

Harmonize your home for the Chinese New Year



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Chinese New Year is a colourful and exciting event celebrated around the world. The festivities and wishes for happiness, prosperity and longevity start on February 16 and will last for two weeks.



Plants cleanse the air and emit positive energy in your home, especially a lucky bamboo plant.

It is a Chinese tradition to bring good energy to the home for the New Year through the ancient art of Feng Shui.

Feng Shui (pronounced Fung Schway and translated as Feng = Wind and Shui = Water) is the practice of learning to live in harmony with your environment, and intentionally designing spaces that support you.

To attract positive energy, enhance your life and achieve balance in 2018 this may be just what you need.

Laura Morris is a certified Feng Shui consultant, artist, and designer with a successful Toronto-based Feng Shui design consultancy, and is the author of *Creating Change: 27 Feng Shui Projects to Boost the Energy in Your Home*.

She believes that by combining mindfulness and creative design you can transform both your space and your own personal energy.

"It works like a big cleansing breath for your home. You can think of it as yoga for your home," Morris tells us. "Moving, clearing, arranging, and placing objects in your home mindfully, can lead to big changes in your life."

So for the Chinese New Year how about doing a little makeover in your home and letting in some positivity, purpose and hopefully prosperity.

Morris gives us a few tips for some simple changes around the home

that are sure to open the door to success, rejuvenation and opportunity.

Feeling overwhelmed? Remove three unwanted and unused items every day for nine days.

Clutter can manifest stagnant dead energy. Think about how good it feels when you finally get to cleaning out that junk drawer or the old clothes in your closet. Now is the time to free the space to allow new better things in.

Low energy? Replace burned out light bulbs (burned out bulbs can create low energy pockets in your home).

Light represents yang energy, which promotes feelings of happiness and inspiration. So light things up in your home to feel lighter and brighter in your life.

Things feeling a little slow right now? Sweep your front step, doorway, or foyer area to get the energy moving.

Sweeping stirs things up. It says to the universe I am welcoming positive energy, prosperity, abundance and health. Out with the old and in with the new!

Feeling blocked? Check your doorways. Make sure doors can swing open fully and are not blocked.

If you have obstacles blocking the front entrance of your home or in the foyer, it's important that you clear it



Laura Morris, a Feng Shui consultant, believes you can transform both your space and personal energy by combining mindfulness and creative design.

away. They block the good energy that can enter your home.

Need a pick me up? Bring in one healthy plant or a bouquet of fragrant flowers into your home. Place it in a central location.

All plants cleanse the air and emit a positive energy while contributing to the positive flow throughout a house.

The best time to add a new plant is at the beginning of a new month

or at the New Year, when it symbolizes a healthy beginning for you and your family.

Try these simple steps and see what good fortune and harmony comes your way in this Chinese New Year!

— Natalie Deane is a lifestyle connoisseur who writes about trends in home decor, travel and entertainment.

Small but sweet spa-style baths



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As condos and compact homes become the new normal, bathrooms have taken a hit in square footage.

But we've all heard the saying, "good things come in small packages," right? As a designer, I'm here to prove that theory true.

Creating a luxurious, decadent bathroom when you're challenged with limited space may sound like a daunting task, but it doesn't have to be. You just have to know where to start.

Step one to creating a fabulous bathroom — or any room, for that matter — is investing in an equally stand-out centerpiece. In a bathroom, the focal point is the bathtub 99 per cent of the time so this is one fixture that's definitely worth the splurge.

I've always loved the romance and sculptural elegance of a freestanding bathtub. This is the ultimate in indulgence.

Beyond its obvious "wow" factor, this style of tub has a couple of practical things going for it, too. First, a freestanding tub visually

occupies less space, making it ideal for a compact bathroom layout.

Second, this style of bathtub physically takes up less floor space, leaving a little extra room to move around.

Slim silhouettes: Research different shapes, styles and sizes of bathtubs before you select one. Luxury British bath brand Victoria + Albert offers a few compact-friendly options that are definitely worth checking out.

Before diving into a bathtub decision, here are some things to consider.

What are your needs?

How do you bathe? What's your routine? Do you like to read while taking a soak? Do you lounge alone? Who else is using the tub, and do they have any special needs? Your answers will help determine the type of bathtub that will best suit your practical needs.

For instance, if the tub will be used to bathe a baby, or if you have mobility issues, a shallower design could be your best bet.

What are your space specifics?

It's important to remember that not all bathrooms are created equal.

More or less space, different floor plans and what you have in them will all affect the size and location for your bathtub.

What's the overall style? Is your bathroom's decor clean and modern, classic and traditional, or something in between? Your bathtub can add to the style theme, or throw it off entirely, so choose wisely.

Try it before you buy it. You would never purchase a bed without first testing the springs. Sit inside the bathtub and take it for a "test drive," if you will. Ensure the tub is as comfortable as it is beautiful.

Finish your spa-inspired bathroom with some pure indulgence in the form of fluffy towels, cushy bathrobes, aromatic incense, bath oils and candles. Creating a serene bathroom that invites you to relax in total luxury is all about the details — big and small. You deserve it, no matter the size of your space.

— Kate Davidson is principal of *Kate & Co. Designs Inc.*, which provides complete design, renovation and decorating services in the GTA. Visit www.kateandcodesign.com.



A free-standing tub visually occupies less space, making it ideal for a compact layout. Image courtesy of Victoria + Albert (www.vandabath.com)