

HOMES+CONDOS

FARMHOUSE CHIC GETS A TV LIFT

Shipping and barn doors and wrought-iron accents, oh my! The modern farmhouse decor aesthetic is continuing its domination with a new HGTV show. Farmhouse Facelift takes to the countryside to folk-low contractor Billy Pearson and designer Carolyn Wiltrink, pictured, as they restore farmhouses for owners who've decided to downshift their lives. "Recent real-estate trends show that city dwellers are realizing the best way to slow things



down and gain more space is to move out to the city and into old farmhouses with acres of land and loads of character." HGTV's media release reads. "However, these purchases can come with a laundry list of must-do renovations, such as a rickety front porch, original wood floors that desperately need refinishing, and an outdated floor plan." The series debuts the first of 10 one-hour episodes March 3 on HGTV Canada. *Melissa Huth*

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SECTION C

THE PERFECT ESCAPE

Use any space in your home to create peaceful, screen-free 'zen den'



Make your bedroom a calm and relaxing oasis by decluttering and adding lots of light and warm textures. Try to keep the bedroom screen-free.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO CREATE A 'ZEN DEN' EXPERIENCE?

- Here are some West of Main Design's suggestions:
- **Play on the senses:** Though all homes are different, we can use some common themes to create relaxation
- **Mood lighting:** Make sure all your lighting is on dimmers so that you're able to create a relaxing environment as the daylight changes.
- **Music:** Invest in good speakers, and create playlists for different types of moods.
- **Scents:** Whether it's delicious foods, fresh green, candles or a diffuser, find out what helps you relax.
- **Greenery:** Whether it's real or faux, a pop of greenery in nature's best relaxing agent.
- **Warmth:** Make sure you have a cozy blanket or hand to wrap and snuggle yourself up in while relaxing.

LOUISE RACHLIS

As people continue to cope with COVID isolation, many interior designers have noted heightened interest in clients wanting to make their homes more "zen."

"We definitely have," says Sascha Lafleur, co-founder and principal designer at West of Main Design on Kaladar Ave. in Ottawa. "We feel extremely lucky to be in an industry that is bringing people comfort and security in a time of deep unrest."

"Yes, clients want their homes to feel calm and relaxing," agrees designer Eugenia Triandou, co-founder of Hibou Design & Co., a Montreal-based multidisciplinary design firm that provides complete bespoke residential design services throughout Canada and North America. "And although some clients do ask for this directly," says Triandou, "instead we find they more often ask for elements like calming colours, steam showers, deep lounge sofas."

The best way to create a zen experience is to "bring in nature," says Lafleur, who provides complete residential and commercial design services throughout North America. "Nature is the best source of inspiration," she says, "whether it be an actual plant to nurture and take care of, or natural elements, and brings in such warm, calming wood tones."

Lafleur also suggests lighting candles for a warm and cozy atmosphere, and "ground with rugs as they're not only warm underfoot, but they also create warmth ethetically by breaking up the hard materials in a dining space or living room."

For a perfect spot to relax, Lafleur advises making your master bedroom "a calm and relaxing oasis by decluttering it and adding multiple light sources on dimmers."

Having a screen-free room is essential in creating a zen experience, according to Eugenia Triandou of Hibou Design & Co. "The best way to create stillness is to remove all distractions."

A lot of our clients insist on no TV in the bedroom," she adds, "and I would have to agree. Creating a daily bedtime routine that involves something like journaling, meditation, reading, listening to music, diffusing essential oils, are all great ways to set the tone for a restful sleep. The worst thing one can do is to have TV or computer screens

in the bedroom areas as it disrupts the sleep patterns."

For Hibou Design, "bathroom and tub is top of our clients' list for the perfect spot to relax." There is absolutely no better place to relax than a deep soaker tub in my opinion. Tubs are like fireplaces, you either love them and use them all the time or not at all. Regardless if you're on "lean tall" or not, having one in moments when you want to decompress is essential."

And some of Lafleur's other suggestions: "Many homes are open concept now, with places to eat at the island or dining room, and breakfast tables are not being utilized as often. Consider changing the breakfast area to a more casual type of seating. Create a cozy corner to read or have a cup of tea or

coffee with your favourite chair and ideally natural light."

As for Lafleur, "I put some music on, light some candles, wrap myself up in a warm linen throw and read cooking books."

Triandou personally likes to relax by "sitting curled up with a book, lighting some candles, playing music, meditating and practicing yoga. And when I'm really in need of some relaxation, I adore getting on my home massage, since that service is still considered essential."

"Nearly a year into the COVID situation and many are still finding themselves stuck at home," says Kelly Dall Antonia, the founder of Walls By Me, an online store selling peel-and-stick removable wallpaper. "This has led to many

focusing on their mental wellness and finding novel ways to unwind."

"We usually think of the den as a room in our homes, but for the purpose of a 'zen den,' you can use the space that is available to you," she says. "Our favourites include a window seat, a hideaway nook, even a corner of a room or your bedroom. Focus less on the den, and more on the 'zen'."

If you're creating your zen den in part of another room, try to distinguish between them, says Dall Antonia. "The option to add a simple divider such as a curtain can add the feeling of being in a different room, but you can also separate this area with your decor. Choose a relaxing wallpaper design in soft hues for this area and be conscious of the layout of the room, particularly this corner. Avoid clutter — a tidy space is a tidy mind, after all."

Cater to your zen den to activities you find relaxing, she says. "Do you enjoy getting lost in the pages of a fictional universe? An overstuffed recliner with a soft throw blanket would be perfect to curl up in. Enjoy colouring or journaling? A vintage writing table will take up too much room while giving you an elegant space to set your things."

If you do have a whole room to dedicate to your zen den, why not go for the whimsy of a rustic log cabin? "With easy-to-install peel-and-stick wallpaper, you can create a woody aesthetic," says the wallpaper expert. "Add a candle with a wood wick to imagine a crackling fire and really simulate the relaxing ambience... you can create your own little sanctuary in your home to unwind and focus on you."



There is no better place to relax than a deep, soaker tub.

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