

special
section

Restyle Your Home



**PREPPED TO
HIBERNATE**

Fall finds to
keep you warm, **R2**

> SPACE REVIVAL



DAVID BAGOSY PHOTOS

The living room of this Summerhill home boasts a brand new look and feel with rich hardwood floors and a wall-to-wall cabinetry unit with built-in fireplace.

Call it home sweet home, not money pit

Plan renovations during the house hunt, not after you've finally turned the key, interior design expert Laura Stein advises

ANDREA JANUS
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

So you've bought yourself a house that needs a little work because you didn't want to live in someone else's idea of a dream home. How do you keep yourself from falling into a money pit, à la Shelley Long and Tom Hanks circa 1986?

The first thing to keep in mind, says Laura Stein, principal and CEO at Laura Stein Interiors in Toronto, is making sure you don't bite off more than you can chew.

A year ago, Stein and her husband bought a home in Toronto's Roncesvalles neighbourhood that needed a complete renovation, a gut job from top to bottom. As a professional, she knew what she was getting into, had plenty of experience with long and complicated projects and understood she would be "frustrated with not being able to make it my own."

Average homeowners, therefore, need to start thinking of their renovation when they are still house-hunting, keeping in mind three important factors: what you're willing to take on, your timeline and your budget.

RENO continued on R4



The living room of a home in Summerhill prior to renovation.

> IN SEASON

Make the most out of vegetable growing season

Green thumbs don't need to hibernate — set up your garden to harvest veggies into fall and winter

TARA NOLAN
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

For many gardeners, fall is a signal it's time to clean up the vegetable garden; plants are starting to look a little peaked, tomatoes are slower to ripen and herbs may have gone to seed.

However that doesn't mean you need to pack it all in and "shut down" the veggie garden completely. There are several edibles that thrive in cooler weather and some that will make it right through the winter, provided they're given the proper protection.

"I like to extend the season in my vegetable garden because it allows me to provide homegrown, organic food for my family all year long — even in winter," says Niki Jabbour, author of *The Year Round Vegetable Gardener*. "Plus, it cuts my grocery bill and introduces us to the wide variety of cold-season vegetables that taste better after the weather turns cold."

Here are ways you can extend the season in your garden:



DONNA GRIFFITH/RAISED BED REVOLUTION

An old window can be used to create a cold frame, which will extend your growing season.

Tuck in your plants

If some plants are still chugging along nicely in the garden, but there is a threat of frost, floating row cover is a great material to have at the ready. Use it to cover the plants in the late afternoon/early evening as the temperature drops and remove in the morning, depending on the forecast. (A lightweight bedsheet can also help in a pinch.) Use rocks or logs to hold it down or tuck the edges into the soil. You can also use spring clamps, available at most big-box stores, to secure the fabric more firmly to the edges of a raised bed.

VEGGIES continued on R4

> HEAD TURNERS

Counter culture demands equal measures of utility, beauty

Latest generation of appliances can perform double duty as handsome accessories

VICKY SANDERSON
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

Have nothing in your house that you do not know to be useful, or believe to be beautiful. The directive from 19th century designer William Morris may be shopworn, but it remains useful — even as a guide for determining which appliances should live on a kitchen countertop, says Tamara Robbins Griffith, design expert for HomeSense.

"How much you display will depend on how big or small your kitchen is. Either way, you need to ask, is this something I will take out to use and then put away because it's not attractive, or something beautiful that I will enjoy seeing all the time?"

Increasingly, manufacturers understand that consumers want appliances to enhance, not detract from, room design, says Robbins Griffith. "We demand a lot from products these days. We want them

to function well and be good-looking, so the appliances that do both scream to be given prime real estate on the counter."

Homeowners, she adds, are turning toward brushed and matte metallic finishes, and multi-purpose, feature-rich kitchen tools — even if they come at a higher price. One easy way to achieve cohesion is to pair countertop appliances or accessory finishes with those of large appliances, suggests Robbins Griffith. "I might look for stainless steel canisters and an espresso machine, for example, because my larger appliances are stainless."

On the other hand, she loves colour in a kitchen. "Maybe the stand mixer is a bright colour and you have a fun enameled cast-iron skillet on the stove. Some pieces have to stand out and some have to recede," says Robbins Griffith, adding that she's also fond of "punctuation marks, which can be anything from a tea towel to a toaster."

Here, then, are three countertop appliances that may deserve a perch in the contemporary kitchen:

COUNTERS continued on R4



RESTYLE YOUR HOME

> WARM UP

Revolutionizing sitting by the fireplace

Fire feature technologies are coming closer to reinventing the real wood-burning thing

VICKY SANDERSON
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

The rise of central heating and the trend toward condo living has produced a whole new generation living without the joys of a cosy hearth in the home. New technologies in fire features are changing that.

Wood-burning fireplaces were, not that long ago, a standard feature in most homes. They are still often found in older homes and are frequently a “must-have” luxury in new higher-end houses.

Toronto designer Lori Morris, who specializes in lush, luxurious spaces, understands why.

“Nothing can beat the essence and vibrancy of a real fire — the crackling of the wood, its smell, raw lighting and complexity. You can never replace the magic of a real fire and the mood it creates in the room,” says Morris, who recently designed a huge wood-burning fireplace with a rich, chocolate-brown cast-stone surround in a setting she describes as a “castle for one.”

Romantic as that may be, she’s not blind to the cons of wood-burning fireplaces. “Since wood needs to be replenished often, the room should allow for nearby storage,” she says. Homeowners should also keep in mind that mess can be created by carrying fireplace logs into living areas. Drafts, too, can be an issue with wood-burning fireplaces.

In some jurisdictions, there are bans on wood-burning fireplaces in new builds or restrictions on when they can be used, as part of an effort to improve air quality.

Even if wood-burning fireplaces go the way of the dodo, there are other ways to incorporate a fire feature into any space.

“With gas fireplaces,” says Morris, “you have more diversity with design and materials that can be used.” Gas fireplaces are also clean, convenient and can work with virtually any kind of design — traditional, contemporary or transitional — because they can be housed in so many surround finishes.

The treatment designer Melissa Davis recently came up with for a gas fireplace in a downtown loft she renovated for a client is proof of that. In the 865-square-foot space, she clad a floor-to-ceiling fireplace surround in quarter-inch plywood stained a rich maple colour. Materials cost a mere \$300.

“People think you have to spend so



DIMPLEX

Electric fireplaces have come a long way in terms of both style and performance and don’t need to be vented, making them ideal for apartment living.



A wood-burning fireplace designed by Lori Morris is a standout feature in an already opulent room.



STEPHANI BUCHMAN

Stained maple plywood mimics more expensive walnut on a fireplace surround, designed by Melissa Davis.

The big knock against them has been, until quite recently, that they don’t look realistic. That’s no longer true, according to Jane Bradley, director for Dimplex, maker of electric heating and electric fireplace products.

“Everyone should be able to enjoy the calm and relaxation that comes with gazing at an open fire year round, so we focus on delivering this authentic fireplace experience to consumers who don’t have access to combustion fireplaces due to building limitations, codes or accessibility,” she says.

An example is Dimplex’s Opti-myst, which uses water from an on-board tank to create a mist that looks like smoke. Light reflecting against the water helps create the illusion of flame.

Dimplex is about to launch a new model called Revillusion, which the company suggests may be its most realistic “flame” yet. The new fire-box, which will be in stores in November, has a reflective surface with a cross-hatched design that helps to enhance clarity and colour to make it look more like a dancing flame.

“Many of the new generation of electric fireplaces also have a “heatless flame” setting, which allows homeowners to enjoy the look of a fire without the toasty glow, a useful option for warmer months.

much money for wood. You don’t — stain maple out the right colour and it has a very similar look to walnut,” she explains.

Other options for refreshing surrounds on retrofits include painting old brick in a fresh neutral shade, drywalling it to create a smooth surface or cladding in one of the new, lightweight manufactured stones.

Homeowners should keep in mind that installing gas lines can be expensive and that ensuring proper ventilation can add to the cost.

Stand-alone fire boxes that burn ethanol or other fuels allow fire features to be incorporated into such unlikely applications as room dividers or the ends of kitchen islands.

Electric fireplaces are typically seen

as affordable and easy to install options for retrofitting existing fireplaces.

Many can simply be plugged into a regular outlet (always read all manufacturer’s instructions on installation and ask a certified electrician if you are at all unsure). Another bonus? Electric fireplaces don’t need venting.

> RETAIL THERAPY

COSY UP WITH THESE FALL FINDS

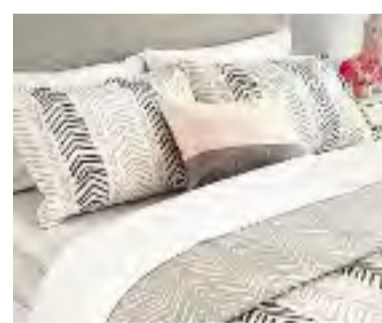
The moment the weather definitively changes from summer to fall, the nesting phase sets in, where we pull the warm woollies out of storage and snuggle up indoors. That’s not to say you can’t spend as much time on your outdoor patio as possible before the snow flies. Outdoor heaters and fireplaces have become ubiquitous fall accessories. And why not? Who knows how long the winter will last? Might as well enjoy that outdoor space for as long as possible. **Tara Nolan** rounds up some autumn-inspired items, many of which can be enjoyed both indoors and out.

**Stack wood in style**

They say home is where the hearth is, but most fireplaces these days don’t really have that traditional hearth — they’re gas powered. But if you are lucky enough to have a real fireplace, you need a place to organize your freshly chopped wood. And luckily some stores still make these wood-holding “relics.” *Rings Fireplace Log Holder*, \$99, available at West Elm, westelm.com.

**Cosy up between the sheets**

Once you’ve experienced the warmth and comfort of flannel, you will not dare to put cotton sheets on your bed until spring. This pair from Simons Maison adds cottage-chic style under the duvet. *Dancing Deer Flannel Sheets*, \$30 to \$50 (all pieces sold separately), available at Simons, simons.ca.

**Burrow under a duvet**

When the cold weather comes, the duvet can come out of the linen cupboard, so you can cuddle up in bed and stay warm with a good book. This cover has a retro-modern design created by decor dynamo Samantha Pynn. *Chevron Duvet Cover Set*, \$200-\$300 (depending on size), available at Simons, simons.ca.

**Put the kettle on**

Herbal tea, black tea with milk and sugar, green tea with jasmine flowers, whatever it is you drink to warm up, steep those leaves in an autumn-inspired porcelain teapot that comes with a stainless steel infuser. *Leaf Simplicity Teapot*, \$36, available at David’s Tea, davidstea.com.

**Keep toes toasty**

If radiant in-floor heating is not yet a reality in your home, you can strategically lay out a few rugs here and there — maybe in front of a sink or beside the bed — to keep toes toasty on especially frosty mornings. Danish designer Mette Dittmer has created a line of rugs in simple geometric patterns and current hues. *Papilio Rug*, \$129 (green and blush), available at Drake General Store, drakegeneralstore.ca.

**Cover up in plaid**

Wrap yourself up for fall Netflix viewing (or an evening on your patio) in this throw that shows a rich, colourful plaid on one side and a stylish herringbone on the other. *Double-sided Throw*, \$69.50 (sapphire plaid), available at Indigo and Chapters stores, chapters.indigo.ca.

**Tell ghost stories around a fall fire**

You might not be roasting marshmallows, but this “fire table” does throw off some heat on a frosty fall evening. Bundle up to look at the stars with a hot drink and the kids. *Outdoor Propane Fire Table*, \$499 (50,000 BTU), available at RONA Home & Garden, rona.ca.

**Warm up while eating al fresco**

While it may not be the most attractive thing you’ll ever add to your patio, this hanging heater — which you could suspend from a gazebo or covered porch roof — may allow you to enjoy an outdoor meal or cocktail on the patio — beyond what one would classify as “patio season.” *EnerG+ Outdoor Hanging Heater*, \$157, available at Home Depot, homedepot.ca.

**Have a hot cuppa**

Potter Greg Voisin has developed a signature style that appears on his mugs and bowls — retro faves such as cameras, bicycles and mixed tapes. But wait until you see his Hotline Bling-inspired Drake mug, debuting at Toronto’s One of a Kind Show. *35 mm Ceramic Camera Mug*, \$25, available at the One of a Kind Show, Nov. 24 to Dec. 4, Enercare Centre, oneofakindonlineshop.com.

RESTYLE YOUR HOME

Q&A > MICHELLE SLATALLA

EVERY GARDEN CAN BE A FAVOURITE

In her new book, *Gardenista*, Michelle Slatalla gives gardeners a new perspective on how their plants can growTARA NOLAN
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

Michelle Slatalla says she learned to garden through osmosis — both her father and grandmother had gardens in the Chicago suburbs where she grew up.

A prolific author and journalist — she's been a columnist for the *New York Times* and has published both fiction and non-fiction books — Slatalla shifted gears in 2012 to launch *Gardenista*.

It's a sister site to the popular online interior design destination *Remodelista*, founded by Slatalla's friends Julie Carlson and Josh Groves.

Both websites emphasize the fact that your outdoor space is living space, no matter how much or how little you have.

"We are as interested in how to make it comfortable and well-furnished and a space you'll use year round as we are in the traditional idea of plants, planting and horticulture info," says Slatalla of *Gardenista*.

This month, Slatalla's new book, *Gardenista: The Definitive Guide to Stylish Outdoor Spaces*, will be published, providing a big bouquet of ideas that you can digest over the winter and

use to inspire your own outdoor space come spring.

What's your current garden like? Are there any challenges you've had to address?

This is the first house where I created a garden from a blank slate.

Because of what I do for a living, my garden at home is my experimental field where I'll test out new plants. I had been living in New York City around the time the High Line opened. When I got back to California, I thought: How do you translate these sorts of ideas to a Mediterranean climate like Northern California?

We have a big problem with water. Drought-tolerant plants and grasses are a big part of our future and where garden design is headed. I wondered what would grow here and what would thrive.

I gave over half of my front garden to this colourful mini meadow, which is a loose homage to the High Line. It's crazy how it's so full of butterflies and bees and hummingbirds.

In the other half of my garden, I was playing around with the idea of minimal, but more formal tailored planting — how little can you do to make a space look green without using a lot of water?

There is a boxwood maze in progress, Daphne shrubs, which are fragrant and green in California all year round, and there is an olive tree in the middle of it.

Can you describe how the *Gardenista* book came about?

Remodelista published a book in 2013. We had a blueprint of how we wanted to cover these kinds of topics in a book format. The next logical thing for us to do was a gardening book.

Remodelista really pays attention to remodelling details. In *Gardenista*, we lovingly talk about drainage, gravel, gutters — those nitty gritty things that exist in the garden and people have a lot of questions about them, but they're glossed over in gardening books. What we were (also) trying to do is give people in

different climates different kinds of plans.

What are your favourite designs in the book?

It's so hard to pick because every time we'd go to take photos, that would be the new favourite. Rose Uniacke has an indoor London conservatory with a huge skylight.

It's quite grand and wonderful. John Derian, the designer, has a garden at the opposite end of the spectrum on Cape Cod with edibles and wildflowers and a tough, seaside cottagey garden. That's what I love about the book. If a reader picks a favourite, it's going to be based on style or climate. There's no best garden.

What do you hope readers take away from the book?

What I hope is that everybody who gets a copy of this book is going to want to look at it and dog-ear a page or five or 10. There will be a photo or caption or idea and the reader will be like: "I want to try that in my own garden" or "I never thought about



Michelle Slatalla's latest book is *Gardenista: The Definitive Guide to Stylish Outdoor Spaces*.

that, but I can see how I can recreate this look." I hope it's full of concrete ideas that are useful, as well as really beautiful.

Are there any trends you see moving into 2017?

We see that our readers are interested in perennial grasses and how to integrate them into traditional gardens that have flowering perennials and herbaceous borders.

Another trend I see is our readers are interested in getting rid of turf grass because it uses too much water. In large swaths it can be boring — it's this velvety green luxury. A lot of our readers are interested in turning their yards into meadows — growing wildflowers and maybe mowing a path through it to get to the door.

Appliances that are both useful and stylish

COUNTERS from R1

Blender: It's hard to think of a countertop appliance that's as versatile as a blender — go-to wedding gift and housewarming present of choice for millennials. Basically, the design — a motor in a box — hasn't changed for a long time.

It's worth noting, then, that **KitchenAid's Torrent Blender (\$650)** won a coveted "Best of the Best" Red Dot award for groundbreaking product design. Here's why:

The box has become significantly sleeker and smaller. A magnetized drive locks the pitcher firmly in place, making for a low-profile machine that can slide in and out like a coffee pitcher. Ideal, then, for small spaces, and an efficient use of counter space. Four pre-set programs tackle juice, soups/sauces, milkshakes and icy drinks or smoothies; adjustable speed settings and pulse are also options. A dishwasher-safe cup lets you add extra or forgotten ingredients through the top of the machine.

Countertop oven: Why do singletons, young families and empty-nesters all buy countertop ovens? Because they're both an energy efficient way to cook in small batches, and useful at delivering extra capacity when preparing a feast for a crowd. Day to day, kids can use them easily and safely to bake pizzas, toast bagels and warm leftovers.

Breville's Smart Oven Pro (\$369.99) has a relatively large cav-

ity — big enough for a 12-by-12-inch baking pan. There are several pre-programmed settings but among the most useful will be the slow cook function, which can simmer from four to 10 hours. A keep-warm function keeps pre-made dishes warm: useful for parties.

If cooking isn't your thing, but coffee is, you could hand the space over to **Wio Breville's Barista Express espresso maker (\$800)**. It's got several features, such as a cup-warming tray and hot water outlet for making Americanos. For freshness freaks, there's an on-board grinder, which considerably ups chances of consistently good coffee.

Electric spiralizer: Yes, it's new, so the spiralizer could, like many gee-whiz-isn't-that-amazing appliances, come in with a bang and leave with a whimper (remember juicers?) But there are lots of reasons to consider incorporating one into your kitchen, especially if you want to bump up your vegetable consumption.

Spiralizers turn firm fruits and vegetables into long, noodlelike strands. **Hamilton Beach's two-speed, 3-in-1 spiralizer (\$50)** has a very small footprint and comes with a spiral cutter and grater blade. So, for example, zucchini can stand in for pasta, beets can be made into skinny spirals for salad, while carrots can be grated for slaw.

Just between us — there's also a ribbon cutter, which you can use on cheat days to make homemade potato chips.



Hamilton Beach's spiralizer makes preparing vegetable dishes easier.



The sleek KitchenAid Torrent Blender has multiple speeds and settings for juice, soups, sauces or milkshakes.



The Breville Smart Oven is convenient for a couple or new family.



A toaster in a hot hue also functions as a colourful accessory.

Grow root veggies during cooler months

VEGGIES from R1

Make a tent for your crops

You can also convert existing raised beds into mini hoop houses. Farmers use these on a much grander scale to protect their crops. To do this, space out and attach conduit clamps along the inside edge of your raised bed, with a matching one on the opposite side. Cut lengths of PEX pipe (you could also use metal conduit tubing) and bend pieces to form a hoop shape across the width of the bed, securing them in the holes created by the clamps. Place the floating row cover over the hoops and secure in place around the entire perimeter of the garden.

Add a cold frame to the garden

Cold frames are another great way to extend the growing season. There are several ways to build a cold frame — it's essentially a raised bed with a clear lid. That translucent topper will capture the heat of the sun, helping the plants inside to grow. The lid could be an old window attached with hinges or a big slab of corrugated plastic, and the raised bed itself can be made from wood or bricks. Jabbour once even arranged a group of straw bales in a rectangle and placed an old window over top to create a makeshift cold frame.

When building the raised bed for the cold frame, one recommendation is to make sure that the back is eight to 15 centimetres higher than the front, which should help capture as much solar energy as possible. It also prevents snow from piling up and water from pooling on the lid.

There are plenty of kits and lids and special covers on the market for those who aren't as handy. And once you get even more into gardening year-round, you can purchase items such as a thermometer or heat-activated opener to make sure that your cold frame does not overheat.

If you're late to the party to plant anything this fall, you can still put your cold frame to good use. Use it for winter plants that like to go dormant; in the springtime you can harden off delicate seedlings inside, sow hardy annuals or store nursery plants if there is still a threat of frost.

Grow the right crops

You're not going to be growing heat-seekers such as tomatoes and cucumbers and peppers in your season extenders. Turn your attention instead to cool-weather-loving crops such as root veggies — beets, carrots, parsnips and radishes — and greens.

"For fall and winter, I concentrate on the cool- and cold-season crops like kale, carrots, beets, mâche, Asian greens, spinach, scallions and arugula," says Jabbour. "These are generally planted in August and September, depending on the crop."

However, Jabbour says if you still have kale, carrots and beets in your garden, you don't have to pull them up; you can protect them with mulch or mini hoop tunnels this autumn to extend your harvest.

Once you recognize that gardening season doesn't begin on the May 24 long weekend and end with the first sign of fall, you can plan out which edibles you want to grow through the spring, fall and winter.

Make your home your own without breaking the bank

RENO from R1

Walk through a home thinking of what you'd need to do to make it your dream house, cost out those projects, and then add 20 per cent for the inevitable surprises, Stein says.

"If my renovation is going to cost me this much money, can I afford to buy this house? Can I make this my dream house with what I have to spend on it? Your prioritizing needs to start from day one when you first set foot in that house."

Projects to spruce up a home that is dated and just needs a facelift "are a lot easier to tackle quickly and to prioritize," she adds. "If you're gutting it to the studs, you can't live there while you're doing that."

Building a few visits into your purchase contract will let you tour the home with an interior designer or architect to better understand the space and get a feel for what might be required.

"So often we go in with clients after they've closed and they say, 'wow, I don't remember it looking like this,'" Stein says. "So you want to give yourself some time to get to know your house and think through your renovation carefully so you're not rushing into making changes."

For any home, however, the first set of priorities is the same: making sure the house is working and safe, ensuring the systems such as plumbing,

electrical, heating and cooling are not only to code, but functioning to your standards.

"Those are the things that can cost a huge amount of money and are really important in the end," Stein says. "You'd be very unhappy come February if your furnace wasn't working. It's not the fun stuff, your friends don't come over and say, 'wow, look at your new furnace.' But it is really, really important."

The next renos to consider when setting a priority list are ones that should be done before furniture is moved in. The top project on this list would be refinishing the floors, which can end up opening a Pandora's Box of issues, Stein notes. If you replace the floors, you may have to replace the baseboards. If you refinish the floors, the baseboards likely have to be refinished, too.

And if you decide to tear down a wall (which itself may require a structural engineer and permits, plus could involve rerouting ducts or electrical wires), flooring will need to be added to the new floor space.

"There are a lot of things where you think about one thing, and it will lead to something else and lead to something else," Stein explains, noting that her own home renovation went over budget by between 20 and 25 per cent, and she's an expert.

Most of that was due to unexpected costs and the scope of the reno," she



The Summerhill home entrance prior to renovations.

says, including having to drywall the entire house because the original plaster was crumbling and mouldy, and replacing existing framing.

Stein also admits she over-budgeted by upgrading to more expensive finishes and fixtures. "This happens on every reno project I've ever worked on," she says. "People think, I'm already spending so much money, I might as well spend a little more and get what I really want, but it adds up quickly!"

High-traffic rooms that you can't live without, especially if you have children, should also be prioritized before moving in. That means kitchens, and at least one bathroom, should not only be safe to use, but



The Summerhill home entrance retiled and pointed post-renovation.

also functional for your needs, Stein says.

"Especially if you've got a family, the kitchen becomes the centre of the home," Stein adds.

Renovations that can be put off include the basement or the backyard, and if your kitchen is just a little dated but doesn't need a complete overhaul, simple fixes can allow you to focus on other immediate big-ticket needs, Stein says.

Adding trims, crown moulding and backsplash, as well as changing hardware, replacing lighting and painting cabinets are all inexpensive ways to make a home your own while you tackle a more urgent project or save for major renos down the road.