

Spring Sweep

BY KRISTEN ARMSTRONG

If you're anything like I am the warmer days of spring make you feel like throwing open windows and letting the fresh air wake up your house from its winter sleep. It's time to clear out the dust and breathe new life into your home with a fresh spring sweep. Here are five simple steps to help you organize and perk up your space.

1 GET PACKING

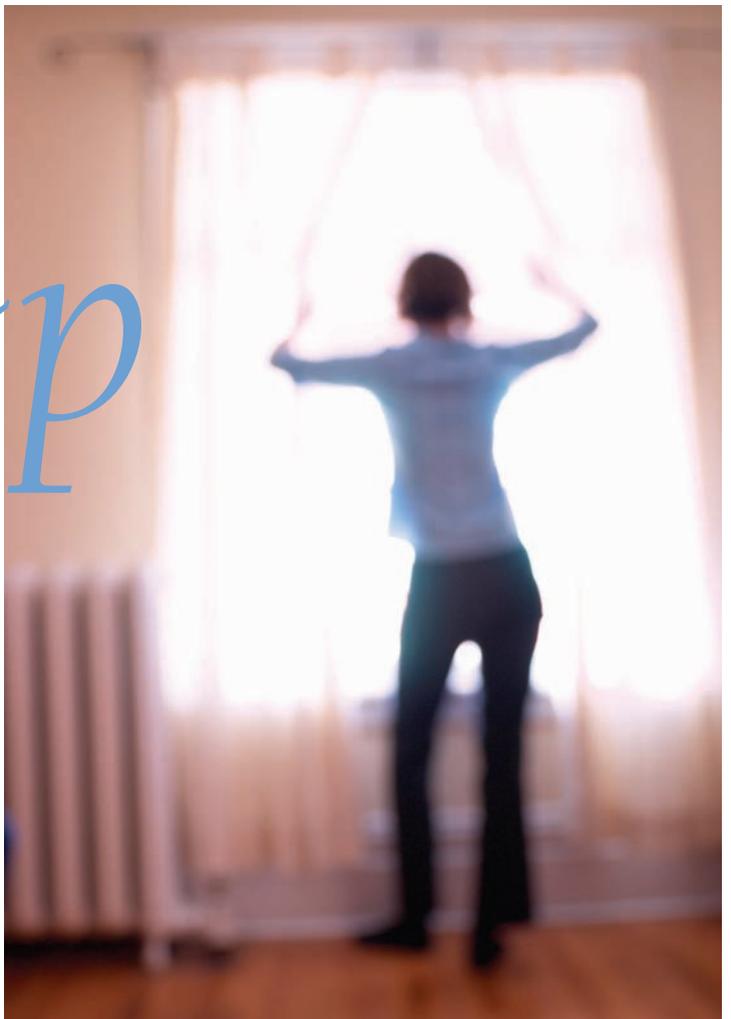
Just like an artist starts with a clean canvas, so should you. Go room by room and decide what is absolutely necessary to keep. It is difficult to imagine a space's potential if you've always lived with the same layout. Think about what kinds of activities your family uses the room for and make sure that each item you keep has a purpose. Ask yourself: Have I used it in the past year or two? Can I give it to someone else who has better use for it? Does it still go with my décor? If it is needlessly taking up space, move it out. Store away winter clothing, heavy throws, holiday ornaments (you know who you are) and anything that says, "It's cold outside".

2 SPRUCE IT UP

Now that the room is less cluttered it's time to get your hands dirty. Scrub any marks or residue from walls or baseboards and fill holes. Touch up paint or if you feel so inspired, add a fresh coat to make the space feel brand new. Clean grimy windows to let the spring warmth and sunshine in and restore wood furniture by filling in scratches and giving it a good polish.

3 ADD A LITTLE SPICE

It's easy to get used to Aunt Gertrude's vase sitting on your childhood table but hey, it's spring, try having a little fun! Go hunting around your house, in the basement and garage too, to find furniture and accessories that might sparkle your new uncluttered, clean space. Look at things in a different way, be creative. For example, you could place a mirror with a substantial frame face up on your coffee or side table. It will give your room a beautiful, reflective surface. It may take several trips and a few "Oh No's!" but the final result will be different and refreshing.



4 RETAIL THERAPY

Go shopping! Nothing says new and fresh like trendy accessories. Pillows, area rugs, artwork, centerpieces, bedding, greenery and even drapery are fair game and should be considered to reflect the season. Keep in mind the style you have created so far and choose colours that work with the existing colour palette. For example, earth tones and browns are complimented well by bright greens, soft yellows and creams. Natural textures like linens, grasses and stone give the space depth. Images and prints of botanicals or seaside motifs give it a light and airy feel; inspirational artwork and luxurious designer fabrics should do the trick.

5 A LITTLE HELP FROM THE KIDS

Some may prefer to go it alone while others may want their little rug rats to help. Children naturally feel good about helping those less fortunate, so give each child their own box to fill with things they aren't playing with anymore. Make a game out of it by perhaps allowing the child with the most to give away her/his choice of family outing or TV show that evening. Remember, kids have great imaginations and may have one or two whimsical ideas to suggest. Add instant personality by having your family pick out their favorite photos, have them tastefully framed and group them on a prominent wall or shelf.

You can make this spring sweep a seasonal event that will quickly become a family tradition; something you all can start planning and looking forward to long before the snow has left the garden. ☀

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