

ASK THE EXPERTS

From interiors and gardening to DIY and eco design, our team answers your questions



INTERIOR DESIGN

SALLIE CHATER

Founder and director of her own interior design company, Interiors at 58, Sally believes in creating luxurious, elegant and original schemes at affordable prices

ILLUMINATING IDEAS

Q The lighting in my house is in desperate need of updating. How would you recommend we treat the different spaces? *Sally Ebbing, Edinburgh*



A trio of lights hung above a table helps to define the dining area

● Email your questions to us at house.beautiful@hearst.co.uk or post to House Beautiful, Unit 9, Apollo Business Centre, Trundleys Road, London SE8 5JE

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A The lighting in your home determines its ambience, so it's an area worthy of thought and investment. First, decide what style of lighting you'd like. Do you prefer a contemporary or timeless look? Although each room has different requirements, it's ideal to have some cohesion throughout.

A good place to start is in the entrance hall. If you have the ceiling height, it's the perfect place for a large pendant to create wow factor and set the scene for your home.

In corridors, wall and picture lights can highlight areas of interest, including artworks and architectural details, and will brighten up dull corners. Staircases can be gloomy so consider innovative feature lighting to illuminate the area and make it feel more spacious. Recessed LEDs in stair treads, skirting or even under the staircase will provide definition to the area and should work particularly well in a contemporary home.

For the kitchen, in addition to having pendants over the island or dining table for visual impact, include ceiling spots in key preparation areas and around the cooker and fridge. Pair with under-counter lighting for a lovely soft glow, and to highlight a standout worksurface or wall tiles.

You can go to town in living areas! More than one light source will be required – a central ceiling pendant and wall and table lamps will give flexibility and ensure that you can adjust the feel of the room to suit your needs, whether you need task lighting or an atmospheric glow.

Bedside lighting is a must for reading or relaxing, but the options shouldn't be limited to table lamps. Low-level, wall-mounted lights or pendants hung either side of the bed provide a practical and stylish solution and work well where space is limited.

Finally, for a home office, ensure you have plenty of task lighting, such as an angled desk or floor lamp that can easily be re-positioned to give extra light where you need it. There are lots of great options – just because lighting is functional doesn't mean it has to be boring, so it's always worth choosing a style that will also enhance your work space.



A few simple changes can improve the energy efficiency of period properties



ECO DESIGN

OLIVER HEATH

The UK's leading expert in sustainable architecture and interior design, and a familiar face on TV

CREATING AN ECOFRIENDLY HOME

Q Our draughty Victorian house isn't very energy-efficient. How can I reduce our carbon footprint?

Ros Whitaker, Hull

A Often in older, period buildings, small changes can create big differences to your energy efficiency, carbon footprint and comfort levels.

First, switch to an energy supplier that both produces and supplies energy from renewable sources such as wind, solar or tidal power. Lots of companies offer a green tariff, but you may find they're buying renewably produced energy from others, while producing most of their own via carbon-heavy, coal-fired power stations. This means you could still be supporting a company whose ethics you disagree with. Try Good Energy, Green Energy UK and Ecotricity.

Then think about reducing your own energy use. If your boiler is more than eight years old, it may be time to replace it with a new and

more energy efficient model. See energysavingtrust.org.uk. Fit draught excluders to doors and windows or consider installing conservation-grade double glazing, which will reduce sound and heat transfer.

Insulation is key. Many Victorian properties have solid brick walls, which can make external wall insulation tricky and expensive to fit. However, insulating your roof and beneath your floorboards can make a big difference. Leave adequate ventilation below flooring to allow air circulation and prevent damp to timber beams. With this in mind, it's also important to make sure that when reducing draughts, you introduce new, more efficient forms of ventilation in areas such as kitchens and bathrooms to reduce damp. Continuous-running extractor fans can be a good option in all areas. ▶