

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

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DESIGN

Design-Pro Tricks to Beautify Your Home for \$100 or Less

Architects, decorators and landscape designers, used to lavishly spending other people's dough, propose high-impact décor moves that cost a C-note or less



VASE SQUAD For a fresh, frugal take on the floral centerpiece, artist Cathy B. Graham scores wee vintage glass vessels on eBay.
PHOTO: QUENTIN BACON & ANDREW INGALLS

By Catherine Romano

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Interior designers often lack experience when it comes to extreme skimping. After all, they're working with clients who can afford to hire a design professional and usually have plenty to spend.

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The Cheapskate's Guide to the Good Life



“Most of the items we use in our work cost thousands, not hundreds, of dollars,” said Mountain Brook, Ala., architect Jeffrey Dungan of the plush rugs, rare woods and investment art his team installs. When asked to suggest an under-\$100 décor upgrade or two, Mr. Duncan looked to a home that operates on a much more modest budget: his own. “I can think of things that make an impact in my house that are not terribly expensive,” he said. Off the top of his head: Move in a monumental plant or a sizable vase filled with branches.

“I have an arrangement of prunings from my hornbeam trees that have the most wonderful color,” he said. “The large scale is terrific, makes a big impact on any room and allows for a personal touch rather than something you just purchase.”

Below, eight more décor aficionados offer simple, economically responsible ways to raise the bar in your abode.

“Anyone can purchase vintage bottles on eBay and quickly amass 15 to 20 of them for \$100. Years ago, I started to collect them—I look for various heights and generally stick to clear, aqua and green glass—and I place a single floral stem in each one to replace what I feel has become boring: the typical dining-table floral centerpiece. I create a garden by mixing a variety of flowers. Beyond the dining table, I do this on my front hall table, side tables and entry consoles.”

— *Cathy B. Graham, artist and author of “Second Bloom: Cathy Graham’s Art of the Table,” New York*

“A vintage ‘fancy’ mirror in the kitchen is an unexpected, glamorous idea. A French gilded or giltwood style can be found in thrift and vintage stores for a song. And a can of gold spray paint can do wonders.”

— *Max Humphrey, interior designer, Portland, Ore.*

“Replace your current lightbulbs with smart bulbs that you can control on your phone. You can dim them or set them to turn on and off at different times of the day. You instantly get a high-end lighting system.”

— *Jason Oliver Nixon, interior designer, Madcap Cottage, High Point, N.C.*

“One of my favorite things is incense. I like



Astier de Villatte Yakushima Incense Box, \$50, abchome.com PHOTO: F. MARTIN RAMIN/ THE WALL STREET JOURNAL, STYLING BY ANNE CARDENAS

Yakushima best. People are fascinated by the aroma. It’s named after a Japanese island and smells like subtropical moss and lilies, but there’s a cedar scent and notes of leather so it blends together in a way that’s both feminine and masculine. A box of 125 sticks is around \$65, which will last six months depending on how crazy you become about its lingering scent.”

— *Jeffrey Dungan, architect, Mountain Brook, Ala.*

“I love searching for local artists or artisans when I travel and purchasing their work for my home. Often, these aren’t globally famous people, so their work is likely to be a good value. It’s the simple luxury of seeing something you love in your home and remembering your carefree exploration of a local market or street.

— *Gideon Mendelson, interior designer, New York*



Umi Throw, \$100, cb2.com PHOTO: F. MARTIN RAMIN/ THE WALL STREET JOURNAL, STYLING BY ANNE CARDENAS

“We like to use colorful throws a lot in our interiors. They give the perfect finishing touch, and they work in almost every room of the house. I’ve even seen them in bathrooms! Although most throws are above \$100, you can find ones within that budget at CB2.”

— *Jay Sheth, interior designer, Mumbai, India*

“Many people purchase the least expensive (and often poorly made) pruners, but if their gardens need frequent trimming and deadheading, paying for quality pruners really helps to ease the load and speed the work. The Felco F-7 hand pruners with rotating handle are truly high-end and luxurious. They’re well made, easy to sharpen and many of the parts are replaceable, so they are long lasting. The rotating handle is also ergonomic and prevents blisters.”

— *Jerry Williams, senior project manager, landscape, KAA Design Group, Los Angeles*

“I grow flowers and can’t live without fresh ones in my house. For my New York City home, I order a petite arrangement that’s unique and truly precious for \$95 from Emily Thompson Flowers.”

— *Paula Hayes, artist and landscape designer, New York*

“Be Home, a Northern California design company with vendors from all over the world, offers a never-ending selection of wood and shell and horn utensils—for serving spreads and caviar and such—for \$4 and up.”

— *John Derian, home-décor maker and purveyor, New York*



Felco 7 One-Hand Pruning Shears, \$78, felco.com PHOTO: F. MARTIN RAMIN/ THE WALL STREET JOURNAL, STYLING BY ANNE CARDENAS

—*Compiled by Catherine Romano*

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