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#1 HOME JOURNAL™

Only Blue Will Do for Your Bedroom

Do you watch TV in your bedroom? Work on the computer? Check social media on your phone? If so, then your bedroom is not the relaxing place it should be. But you can make it more peaceful with just one step: Make it blue.

Color experts have long touted blue as the color of calm and tranquility, probably because it reminds us of the sky and the sea. Studies have shown that looking at the color blue can slow the heart rate and even lower blood pressure. A 2013 Travelodge study found that people slept longer in blue bedrooms than in rooms of other colors.

Painting the walls is a quick way to get an all-over calming effect. Light to mid-shades are best. (Dark hues are more dramatic and could be energizing.) You can also add blue to the room with bedding, curtains, rugs, or accessories. Including touches of pale yellow can add some warmth to the room, or you can keep it cool with light gray tones.

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Energy-Saving Tips for Warm Days

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) estimates that air conditioners use about 5 percent of all electricity produced in the U.S., costing homeowners more than \$11 billion a year. Even if you

don't need AC in your house, the DOE says there are plenty of simple steps you can take to reduce your energy usage and stay cool.

Thermostat

- Set the thermostat as high as is comfortable.
- Use a programmable thermostat to automatically increase the temperature setting while you're away.

Windows

- If you live in an area where it cools off at night, turn off the AC and open the windows while sleeping. In the morning, close the windows to trap in the cool air.
- Cover windows with blinds, shades or curtains and keep them drawn during the day to keep out the sun and prevent heat gain.

Fans

- A ceiling fan will circulate cool air and allow you to set the thermostat 4 degrees higher.
- Shut off ceiling fans when you leave the room - they cool people, not air.
- Use ventilating fans in bathrooms and laundry rooms to remove heat and humidity.

Appliances and Lighting

- When temperatures soar, avoid using appliances during the daytime that generate heat, such as ovens, dishwashers or dryers.
- Replace incandescent light bulbs with CFLs or LEDs (85 to 90 percent of electricity used by incandescent bulbs is turned into heat).

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On the Fence

Adding a fence to your yard is a big decision that comes with a lot of considerations. If you're having trouble figuring out where to start, *BrightNest.com* suggests asking yourself these four questions.

1. Why do I want this fence?

The type of fence you choose should depend on what you want it to do. If you need privacy, then you'd want a taller fence with closely fitted vertical pickets to limit visibility. If it's for a small dog, you could choose a shorter fence with more space between the pickets.

2. What style do I like?

There are probably more styles of fencing than you think, so don't limit yourself to what you know. Do some research - websites like *Pinterest* or *Houzz.com* are full of photos for you to get new ideas.

3. What's the best material for me?

The best choice of material could depend on factors such as your budget, your home's climate or the amount of maintenance required. The most popular materials are wood, vinyl, chain link, aluminum, and wrought iron.

4. What's the best way to make my fence choice a reality?

Will you do it yourself or hire a professional? It might depend on what type of material you decide on - some, such as wood, are harder to install than others and might necessitate hiring outside help.

Fence Materials

Wood - attractive, fairly inexpensive, needs to be treated or stained for protection. Requires more maintenance than other materials.

Vinyl - variety of styles, easy to install. More expensive than wood, little to no maintenance.

Chain link - easy to install, inexpensive. Generally considered outdated, and is prone to rust.

Aluminum - costs more than wood, but no maintenance required.

Wrought iron - the most visually striking, but requires maintenance and is by far the most expensive option.

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Organize Your Entryway

It's the first thing most of us do when we walk in the door - put down whatever we're carrying.

This can create quite a pile-up, but a little organization can go a long way in keeping the mess under control. *Real Simple* magazine offers some tips.

1. Shoe rack. Invest in a modular shoe rack with individual cubbies for each pair of shoes. This keeps pairs together and prevents the floor from becoming a big pile of disorganized footwear.

2. Bins. Corral odds and ends with bins, baskets or attractive storage containers. Give each family member their own bin and label them to avoid confusion.

3. Hooks and holders. Hang hooks, shelves and containers on the wall to catch your coats, keys, sunglasses, and even the mail. That way you avoid piling things up on the kitchen table or other surfaces, and they're easier to find later.

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Classic Bruschetta

2 tsp. minced garlic
4 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil, divided
2 1/2 cups minced Roma tomatoes
1/4 cup grated parmesan cheese
1/3 cup thinly sliced fresh basil leaf
2 Tbsp. balsamic vinegar
1/2 tsp. salt
1 tsp. fresh ground pepper
1 baguette, sliced and toasted

Saute garlic in 1 Tbsp. olive oil over medium heat for 2 minutes. Place in medium-size bowl to

cool. Once cool, add 3 Tbsp. olive oil, tomatoes, cheese, basil, vinegar, salt, and pepper.

Mix thoroughly and let sit at room temperature for at least 15 minutes.

To serve, spoon mixture on top of toasted baguette slices.

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