

DOUBLE DUTY *spaces*

As we get used to spending more time in our homes, we're all looking to get extra use out of rooms. **Peter Griffiths** uncovers ideas for doubling up on them.

Houses are getting smaller, more of us than ever are living in apartments, and in these uncertain times we're sticking close to home. So what can we do to get the most out of our abodes? According to Sydney-based interior designer Sarah Yarrow (www.sarahyarrowinteriors.com) it's all about making sure that the space we do have can fulfill more than one function ...





Living area & indoor garden

When outside space is at a premium, bring the outdoors indoors by making one room or corner of your home a green retreat. It can be your living room, spare room or even your bathroom: you choose. As a place to sit and relax, add as much value as you like with curated greenery, sympathetic decor and even a water feature – or keep things as simple as grouping potted plants together. Either way, you'll end up with an oasis.

“Just three plants will do it,” says Sarah. “You can vary the scale, proportion, colour and pattern of the pots, plus the height of the plants, to match or contrast with the surroundings. Swap out that extra armchair to make space, or don't use floor space at all. Hanging plants make the ceiling your fifth wall.”



And if every plant you've ever owned has died, paint greenery onto the walls!

Equally, if you have any kind of outdoor space, take your cooking out into the open effortlessly with a side table next to the barbecue. “It's as easy as an additional bench or table for preparation and to hold food and drinks,” says Sarah. Keep a couple of utensils and serving items handy, and *voilà* – al fresco dining with extra living space.

Laundry & mud room

Plants can go in the laundry and bathroom as well (they like the humidity!), softening these stark spaces. The laundry is now often seen as an extension of the kitchen, with stylish cabinetry and tiling making it a pleasant everyday-use area. But these areas often have redundant space, too which you can make better use of.

“The laundry can act as a mud room,” explains Sarah.

“A bench seat with pull-out drawers beneath, and hooks on the wall behind it, will let you hang up a raincoat, hat or schoolbags, and leave muddy shoes on the tiles. They're only going to end up back in the laundry anyway.”

Also think about a retractable spray tap to wash off dirt right away – the plants won't mind!

Bathroom & dressing room

Those oversized apartment bathrooms can double up as 'getting ready' areas, opening up precious space in the bedroom. All they need is a long mirror, a snazzy table and some sympathetic lighting.

“A full-length mirror and sidepiece make it your dressing room,” notes Sarah. “It's super-easy to do, and hooks can help here too. There are many lovely leaning mirrors around, so it's just a matter of popping a stool or something next to it for your earrings and other bits, then use the extra space to apply your finishing touches.” →

Lux up the laundry

Swap the local drycleaner for the LG Styler Steam Clothing Care System, \$2,999, from Harvey Norman.

This incredible slimline appliance allows you to sanitise, deodorise, steam and dry coats and jackets all in one.





Living area & everything else

One room can effectively become several by delineating with decoration, colour and flooring. “A rug is important as something that defines space,” says Sarah. “Subconsciously it helps to separate each zone. Wallpaper can do the same thing.” Likewise, your kitchen can be a spillover entertaining area with space-efficient stools, otherwise easily tucked away.

There are several ways to multitask your living room, but start with clean lines and surfaces to offer the appearance of space. If your work-from-home area is your dining table or kitchen bench, make sure you clear away your work items each day, defining the function at any one time.

Next, turn your attention to furniture with more than one use. A coffee table overwhelms a small space, so think laterally – ottomans can act as tables and provide additional seating for guests. A classic wheeled bar trolley can move from kitchen to living area as needed, with any number of storage or serving purposes.

“The number one rule is making your furniture’s scale and proportion correct to the floor area,” explains Sarah. “You can fit everything into one space if you do that.”

Guest room & study

If you’re lucky enough to have a spare room, think about its primary function. You might need a workspace all day, whereas people come to stay infrequently – but even a small room can perform both jobs. The key is versatility.

“Decide on your priority and make everything else fit in around it,” shares Sarah. “If it’s a study, make sure the key item, the desk, is proportional to the space; many furniture stores now stock furniture for small-space living. There are even desks that flip up and down, like wall-mounted eating tables for small apartments, that you can stow away. An upholstered dining chair takes up less room than a work chair, too.”

Add a sofa bed, and you’ll have two rooms for the price of one. Or if you don’t mind guests sleeping in the living area, make your main couch a sofa bed and the spare room entirely your own domain. **AWW**



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