

Warming Effect: How to Create a Cozy Home

By Bren Petrunick



The first signs of “sweater weather” has us reaching for pumpkin spice, cranberry hues and cozy comforts. And while we may complain that autumn’s arrival came too soon, many of us secretly love the crisp days and other seasonal splendours of autumn. At the same time, we are bracing ourselves for the bitterly cold days and nights that won’t lie dormant for much longer.

One of my primary design objectives is to help clients achieve comfort in their homes, and when the temperature drops outside, that means cranking up the heat inside. There are a couple of ways I traditionally like to do this: by adding physical warmth and creating a cozy mood.

Physical Warmth

Much like we tend to layer our wardrobe to combat the cold, you can layer your décor to bring some added warmth to your home. Echoing our closets, textiles can have the same effect on our interiors. So now is the time to stow away your lighter weight linens and cottons and replace them with winter-friendly fabrics such as velvet, corduroy, faux fur and chunky heavy knits. These materials are warm to the touch and help retain heat while insulating your home. Pile on the pillows, layer the throw blankets, and refresh window coverings and area rugs with a thicker, textural options to create a cozy cocoon effect.

While the home’s principal living areas tend to be a focus of autumn decorating efforts, a little extra attention paid to the bedrooms will not be wasted. Choose heavier, heat-retaining fabrics for bedding, such as flannel, fleece or wool, which are soft to the touch and hold heat in. For drapery, a heavier side panel material can add insulation while blocking out drafts and light.

Of course, there is always a more traditional and instantaneous means of dialing up the physical warmth. If you have a fireplace, make it the focal point of your room by lighting a fire and arranging furniture around the hearth to create a natural gathering place where friends and family can soak up the heat.

A Cozy Mood

I strongly believe that conjuring the idea of warmth is every bit as important as infusing physical warmth, especially when it comes to interior design. It’s easy to turn up the thermostat, but that alone won’t make a cold and clinical home appear cozy. And in the early days of fall, when the temperature hasn’t quite caught up (or down!) with the calendar, visual warmth can satisfy our autumnal cravings without making us break a sweat.

Colour and pattern make dramatic contributions to the ambiance of a cozy home. You don’t need to go as far as changing your wall colour to suit the seasons, there are plenty of simple and cost-effective ways to incorporate a colour palette inspired by fall. Try updating your accessories with warm earth tones, such as deep reds, oranges, golden yellows and rich browns, and choose seasonal themes. You can also combine different materials, including wood, leather and mixed metals, to warm up a neutral space. Then, pull everything together with a bold, rich burst of colour, such as a rug or a piece of art.

As you swap out your accessories, consider changing your artwork as well. When selecting new art, lean into warm colours and themes that evoke feelings of coziness, like nature scenes and rustic landscapes.



Lighting is another easy way to bring visual warmth to an otherwise neutral or cool space. A layered lighting plan will eliminate “dark zones” in the home while enhancing functionality – which is a must with the shorter days ahead and a lot more time spent indoors through the coming months. A good lighting plan should combine ambient, task and accent lighting, ensuring each area is illuminated from overhead, with focused lighting in activity zones like the kitchen table, desktop or reading chair.

Pay attention to the temperature of your light bulbs, which range from cool (leaning to the blue side of the colour spectrum) to warm (white with yellow undertones). Something as simple as replacing your bulbs with a warm variety can give any room a cozy, inviting glow. Dimmer switches are another must-have, and I recommend adding them to every light. This allows you to tailor your lighting to your needs, the occasion, and the ambiance you’re aiming to achieve.

With winter on the horizon, ‘tis the season to indulge in warm cider, wool sweaters and cozy comforts. I invite you to embrace the season by warming up your home, and heart, in style.



Bren Petrunick is the creative founder of award winning Simply White Interiors. For two decades this notable Niagara based design firm has become sought after for providing stylish and uniquely personal interiors. Servicing Niagara, GTA, Ontario swi.design @simplywhite