



20 ways to decorate your home with little or no money

Everyone wants to live in a home that feels both comfortable and welcoming. With a little inspiration and some innovative ideas, **Anya Brighthouse** shows how you can develop your own unique style.

I would, of course, like to think that I am an ecologically conscious human being. To that end, I am going to 'recycle' some ideas from previous issues that I think might have got missed in the fuss. Sometimes when we are looking at the 'big picture' we miss some of the detail. I am incredibly cheap at heart (except when it comes to clothing), and so I thought it might be good, as winter rolls in, to look at some ideas to help us love our homes just that bit more, without spending wads of cash.

1 Moving furniture This may on some level sound like a really obvious thing, but in my experience we Kiwis are very good at buying pieces of furniture for 'just the right spot', and then putting it there and never moving it. Then we wonder why we get bored with it and want to buy another piece... I am very much of the school of trying to buy pieces that are multi-functional, and can be out in as many places around a room and around a home as possible. Often what we crave is the spark that comes with a new piece – but maybe that spark can simply be achieved by trying to move things into a different position. I have a friend who gets easily bored and even changes the purpose of a room, so that a dining room becomes a lounge! I love to move things around, and I find that certain things in my home anyway, look better depending on the seasons so...

2 Winter/Summer Now that the weather is changing it is time to put the rugs back down on the wooden floors, move the room around to take advantage of the sunshine (and obviously not the glaring heat of the sun) and

generally give it that cosy wintery feel that I really love. I am definitely a winter girl at heart with my knee-high black boots and layers of black dresses and cardys. The reverse happens all over Europe as soon as the sun starts to warm things up – and the rugs go back up and the house goes into 'summer' mode. We don't seem to do it much here – maybe we should...

3 Feathers I found a whole bunch of fake, feathered birds in my favourite \$2 shop, which is in Whakatane in the Bay of Plenty. Whenever we visit the grandparents there – I always go to this shop as they have a particularly great handcraft selection to choose from. Basically I bought every feathered bird they had. The red ones I arranged on some twisted willow and now they live in my daughter's room. The white ones I twisted on a candelabra. I have saved some to hang off an old branch (I am still looking for the right one), as I think they would look beautiful suspended over a child's cot or bed as a mobile. The large feathers are beautiful in a mobile. Nothing beats peacock feathers for simple beauty.

4 Shells I have had to learn to do something with shells because my daughter is an avid collector. Whenever we visit the Grandparents she disappears off with her Grandmother and comes back with a plastic bagful of shells to be carefully thrown in the car and dragged back to Auckland. There are a few tips for getting rid of the smell – boiling them and washing in detergent – or the lazy method that I adhere to: leaving them out in the sun and the rain, as over time they lose the sea smell and they bleach nicely. Shells are a naturally



Above: Whanau wall, fruit and collections. **Opposite page - clockwise from top left:** Feathers, shells, candles and flowers.



Above: Handprints, Kids artwork and bunting. **Opposite page - clockwise from top left:** Letters, bunting, painting old furniture and framing kids artwork.

beautiful part of our native surroundings – and, in my opinion, are timeless things that shouldn't ever be unfashionable. Why not put each separate trip's worth of shells in a jar with the date and location they were collected? Imagine a whole shelf full, gathered over the years by the small hands of your children or grandchildren... somehow makes them all the more beautiful...

5 Whanau wall I know this is one of Mary Grant's favourites – so I made sure to include it. What can be easier than displaying photos of your family and friends? A whanau wall can be as big or as small as you want. It can stay in one space in the house and the photos changed regularly, or they can be organic things that end up taking over the whole hallway! How wonderful to watch your children/grandchildren grow over time right under your own nose! Lots of shops sell cheap simple frames – check out THE WAREHOUSE for frames available in packs of 10 (@\$59.95) as part of the new 'republic revolution'. EZIBUY, SPOTLIGHT and BRISCOES also have a great selection.

6 Flowers and plants We have lost the art of growing flowers for the house. I know I am useless in the garden, and am always daunted by the thought of growing flowers. Give me foliage and greenery any day – I am less likely to kill these! We can buy cut flowers – and immediately lift a room – even if there is no scent, but how wonderful to cut something from our own gardens. Try hydrangea or magnolia leaves which last for ages. Olive and feijoa leaves look soft and silvery in a tall vase. Buxus in a terracotta pot can look great around the house, especially if you clip them into shapes. Much more cost efficient than buying them.

7 Fruit Why can't we use the groceries we buy stacked in a lovely bowl to add to the look of the house? Lemons and limes are a great one (the limes only when they are at their cheapest!), as are apples and pears. My favourite are red pears – I have a hard time actually letting the children eat them, as they look so fab in a big bowl...

8 Cushions Cushions are a cheap and cheerful way of changing, adding to a room. If you keep using the same inners then this keeps the cost down. If you find some fabric you love but don't sew – try a relative that does – or even your local alterations shop – if they

are cut to size and you supply the zip (use long invisible zips, available from SPOTLIGHT) – they will usually sew them up for you. I try and look what is happening in the shops and then see if I can find a cheaper option. I am quite into polka dots and found a beautiful set of red and white polka dotted tea towels at Briscoes for \$9 for three. They have made gorgeous cushion covers. WALLACE COTTON (www.wallacecotton.co.nz) always have a great range of cushions each season. They have a particularly sumptuous black velvet cushion with a jeweled crown on it for winter @ \$29. I might have to have it...

9 Collections We have lost the art of collecting. I do have a couple of collections. I collect blue and white china, and I find it interesting that it is starting to be fashionable again. I have been doing it for 20 years, so I figured it was bound to come back into fashion at some point! I love stacking them all on one shelf, mismatched and jumbly, but I just love it as I not only look at the patterns and shapes but I remember who gave me what bits and where I collected the other pieces from. Try putting a plate collection on a wall, or use your beautiful glass vases down the middle of a table filled with wild flowers. Bring out your tea cup collection when you have friends round, – giving each person a different one.

10 Candles By candles – I mean lighting really in all its many incarnations. In this country we are very good at overhead lighting and we often forget the wonderful change in mood that softer lighting can bring. Candles, candelabras and tealights are all cheap and easy to use (just make sure all small people are kept away – or are asleep!). We can also use table lamps and floor lamps. They can easily be moved around – use your imagination!

11 Repetition I say this as a way of introducing bottles. I have a rather large collection of bottles from various water and sparkling drinks stashed in a cupboard. I love their shapes, but mostly that they are free! My favourite is an ANTIPODES water bottle which looks great with a single flower like a protea in it. I use the smaller LIMONATA bottles or small SAN PELLIGRINO bottles with a single flower running down the middle of the table or along the window sill with jasmine or ivy. You can get both of those bottles from your local FOODTOWN.



12 Letters These can come in all shapes and sizes, and in past issues we have talked about painting them straight on to the wall with the help of an overhead projector and a RESENE test pot. This is about as cheap as you can get. It just takes a bit of time. Lots of companies now have a range of letters – from expensive single letters through to small mass-produced ones; these always benefit from a bright coat of paint. Try Ezibuy, Spotlight, and the Warehouse. Try sign writing companies for single polystyrene letters – these are safer than the wooden ones and would do less damage if they fall on a small person! They are perfect when you want to inject a bit of colour and fun to a neutral room.

13 Paint There really isn't anything like a coat of paint for transformations. Old pieces of furniture get a new lease of life – and there is something about doing something ourselves that I think is written in our Kiwi DNA! Painting walls in a room – or even one wall if the budget is tight. I have no problems with feature walls – just remember to use it like a head board if being used in a bedroom – it just balances the look of it. There are lots of blackboard paints out there and some companies are doing coloured ones. Paint shapes on the wall that can be used for notes or pictures. Just a tip though – try and stick to white chalk, as over time the coloured chalk dust can make a mess of the walls.

14 Hand prints or footprints for that matter, are simple, universal works of art in their own right. And anyone can make them.

15 Kids artwork You can never have too much of your children's artwork around. Try getting some of the pieces framed – they are precious and your children will love you for it. If you can't quite stretch to that cut cardboard into different shapes to frame them. If their artwork is treated with respect they will know it is loved and treasured by you. Mix it with the artwork you already have – be it photographs, prints or paintings.

16 Internet I wish I could say that I found this on the internet myself but that would be a fib. My husband is far more 'techie' than

I and he found this fabulous website that converts your digital photos into a larger piece of artwork. It sends the file back to you, so it simply prints out sheet by sheet into a photo that you piece together. Don't be scared off by the graphics – I am assured it is easy to use and the end product is great. Try homokaasu.org/rasterbator

17 Bunting This is suddenly quite fashionable. Lots of the more expensive shops are stocking it, especially for children's rooms. It couldn't be easier or cheaper to make. I bribed my 10-year-old to cut out the triangles, then I just folded them over a piece of bias binding and sewed in a straight line until I got to the end. I made it for the last parenting article. So far it has been used in my daughter's room, for my son's 5th birthday (he thought I had made it especially for him) and to drape the band rotunda at the Domain for our final mass autumn picnic with friends.

18 Fabric pictures Photocopy some fabric you love and slip it into some cheap clip frames. Or stretch it over a canvas, large or small.

19 Umbrellas I am very partial to Chinese silk umbrellas at the moment – and for that matter Chinese lanterns as well. The umbrellas can be used upside down with a bare bulb (don't put the bulb too close to the fabric) as a simple lampshade. Or they can be tied onto a standard lamp, or used by a small person for dress-ups! Try XIA in Mercury Lane in Auckland City or Wah Lees in Symonds Street for lanterns to string up outside during the summer to brighten barbeques and birthdays. They could be used in a child's room, especially if you use all the pinks and the child in question is a wee girl.

20 Read and collect inspiration all the time. Houses should, in my opinion, never really be finished. They are organic things that grow and change as your family does. If you are always keeping your eye out for new ideas, then you will be ready when a new situation (a new baby, kids outgrowing their rooms, Nana moving in permanently, not being able to move as the market landscape has changed ...) comes your way. There is never one way to solve a problem – and this is never more so than with the homes we live in. Enjoy them! ■

Above: Fabric pictures, flowers and plants, and cushions.

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