

Face it, it's fall

Autumn tips to warm up any space — guaranteed



VICKY SANDERSON
AROUND THE
HOUSE

Like most unpleasant realities, the inevitability of darker, colder days is best faced head on, in part by preparing the home for the seasonal shift.

Since long winter naps may increasingly be in order, start with sleep accessories. Get out duvets used in fall and winter and air them for a few hours by hanging over a door or — better yet — on an outdoor line.

If feather duvets lack oomph, consider having them refilled or repurposing them under a mattress protector to add another layer of softness.

Vacuum mattresses and spritz with linen spray that contains an essential oil with disinfectant properties, like lavender or rosemary. Wash mattress and pillow protectors.

Around the House, I prefer lightweight wool blankets over bulky duvets, which are a pain to store over summer. I also have a wide assortment of woven cotton Väreld bedcovers from Ikea www.ikea.ca.

They're affordable, last forever, and come in various colours, making them a fun and easy way to change the look of a bedroom.

If bed linen needs replacing, designer Samantha Pynn's new collection for Simons www.simons.ca includes very pretty pinwheel and kilim patterns in attractive, versatile blues.

You'll be doing Mother Earth a favour — and probably saving money — if you fix air leaks on windows and doors. Home Depot www.homedepot.ca has good information about how to do that.

Programmable thermostats like ecobee www.ecobee.ca allow you to lower temperature automatically at night and when not at home, and can help save up to 23 per cent in heating costs annually.

The ecobee can be connected to Apple's HomeKit through an app and the latest, the ecobee4, has Amazon Alexa built in, so the thermostat also acts a clock, delivers news and weather, and cracks bartender jokes.

Because the only thing worse than looking out at a grey and wintry world is doing so through grimy windows, it's an ideal time to wash them. Take a few minutes to vacuum — and rinse, if necessary — screens before storing.

To warm up any space, group attractive votive holders on a tray that can move from room to room.

It's prudent to put together a small "emergency" box in case of electrical failure; a few candles, book of matches and portable charger.

Given that climate change is leading to more severe winter storms, it might also be wise to plan for something more serious.

The Government of Canada www.getprepared.gc.ca has good advice about dealing with severe weather events, and both the Canadian Red Cross www.redcross.ca and the Salvation Army www.salvationarmy.ca sell emergency kits online.

Don't forget to test smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, and replace the batteries where necessary.

Culinary comforts help make dull weather more bearable. So consider treating yourself, for example, to a "Nordic" tea mug from David's tea www.davidstea.com

The clever design includes an infuser for loose tea, and a lid that doubles as a saucer. It also comes with a pen you can use to customize the mug.

Hamilton Beach www.hamiltonbeach.ca has a new six-quart slow cooker with an integrated meat probe, making it easier to cook meat to just the right internal temp, and perfect for slow-cooked seasonal roasts, chilis, stocks, soups and stews, and for cooking sous-vide, poaching, simmering and braising.

PRO TIP: You can also use it to make a dreamy rice pudding, which is especially delicious if made with coconut milk. Add some toasted hazelnuts and white chocolate if you like.

The Temperature Tracker also has a spill-free locking lid that makes it useful for those holiday pot lucks that might just get you through the darkest, dreariest days of the years.

— Vicky Sanderson is the editor of *Around the House* www.aroundthehouse.ca. Follow her on Instagram @athwithvicky, on Twitter @ATHwithVicky and on FB at www.facebook.com/ATHWithVicky.



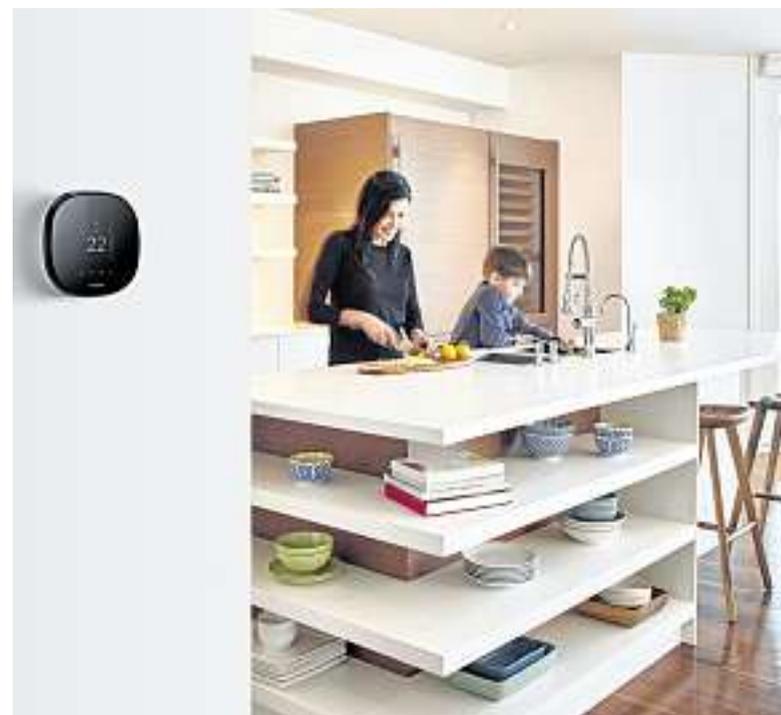
Cheaper cuts of meat become tender in a slow cooker.



Pretty pinwheel patterns make wintry nights more cheerful.



Votives from Turquoise Place add warmth to a chilly room.



Programmable thermostats save money, energy and the planet.