

Six months, Six projects

Spend those cold days making your house a nicer place to live

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Janet Keane wanted an updated and coordinated look for the master bedroom and bathroom of her Voorhees home.

"In the past, I kind of bought what I liked and made it work," she said. "Now, I go out shopping with a better plan."

After taking a home redecorating class, she learned expensive makeovers are not necessary to give a room a fresh look. The work also can be done over time. Keeping the paint scheme and furniture, Keane did little things like moving around furniture to create more open space and worked off a burgundy stripe in the bathroom to add accents -- such as candles -- of the same color.

There are plenty of home improvement projects that can be done over the cooler months. These projects can be interchanged with the month that best fits a homeowner's schedule.

With fuel prices skyrocketing, start with insulation before the weather gets too cold. In December, spend some time redecorating the master bedroom, one of the rooms many homeowners overlook.

Every home needs a workshop space in the basement or garage, so that project can be tackled in January.

In February, head back into the main part of the house and redecorate a bathroom. Move on to the dining room in March and the living room in April.

Sandra Cook, who owns Home-Stylist in Voorhees, concentrates on quick interior design projects.

She suggests looking long-term when doing home improvement projects. They add value to the house and can help command a higher resale value.

"First, and most important, you're doing it for yourself," said Cook, who handled the redecorating in Keane's master bedroom and bath. "But anything that can be done to update a home adds value."

Rich colors don't detract from a home's resale value, she said. In fact, they can increase its attractiveness.

Even behind-the-scenes things such as insulation can help a home's resale value, said Nick Blassmann of Mount Laurel's Home Depot. Homeowners should keep the before and after energy bills to show a potential buyer how much was saved with the upgrades.