



BOOKMARK THIS
Need a gift for a gardener? Check out nine new great books.
GARDENING

PLAYING DRESS-UP
How to make fast cooking tasty?
It's all in the condiments.
COOKING

NO MYSTERY HERE
Flavor is behind just about everything
in Sue Graffon's Louisville home.
GROUP PORTRAIT

THE 3 WAYS OF CHRISTMAS

When we turned to design aficionados for gift-giving guidance, beautiful presents for the home came in:

- 1) 'Under \$25'
- 2) 'Under \$100'
- 3) 'Sky's the limit'

By Karen Klages and Stella Woodruff
Photos by [unreadable]

There's something cozy and warm and fuzzy about "home for the holidays." Perhaps at no time of the year do we feel the architecture that challenges us to mark a living way — and somehow, magically, for the next six weeks or so overlook its shortcomings, the faulty gutters, the leaky windows, etc.

And so, in this spirit of loving the homes that nurture us, we thought it appropriate to come up with homey gifts for the holidays. Gifts to give to others (or to ourselves, for our place and space and urges to rest).

We thought it equally appropriate to consult with six design pros for their thoughts on the subject. Meet our experts — Frank Fontana, Oli Newson, Lisa Skolnik, Scott Wilson, Lisa Atterberry and Dina Cale — and check out their picks for creative homeward gifts.

klages@tribune.com; stwoodruff@tribune.com



Frank Fontana
Head, HGTV's "Design on a Dime" (Fontana moved to Chicago last summer)



Lisa Skolnik
Chicago city editor for Metropolitan Home magazine and regular contributor to the Chicago Tribune



Scott Wilson
Product designer — once a creative director at Nike in Portland, Ore., a designer with IDEO in Mountain View, Calif. and now a design director with Motorola in Chicago, now doing his own thing in back of his Chicago-based studio



Lisa Atterberry and Dina Cale
Creative Partners, Chicago-based interior designers, 1313 W. Division St., 773-462-1021, www.creativepartners-chicago.com



Oli Newson
Architect and owner of Orange Sky, a furniture showroom in New York that specializes in all things modern, hip and cool

For more gift picks from our design pros, see PAGE 6.



HOLIDAILY

Check out the Holiday special strategies, tips and tales at chicagotribune.com/holiday

1

UNDER-\$25 PICK: WROUGHT IRON, FOUR-TAPER WINE BOTTLE CANDELABRA

from Sundance (wine bottle and candles not included)

Picked by: Lisa Atterberry and Dina Cale

Why this? "I love everything in the Sundance catalog," Atterberry says. "But anyone who loves candles and wine would love this as a gift."

For whom? "I may just have to keep this one for myself," she says.

Details: \$20 at Sundance, 800-422-2770, sundancecatalog.com

3

SKY'S-THE-LIMIT PICK: WOOD ROCKING CHAIR

An invited guest by the London-based designer Ross Dowd for the Italian company Weges

Picked by: Oli Newson

Why this? "It's comfortable as a rocking chair, but it's also an object that can go anywhere in a studio, what your language of design."

For whom? "It's collectible as a work — as its personality and sensuality does evoke specific moments."

Details: \$475 in orange or gray, \$1,275 in high-gloss black or white at Orange Sky, 221-N. Dear St., 312-333-1022, www.orsky.com

2

UNDER-\$100 PICK: GARLAND LIGHTS

by Dutch-born but French-based designer Tord Boontje for American

Picked by: Scott Wilson

Why this/what's hot? "It's one of the simplest and most beautiful decorative lighting treatments done in recent times."

The lamp is simply a continuous strand of laser-cut metal (cast in a beautiful floral pattern) that you twist around a light bulb and shape into the form you desire.

For whom? "Clearly, minimalist friends who need a modern, decorative touch to warm up their space environment."

Details: \$40 for the base or other versions at The Sundance Shop, 1314 W. Foster Ave., 773-476-6327 and 1/16 in stock at the Museum of Contemporary Art, 2018 Chicago Ave., 312-307-4000





Tricks and treats for fast fix-ups

By Leslie Mann | Special to the Tribune

What do Q-tips, puppy-training pads and make-up sponges have in common? They are among the home-repair tools that are handy but cannot be found in a hardware store. Q-tips make great, disposable paint brushes for touch-ups. Use leftover puppy-training pads as drop cloths for small jobs. Make-up sponges, sold in bricks of 32 for \$2, double as throw-away applicators for spackling compound, caulk or paint. For more non-tool tools, we polled the experts. Here are their favorites:

Old tile grout and paint

Mix one part grout with three parts paint and you have custom chubbier paint.

—Frank Fontana

Scrap of cardboard

This makes a free furniture slide that protects your floors.

—Mike Venetti

Bleach

Put a bleach-soaked rag on a greasy joint overnight to remove mold.

—Eric Stromer

Hair dryer

Use the dryer to quickly dry taping compound when you patch drywall.

—Erol Baranaka

Toothpaste

It removes stains from linoleum or vinyl floors.

—Jim Vandergloag

Coca-Cola

This removes rust from metal.

—Jim Vandergloag

Ziploc bag

Use tape to secure it around your smoke detector to protect it from dust when you remodel. And, use it to store your paint brush overnight, and paint jobs.

—Bob Carney

Bifocal glasses

When you are working on something over your head, like a ceiling light fixture, turn your bifocals upside down so the reading part is on the top.

—David Owen

Murphy's Oil Soap

Mix with water and spray the mixture on your pond to deter mosquitoes.

—Jim Dannevan

Old newspapers

Lays five sheets thick in the garden for a weed barrier.

—Ted Ramel



Kid's school eraser
Use it to remove scuff marks from linoleum.

—Erol Baranaka



Potato

Jam it into a broken light bulb base to unscrew it out of the fixture.

—Eric Stromer



Liquid dish soap

Dip your finger in it before you apply caulk and you will make a smooth bead.

—Cheryl Orlewski

After connecting appliances to natural gas sources, spread the soap on all connections. It will bubble at the source if there is a leak.

—Mike Gudek



Coffee and tea

Brew some of each, mix and cool. Then you have a homemade stain for wood.

—Frank Fontana

Bar of soap
Rub it on the glides of a drawer that sticks to make it slide in and out smoothly.

—Sean Springer

Do you have a handy tip that you'd like to share with our readers? E-mail yourplace@tribune.com.

Candle wax

Drip some in an old screw hole before putting a screw back in. The wax will secure it.

—Greg Bettenhausen

Old garden hose

Put a piece of it over a bucket handle for a grip that's easier on your hands.

—Tom Silva

Shoe polish

March it to a scratch in your wooden floor or furniture, rub it in and buff it.

—Tom Silva

Old dental tools

Use them for crickets when you strip old woodwork.

—Tabitha Long

Electric leaf blower

Use it to clear lint out of your clothes dryer hose. First, disconnect the hose in the house and make sure the exterior screen is removed.

—Mike Roper

Toothpick

Stuff it into a stripped hole before refitting an old screw.

—Sean Springer



THE EXPERTS: Erol Baranaka, vice president, Smykal Associates, Wheaton; Greg Bettenhausen, president, All Bar Wilmette Plaster, Wilmette; Bob Carney, president, Acorn Remodeling, Oak Park; Jim Dannevan, co-founder, Habitat for Humanity Lake County; Frank Fontana, host/designer, HGTV's "Design on a Dime"; Mike Gudek, project manager, New West Construction, Chicago; Tabitha Long, co-owner, Island Gals Salvage, Elk Grove Village; Cheryl Orlewski, volunteer, Habitat for Humanity Lake County; David Owen, author, "Shrinkwrap & Seal: A Thinking Person's Guide to Home Improvement"; Ted Ramel, construction manager, Habitat for Humanity Lake County; Mike Roper, maintenance technician, Green Picket Designers & Builders, Lincolnshire; Tom Silva, general contractor, "This Old House" TV show; Sean Springer, owner, Site Construction, Naperville; Eric Stromer, host of HGTV's "Over Your Head"; Jim Vandergloag, vice president, New West Construction, Chicago; Mike Venetti, vice president, Bigelow Homes, Aurora.

RED EYE POP HOMES



Fontana says you can find great deals on items at scratch and dent and clearance sales. (JASON SHAW FILE PHOTO FOR RED EYE)

Cool decor doesn't have to break the bank

By Valerie Vedral
FOR RED EYE

There's nothing like that first apartment and the freedom that comes with living on your own.

Now that you answer to a landlord, though, that means bland walls and boring decor, right? Not so, says Frank Fontana, host of HGTV's "Design on a Dime," which begins its Chicago-based shows on March 31. The interior designer offers some tips for first-time renters who want an inspired space without breaking the bank.

"No. 1 is checking in with your landlord as far as what you're allowed to do," Fontana told Red Eye on Wednesday.

Fontana, who rented a loft when he moved to Chicago last year to begin filming episodes, has created an eclectic interior design there featuring Venetian plaster, stencils and other finishes.

An easy, inexpensive way to decorate is to add color or texture to the walls, Fontana said. It's the best way to create the biggest bang for your buck, he said. Don't be afraid of bold, darker colors or faux finishes, either.

Fontana recommended renters pick a focal wall—a center of attention—and give that wall special treatment. It's subtle, he says, but it works.

►► What's hot these days in hip living spaces? Fontana said Venetian plaster and, believe it or not, black walls.

"I'm one of those designers that really does not play by the rules," he said. "Anything you put in front of [a black wall] will really pop."

A tip from Frank

When shopping for your new place, make sure to bring measurements along, said HGTV host Frank Fontana. It's a tough lesson to learn when the crown molding is too short or your new furniture purchase doesn't fit in your room. [V.V.]

Crown molding also makes an impact and doesn't have to be costly. Fontana said you can find MDF, or multi-density fiberboard, molding for a bargain at hardware stores. Renters also can use MDF to decorate the walls by putting up strips of the wood and then painting them and the wall a uniform color. It's a quick way to add texture, Fontana said.

►► What about the furniture? Don't go out and spend full price on new furniture, Fontana said. IKEA has great deals, he said, adding that another way to score good deals is to shop "scratch and dent" or clearance sales, where you can often find amazing pieces at a fraction of the cost.

Fontana said it also pays to politely ask store managers to put you on an e-mail or mailing list for advance notice on sales. "That's how you get the best deals," he said. "You have to be a little hustler, kind of."

►► Have old furniture that has to work in a new place? Funk it up, Fontana said. Find a slipcover for older but functional sofas. Paint accessories or lamps to match the decor. "A simple solution to old hand-me-downs is to paint it all black. It's totally hip and now," he said. "I don't think anything should ever be thrown out."

►► What about the walls? Accessories and art are essential part of design too. Fontana is a fan of homemade art, so he recommends hitting up friends who might be photographers or artists and asking for something to display. It's an easy way to get one-of-a-kind artwork for your new place.

[VALERIE VEDRAL IS A RED EYE SPECIAL CONTRIBUTOR.]



CONTRACT
FRIEND OR
PAINT SM.
DESIGNER O
FOR CHICAGO

RENOVATE!

BREAKING THE MO
3 ARCHITECTS REDO
THE CHICAGO BUNGALOW

THE HANDYMAN
HOW HGTV'S FRANK FONTANA
UPDATES ROOMS FOR LESS

REHAB CENTRAL
GUTTING AN OLD FACTORY
TO BUILD A NEW HOUSE



Frank Fontana's workshop

AN HGTV TURNAROUND ARTIST SHARES HIS \$1,000-OR-LESS MAKEOVER SECRETS



**"I don't fit the
stereotype of a
decorator."**

Frank Fontana's life reads like the script of "Rocky." Or it would if Rocky Balboa had been pulling fabric swatches instead of punches. "I don't fit the stereotype of a decorator," says the freshly minted host of HGTV's Chicago-based "Design on a Dime." In fact, Fontana's alpha-male demeanor and bodybuilder's physique (he actually wears a tight "Italian Stallion" T-shirt) threw the producers of the 2004 ABC reality show "The Great Domestic Showdown" for a loop during auditions. Says Fontana: "When I walked in they said, 'Is this guy for real?' I was the underdog of the entire thing." But just like his alter ego, Fontana unexpectedly took the title. Today he continues to champion the impossible by taking sorry-looking, real-life rooms and smothering them up for their owners—always for under \$1,000—with the help of his "Design on a Dime" assistants, Kelly Edwards and Ali Azhar. "I want to shake it up a little in Chicago," says the transplanted New Yorker. —Lisa Cregan



Inspiration: >> Shabby chic beach cottage

1. A "focal wall" is created of pine planks painted with a 50-50 mix of white primer and water (it looks like professional pickling but is much less costly). Three-inch-wide whitewashed pine trim frames the whole room—a subtle touch that adds warmth.
2. Desk and shelf of reclaimed barn wood from American Barn Company (3800 N. Clark St.) are cleverly whitewashed for a weathered look.
3. The genius of this shadowbox is that the display can be rotated with the seasons—summer flowers, autumn leaves, even holiday candies.
4. Converted Home Depot outdoor lanterns hang on plant hangers, keeping the mood casual while providing accent lighting to the wall.
5. The owner's frondle bed is painted off-white and distressed to keep with the shabby chic theme.
6. Pillows from Bed Bath & Beyond bring a pretty robin's-egg blue to the mix and pull in the wall color.
7. Walls in a soft buttery cream (Benjamin Moore #2023-60) have a "sunny summer day" vibe.



Inspiration: >> Old American

1. \$100 table and chairs from Craigslist were refinished in ebony and plum to match the homeowner's hutch.
2. The unusual chandelier is actually a reclaimed old window frame embellished with stained glass and candles (the candles rest on a sheet of Plexiglas).
3. A reclaimed closet door, its center portion replaced with stained glass and softly lit from behind, becomes wall art.
4. Ikea mirror with a fold-down shelf holds twinkling tea lights in tiny multicolored Chinese bowls.
5. Ikea hurricane lamps keep with the Colonial theme.
6. Oak bark (bought in sheets on eBay) is glued onto a plastic container and filled with dried blooms to bring the outside in.

