



“Whatever you can do or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it. Begin it now.”

~ Goethe

Your ideas and suggestions for the following issues are always welcome

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Style File: Cottage Style Decorating

Cottage Style isn't really a style. After all, a cottage is meant to be lived in, to be enjoyed, and is usually the recipient of all the cast-offs from the real home.

Furniture in a Cottage Style home is often recycled, purchased from a flea market, or collected from family rejects. Anything found can be painted or recovered to help it fit into your scheme.

Reuse Vintage Items. In Cottage decor, pieces are often adapted from one use to another. For example, a bench might serve as a coffee table, an old kitchen cupboard can hide towels in a bathroom, or a kitchen table might become a desk. To fit into the scheme the piece just needs to look old and loved with signs of wear-and-tear.

Flooring in Cottage Style homes are often informal and even imperfect. Bare wood floors are a good option. New wood can be made to look old and painted floors can have patterns stencilled on, either to add interest or define areas. Raw planks can be covered with vintage braided throw rug.

Fabrics. Cottage decor usually calls for a mix of fabrics used for slipcovers, upholstery, curtains, draperies, table skirts, pillows and more. Coordinate a variety of prints like floral, stripes, checks, and plaids for a collected look. Slipcovered furniture is also very popular in a cottage look, offering relaxed furnishings. Throws for snuggling under can be tossed anywhere.

Color and Pattern. While there can be many colors and patterns in a cottage style setting, it's good to have a unifying theme. English Cottage suggests pinks and greens in floral prints. Rustic style, with twig or rough-hewn wood furniture, works well with forest colors—greens, rust, and golden tones. For a Cottage Style home near the shore, try beachy colors of soft blues and sandy beiges with lots of white.

Accessories. Any odd thing can serve as an accessory in a Cottage Style home, so be on the lookout wherever you go. Charming plates, old hats, musical instruments, interesting frames and heirloom samplers become the center of attention in a comfortable cottage room. Antique shops, tag sales, grandma's attic, and flea markets all reveal a treasure trove of items both useful and decorative.

Lighting. Collectibles can easily be adapted into lighting fixtures by installing inexpensive lamp parts. Turn an old jug, vase, or tin into a one-of-a-kind lamp. Not sure you want to tackle wiring a lamp? Take a vintage find to a lamp store where you have it adapted to your need for minimal expense. The more unusual your item, the more fun you'll have looking at it when it's electrified with a cute shade.

Furniture Tips: A Very Versatile Armoire

An armoire is a **tall cabinet, usually with drawers, shelves, and doors, used for storing clothes or household items.** An armoire is a very **versatile piece of furniture** and can be used exclusively for decoration or for the main storage unit in any room in the house. It can hold clothes, household furnishings, china, stereo equipment or a computer. **The possibilities are endless!** Historically, an armoire was used as a clothes closet to store apparel in homes that did not have a built-in closet. Today, it can be fitted with shelves, drawers, hanging poles, or left open. Armoires were once made of beautifully finished wood, either waxed or painted. Now high-tech materials are used to create this wonderful storage piece to fit in any setting. This one piece of furniture could be one of the most useful pieces you own.

In a Family Room or Living Room

- **House Your Stereo and Video Equipment**
With so many high-tech components, stereo, disk changers, and other audio/video items in people's homes, they'll fit well into an armoire or entertainment center. Keep the doors closed, with speakers arranged around the room, to maintain a neat look.
- **Organize Your Hobby Equipment**
From model plane kits to knitting projects; an armoire is a perfect place to put away craft and hobby projects when not in use. Add hooks or pegs on the side walls or doors to hang things.
- **File Your Music and Instruments**
This won't work if you play a bass or piano, but an armoire is a great place to store a musical instrument, carrying case, and all the sheet or book music that goes along with your hobby.
- **Archive Your Memories**
Scrap booking supplies, souvenirs, photo albums, and collections can be stored together in an armoire. With the items in the family room, everyone will be able to get to whatever they want.

In a Bedroom

- **Clothing Storage**
An armoire is a perfect place to store folded sweaters, shirts, lingerie, bedding, and miscellaneous items.
- **Accessory Garage**
Purses, shoes, scarves, and jewelry can find a home in an armoire. Keep pieces sorted, shoes in pairs, necklaces and bracelets hanging on hooks on the side walls. Add pegs or small rods for scarves so they don't get wrinkled.

In a Bathroom

- **Store Your Linens**
Store towels and bedding, neatly folded, on the shelves of an armoire in the bathroom. Keep scented papers near so that everything comes out fresh.
- **Everything to Get Ready**
If you don't have room elsewhere, a bathroom is a perfect place to fix your hair, shave, apply cosmetics, or do your nails. Keep all your supplies in an armoire in your bathroom, including a robe and slippers.

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Décor Ideas: A Focal Point in a Room

No matter what your personal style is or how beautiful your furnishings may be, a well decorated room needs a fixed point around which everything else revolves. Decorating professionals call this a focal point. If your room has a beautiful picture window looking out to a lovely garden, that's it. If you have a fireplace, large or small, that will be the focal point in that room. Making the most of your focal point will make your room inviting and warm, as well as functional. Sometimes a room has no distinguishing feature built in and you have to create one. Some ideas of focal points that you can add to a room are:

- An armoire or other tall, large cabinet
- A beautiful oriental or patterned rug
- A table with a collection of interesting pieces on it
- A dramatic mirror or fabric panel
- A large wall unit with collectibles interspersed with books and other interesting objects

The point of creating a focal point is to select something to draw the eye and invite the visitor to linger and enjoy.

Practical Ideas: Spring cleaning tips

- Work from the top down, inside to outside, to avoid getting what you just cleaned dirty again.
- Do one room, even one area of one room, at a time to avoid unfinished jobs.
- Do two things at once. While laundry is going, scrub the shower stall.
- Make small repairs. If you're not handy, hire someone.
- Invest in good rubber or vinyl gloves to protect your skin and nails.
- Dust before vacuuming or cleaning the floor. Try feather or lamb's wool dusters, especially extendable ones for reaching above window and door casings and into corners. Household rags are invaluable for jobs requiring a damp cloth – natural fibres work best.
- Buy mops with a squeeze mechanism for vinyl, linoleum or ceramic tile floors.
- Don't stand your brooms on their bristles. It will destroy their shape and diminish their effectiveness. Instead, get a broom holder.
- Use a Swiffer for light dusting, or your favourite broom or vacuum attachment to clean hardwood floors. Then damp-mop with a mild cleaner such as Murphy Oil Soap.