



My country house makeover

Interior designer and mother-of-two, Noelle O'Donoghue shares her professional wisdom with Yvonne Kerr in our country home Q&A.

A DAIRY FARMER'S daughter from Offaly, Noelle O'Donoghue spent her childhood making puppets, clothes for her dolls and, eventually, clothes for herself. A career in the fashion industry led to interior design and Noelle Interiors opened recently in Tullamore after 11 years in the interior design business. Noelle lives with her husband, Eoin, on a farm in Daingean, 10 minutes from Tullamore.

Q. Should I get my old furniture upholstered or buy new?

If the suite isn't good quality, or isn't a classical shape, recovering is not an option. I recommend buying a good quality suite in a classical shape as it will last forever. Otherwise, reupholster. The style can be modernised by removing the bottom skirt and adding new legs on castors. New fillers will fill out the cushions and maybe replace the back shaped cushion and/or add a selection of large scatter cushions in contemporary or traditional patterns and colours to give it a new look. Visit your local interior designer/shop to ask for advice; they can also recommend a skilled upholsterer.

Q. Roman blinds or curtains?

Roman blinds need less fabric so in most cases they will be a cheaper option than curtains. A standard Georgian window is approx 110cm wide by 180cm long. A Roman blind on this window will cost €288 in a plain silk fabric with blackout fleece lining on an easy chain rail, whereas curtains



Recovered couch in a classical shape and style

with French pleat heading, lined and inter-lined and in plain silk fabric will cost €533. Architrave around windows will frame the window and the roman blinds can look very stylish within this frame. A pelmet overhead will finish off the whole look while remaining a cheaper option than curtains and a pole.

Q. How can I cover up cracked or uneven walls?

Use a very good quality matt paint with panelling. Soft sheen or gloss finishes will highlight all the imperfections. Where there is a lot of traffic in a busy work area, I recommend Colortrend's new ceramic matt paint. It's totally scrubbable with a pot scrub!

It's also available in the entire historic colours as well as Colortrend's other ranges. Wallpaper is another good option and has become fashionable again. A subtle pattern or dramatic wallpaper on a feature wall can add interest to a dull hall or living room.

Q. What can I do to minimise the draft from my sash windows?

Interlined curtains with leaded weigh hem will keep out most drafts and keep the heat in. Curtains that are interlined are more expensive than standard lined curtains but they are more luxurious looking and will make a less costly fabric look much more expensive. To exclude all drafts, use a pelmet overhead and make sure the curtains are returned properly into the wall at the sides. Using a qualified fitter (not a handyman) can make all the difference for well-made curtains to drape properly.

Q. How can I bring more light into my dark living room?

Aside from knocking a new opening into a south- or west-facing wall, the best option is to make the room more atmospheric. You can achieve this by adding strong and interesting colours with lots of soft accent lighting. Good lighting is the key, and lights in all corners throughout the room are essential. Don't use ceiling lights, and use reflective surfaces and mirrors to create atmosphere. Create interest with texture and fabrics and keep the look soft using carpet to make it warmer and more inviting.

Q. How can I update my bathroom or shower room quickly and cheaply?

The cheapest, easiest option for updating old-fashioned wall tiles is to paint over them. Colour trends new WB50 paint can be used to paint over wall tiles, PVC and even PVC doors and windows, using the recommended primer. WB50 comes in a matt finish and is available in all the historic colours. Use a grout pen to highlight individual tiles.

Q. How can I protect wooden furniture in a sunroom without blocking out the sun?

If the windows have standard glass and you do not want to use a voile Roman blind to give shade, the only



Dramatic wallpaper makes a stylish impression



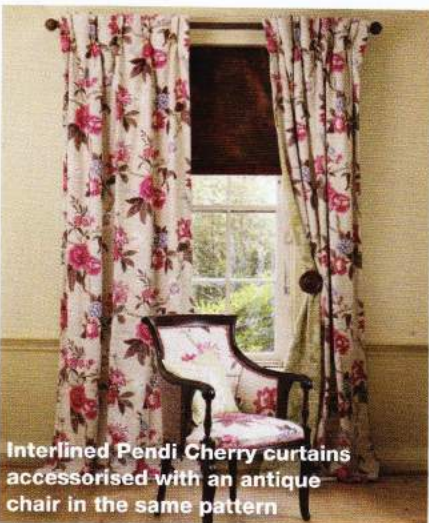
Painted panelled walls



Subtle wallpaper blends in with tones of the same colour throughout this bedroom for a modern feel



A cheaper option for your windows - pelmet instead of curtains



Interlined Pendi Cherry curtains accessorised with an antique chair in the same pattern

other option is to cover the furniture. Tables can be covered with table cloths or oil cloths and this can also add colour to the sunroom. Use table runners on console tables or sideboards and throws over couches and chairs. I would recommend a voile Roman blind that can be lifted on dull days, you don't have the bulk of fabric and they can be sleeker than gathered curtains.

Q. What is the best way to update tired and scuffed wooden floors?

Any floor that is dull and scuffed will need a light sanding first. Then use Colortrend's sanding sealer to find a level before applying two coats of platinum wood varnish. Colortrend products are all water-based so there are no obnoxious smells and they dry

within 30 minutes so the job can be finished in a day. There are no solvents so your brushes can be washed in water and it's easy on the environment.

Q. How do I give my old house a modern look?

Use new modern colours such as beige, grey or taupe. Keep the rest of the room in tones of the main colour. Use splashes of yellows or pinks, greens or purples in accessories like cushions, rugs, wallpaper, flowers and pictures. Use different textures to create more depth and interest. A couch covered in plain grey velvet fabric with bold patterned cushions in the accent colour will give it a modern look. This can give even the most traditional backdrop a modern feel. ✪