

Designs on your

As the weather starts to get warmer, it's time to cheer up your home for the new season. **Jane Gallagher** meets two people who can show you how

IS YOUR home looking a little tired? Has the lighter nights highlighted a few flaws in your decor?

Spring is the traditional time of year when the DIY stores splash most of their marketing budget on adverts for home improvements.

And with the Easter holidays approaching, followed by two May bank holidays, a lack of time is no longer the excuse.

But what is hot for spring 2009? And what changes can you realistically make without having nightmares about the Changing Rooms television programme come back to haunt you?

We have asked two of the region's up and coming interior designers for their ideas.

Architecture graduate Oliver Steer set up his own company in 2006 after working as a senior designer for one of the country's leading interior designers.

"My particular style of interior design is that of timeless, comfortable living," says Oliver whose company Oliver Steer Interior Design Ltd is based in Eccleston, Merseyside.

"I prefer to aim towards a classic English interior set within simple surroundings.

"Attention to detail and a keen eye for colour are, in my opinion, the key elements to interior design and the success of my own personal style."

Oliver says the current trends for beautiful homes centre around a luxury lifestyle with a simple, understated undertone.

"Apart from the extremes of minimalist or lavish frills and spills, which can always be found dotted here and there, a tempered traditional-contemporary mix is the definitive trend and of course the resources available to entertain this style are endless."

But any investment should stand the test of time.

"My clients often request when redecorating or indeed embarking on a new space, that I ensure longevity from the design with only the occasional need for the odd touch up here and there in the future."

However, for those of us whose budgets may not run to hiring an interior designer, what is the most effective way to do it yourself?

"If you are starting out with a small budget, invest wisely and plan the project over a time."

"Better to spend your budget completing two rooms to a high standard and bring further rooms on board once you can afford it than spread your entire initial budget incredibly thinly over your entire home and risk having to

real rooms

revisit these areas in a couple of years time.

"If you are intending on living in this property for a considerable number of years, take your time and make this a labour of love to stand back and admire."

Oliver says that feature walls are a definite current fashion trend giving small spaces or those of us with small budgets the chance to introduce a touch of colour or drama.

"I recently completed a large feature wall in a department store which followed the back wall of the staircase through four floors. In this instance I used an iridescent flock wallpaper from Zoffany which gave a real sense of drama and intrigue.

"In my own home in Ormskirk however where space was more at a premium I steered away from feature walls preferring to decorate entire rooms in textured or grass cloth coverings.

"In the correct environment a feature wall can work very well however make sure you balance this decorative element with interesting curtains and upholstery to give good design cohesion."

But what can we realistically achieve during the coming months?

Dipri Patel of Barbridge, Cheshire owns Charisma Interior Design which was launched last year with the help of women's enterprise agency Train 2000.

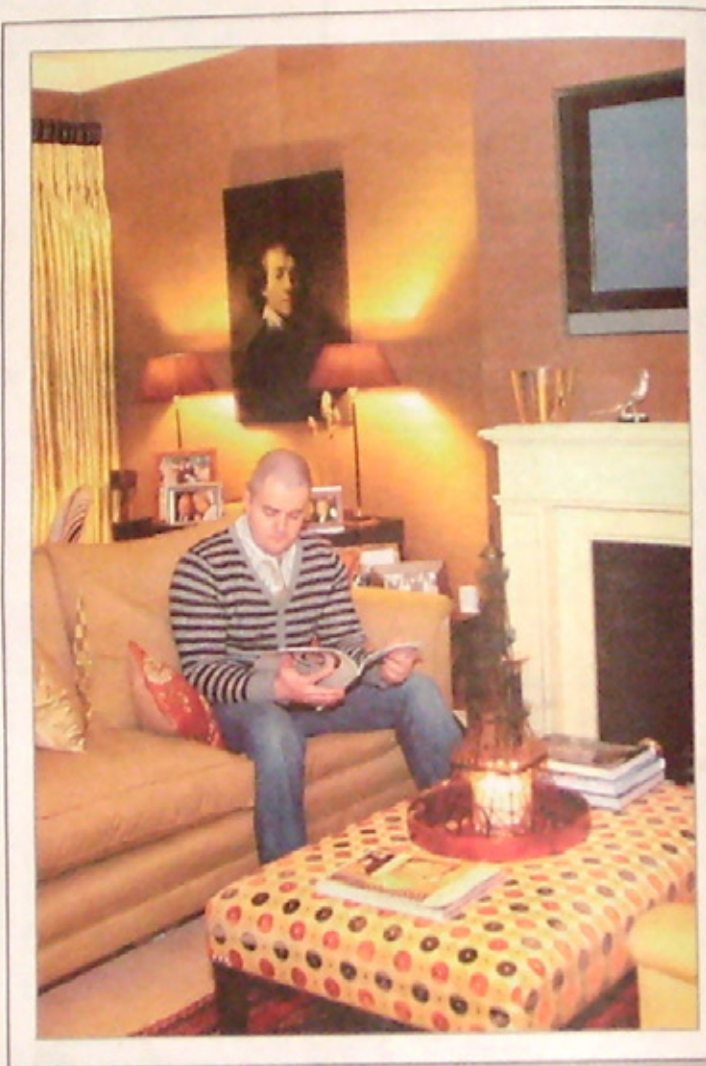
And the 38-year-old mum-of-one is putting her money where her mouth is as she has just moved into a new home.

"Spring is the time to de-clutter, create more space, wash away the winter blues and celebrate the warmer weather with gorgeous fresh pretty pastels in green, pink and blue.

"Combine these with earthy shades to create a fresh feel for your home this season or try something different and bring mustard yellow and charcoal colour scheme in your home with a Japanese style.

"But don't stop with the colours why not renew your senses and introduce scented candles like gardenia, sweet peas, lilac into your home.

"You don't have to spend a fortune or masses of time, you can simply change the look of your home in few hours or couple of



Oliver Steer believes the current trend for homes centres around a luxury lifestyle with a simple, understated undertone

Change on a budget

IF YOU are looking for a change on a budget try transforming a plain coffee table into a stylish centrepiece.

Try a distressed look by using a crackle medium together with an effect called frottage.

This technique relies on materials like tissue paper to lift

the glaze to create an interesting background texture.

Alternatively, spray the coffee table with a primer, followed by pastel green spray paint, then measure your table-top's width and length and cut a piece of fabric to fit it, ensure to add an extra 4cm to the length and width for hems.

Fold a 2cm hem along the far edges of the fabric and lay it on the table with a sheet of toughened glass on top to hold it in place.

This transformation only takes three hours, go on be adventurous and try it, and see the differences it makes to your room.

A lack of time is no longer an excuse

days, smallest updates can make huge differences.

"With long weekends stretching ahead of you, give your home a boost refresh a room with a cost of point.

"Try the new range of neutrals,

but add texture using leather, linen, wool, velvet and chenille. Choose patterned wallpaper for one wall and keep the others a plain colour, this will add instant style.

"There are masses of things you can do."

■ FOR more information about Oliver Steer visit www.oliversteer.com or call: 01744 739063.

■ TO FIND out about Dipri's work visit www.charismainteriorsdesign.co.uk or ring 07515 387354.

home for spring



Interior designer Dipti Patel in her Barbridge home. She believes spring is the time to de-clutter to create more space

Makeover tips

DIPTI'S tips for simple home makeovers

- Hem plain-coloured curtains with lengths of more expensive fabric, (i.e. a bottom border) for a luxurious look on a budget.
- Freshen up your woodwork and the lower parts of your walls with a lick of white paint, this will instantly provide a cleaner and fresh look.
- Get the carpet cleaned or if your floorboards are looking dull and worn, sand them down and paint them white, it's a cheap and a great way of making the room look larger and brighter.
- Use a rug to co-ordinate the spring colours into your room.
- Repositioning a large mirror can make a living room or bedroom look bigger and brighter. Put a mirror opposite a window to bounce light into a dark area, or hang over a fireplace to make the room seem more spacious.
- Rearrange your furniture, it's amazing by simply moving the furniture layout, the whole room gives a different look. Try it and judge for yourself.
- Make an impact with pattern whether it's a country style with traditional floral or damask prints or retro style graphic. To further add interest, combine the pattern style, have fun mixing stripes, checks and stripes with pretty floral, just remember to use different scale to avoid making it look busy.
- Invest in new sofa covers that are easy to change, wash and put back on again. Replace cushion cover with some new ones this will update your sofa immediately.
- Make a wall art using fabric to create a focal point, using your old cushions or invest in some new funky fabric, only need a small amount to make a big difference. Alternatively, use wallpaper by pasting it on a canvas, lean it in an alcove or mount it on the wall.
- Jazz up boring shades, by re-covering it with your favourite fabric and with the help of fabric glue. Alternatively, go for a different style and invest in some new ones.
- If any original features in your home have been taken out, consider putting them back in, try looking for old fireplace in reclamation yard or auctions, clean it and install to its former glory. While not in use, turn it into an attractive feature and display candles.
- Install continuous shelving, which provides a handy place to display accessories, but also makes the room look wider.