

Sweat the small stuff



While you're saving up for those ever big renovation changes with a large dollar sign involved – why not take care of the little things and make it count, shares Carly Flynn.

COLUMN by Carly Flynn

It's easy when it comes to renovating to concentrate on the big stuff. The new bathroom, new kitchen, new garage or complete overhaul of the home. But I'm finding it's just as gratifying taking care of the small stuff. Our home is largely done, from a building sense. There's no more expansion to be had. It just needs a bit of colour, a bit of personality.

I've spent the last six or so months in my element getting the outdoors looking inviting; a new vege patch, scented potted plants, an electric gate and a long-term landscaping plan drawn up for us to plod away on over the next few years.

But as the cooler months approach, I find myself wanting to curl up a bit more indoors, and I'm confronted by what changes I want to make inside. Time to look at the finer details and make it a place that inspires me, rather than burden me.

Last winter we put in a ducted heat pump, which was, to my mind, the best money we've spent so far. Every room is warm at the flick of a switch, and it's relatively economical too. I no longer have to worry about blankets falling off the kids on the coolest of winter nights. With the double-glazed windows, even turning it off before bed means it's still relatively warm in the morning.

This has been a life changer for sure; friends comment it's like a hotel, as they dash inside after school drop-off for a well-timed warm cup of coffee.

We also covered the bamboo flooring, which was cooling down the hallway, with new carpet. It's worked well over summer too. But these projects are larger scale and I'm talking here about refreshing rather than renovating. Hopefully, spending next to nothing.

These days we're swamped with pictures of roaring fire and winter hues on social media and glossy magazines. Mustards. Purples. Olive green. I don't know about you but I don't intend on buying new cushions for every season, or swapping out my artwork just to blend in with the season. Here's a tip. Have a stash of seasonal cushion covers to switch out with seasons. It keeps your interiors looking interesting, without costing a dime.

I got an extraordinary amount of pleasure cleaning out my bulging bookshelf recently. A school book fair prompted the long overdue decision. As I ploughed through the

shelves I got braver, throwing ones out I hadn't gotten around to reading. I figured if I hadn't read them yet, I never would.

A book I have read recently is Marie Kondo's incredibly popular de-cluttering book. 'Spark Joy'. Her premise is that possessions in our home should have form or function, or literally 'spark joy'. That may be a bit of a stretch when faced with the congested playroom of a four-and-five-year-old, but I'm slowly going through the rest of the house with this mantra.

I'm trying to connect with what makes me happy in my home. A clean fridge full of nourishing food. A perfectly placed piece of artwork or flourishing pot plant. A nice cup to drink my coffee from. And clean windows to bring in the winter sun. Something else that's given me pleasure is a wonderful kitset to hide our bins. Seriously!

I think a person's home is like our own body - we have to check in with it internally once in a while and figure out what is or isn't still serving you.

Even though we moved and de-cluttered big time just over a year ago, we're already full up again. Books, kids' drawings, toys, kitchen appliances, and pantry items we'll never eat. Stuff that does little to spark joy, or have any form or function.

Some of it is going on Trade Me, some to friends, some to charity. I now have a little account that is stashed with anything I make. I'm saving up for beautiful wallpaper in my bedroom. Something to wake up to put a smile on my face.

My attention has turned also to storage. In particular, the kids' toys; puzzles, pens and plastic. Good storage is essential in any home. We have enough of it so I'm culling what spills over. And teaching the kids how to put things back in their place; if only I could get the kids to hang their bags in a particular place each day I'd be a very happy lady!

So even though solar panels, a chicken run, and a pool project are on the long-term plans; short-term I'm changing out my seasonal cushions and sheets, remembering to water my plants, filling my fridge and freezer with nourishing food, tending my winter garden, and being eternally grateful for being in a home I love. ■