

How To Give Your Home An Extreme Makeover

By Charles Hanson

It's hard to believe that only a few short years ago very few of us could have imagined, let alone hoped for a truck full of strangers to show up at our door to freshen up the family room, beautify the bedroom or glamorize the garage. Now, thanks to the magic of television it almost seems unfair that "Trading Spaces," "Surprise By Design," "Design on a Dime" and, of course, "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition" haven't yet gotten around to paying everyone a call. Of course, when they do, they come backed up by corporate sponsors like Home Depot and Lowes who help provide everything from paint to tile to those professional appliances and the flat screen television monitor that, like the Jetsons, soon everyone will have in every single room in their house.

So, you've decided your house needs an extreme makeover but your cards and letters have gone unanswered? Even if you're on a budget, you can use some of the home decorating, renovation and landscaping tricks of those television shows yourself to give your home, if not a totally extreme makeover, at least one that will help satisfy your desire to transform your home's appearance, even without the flat screen televisions.

Here are a few tips:

- 1) There is safety in numbers. Just like on television, team up with family, friends and neighbors and trade some sweat equity. Whether it's painting, laying out a new patio or demolishing your master bath, the more help you have the better. Find at least one professional who knows what they're doing, let them train and delegate your volunteer workforce and find out for yourself that it really does take more than a couple of days to renovate a house.
- 2) Be a man (or woman) with a plan. Part of the reason that these home renovation shows can accomplish so much in so short a period of time is that they are run by an army of highly efficient producers who have figured out everything in advance with the help of professionals. Don't just jump in, but go through each step of laying that new patio, figure out what materials you need, how many people and estimate how long it will take. The more prepared you are, the less frustrated you'll be and the better able to handle unforeseen circumstances.
- 3) Go for the drama. If you want a big change, choose to do things that have the biggest impact. What do the shows without the big budgets rely on for the dramatic reveal at the end of the program? Color, mostly in the form of paint and fabric, usually revolving around some sort of theme. So be creative (or find someone who is) and design that all-pink boudoir or hunting-lodge themed den you've always wanted. Inside and outside the house, broad strokes make the biggest impression. Don't just plant 20 daffodils, plant 200. Or 2000.

- 4) Accessorize, accessorize, accessorize. Just like on TV, after you've spray painted the furniture and shellacked old newspapers to the walls and ceiling, there's nothing that finishes off a room or an outdoor space like the right accessories, from lamps to rugs to furniture and knick knacks. Go through your own house and re-purpose objects from other rooms, hit the garage sales and flea markets or indulge in one or two new things from the home store to complete your project in style. And again, just like on TV, choose judiciously, make sure that each object either stands on its own or enhances the scheme of the room and, just like when layering fashion accessories, when in doubt, take it out.
- 5) Know thyself. Unlike television, you're going to be spending more than an hour with what you do, so be realistic about what you really want to live with. You may have liked those big stick figures painted on the wall or that all black bedroom on TV, but do you really want to look at them day in and day out. While a dramatic makeover is all about taking risks, you probably don't have the budget to redecorate once a week. Again, here is where a professional or your local home store can help you focus on making changes that are realistic for you and your family.

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