaf colour ranges from lime green to burgundy and purple, and size varies from as small as one cm to as

large as 20 cm across.

The leaves can be thin and spiky or thick and rounded with a pointed tip. Some, such as Cobweb Houseleek, have fine spider web-like filaments that grow naturally from leaf edge to leaf edge, forming a white cover on the top of the plant, while others have fine hairs that cover the entire plant structure.

Upon maturity (usually around three to four years old) the plant will send up a single stalk that can reach five to 15 cm tall. The head of the stalk is a cluster of star-shaped flower buds one to two cm in diameter that range in colour from dark pink to yellow and that flower for several weeks.

After blooming, the plant will die. Usually by this time it has produced many offsets ('chicks'). Collecting them can be fun and a large number of them can easily be squeezed into a small area.



Succulent plants come in wide variety of sizes and foliage colours and can survive dry conditions with lots of sun and very little water.

So turn that vast wasteland into a new succulent garden and don't be afraid to add a rock or two to make it look more like the desert.

Check out these wonderful plants that will continue to survive even in the toughest

heat at your local garden centre today.

— Denise Hodgins is a horticulturalist and landscape designer based in London, Ont. Visit her at www.gardencoachdenise.com.