



Home & Garden



Reflections on your own lifestyle

Often overlooked, mirrors are capable of completely transforming a room with their often magical ability to add a sense of space as well as fully complementing your decor

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By Gabrielle Fagan

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MIRRORS are the simplest accessories for the home, yet they often work the hardest. Place a mirror well and it will open up a room, brighten a dark spot, or transform a blank wall into a stylish focal point.

Barty Phillips, author of new book *Minimum Space Maximum Living*, highlights mirrors as one of the most powerful tools in making rooms seem larger.

She said: "Mirrors can have a magic effect in a room, and yet all too often are underestimated as sources of light and extenders of space, and just used to check appearance."

"They can open up dark corners, illuminate gloomy basements, and not only create illusions of space but also provide optical surprises."

Barty's has devised a host of clever ways to use mirrors to transform rooms.

"A large, well-placed mirror can almost double the amount of light in a room if opposite a big window, and that in itself always makes a room seem larger," she said.

"Another trick in a gloomy north-facing room is to fix mirrored panels to window shutters. The shutters can be angled to make the most of any available light."

Liven up a dull wall with antique or interestingly-shaped hand mirrors displayed in a group to give a real collector's feel to a room. They can be found in antique shops, auctions and jumble sales.

Barty added. "It's all about thinking about using mirrors in different ways. For instance, mirror tiles could be fixed to the back of a set of shelves to reflect any lighting for sparkle and interest."

"Another trick which doubles the effect of greenery in a room is using mirrors to reflect house plants - it can give the impression of a real jungle, and add a feeling of depth to a room."

Follow Barty's rules for mirror power and use our guide to the fairest mirrors of them all.

Place a mirror on a wall adjacent to an interesting view or picture. The mirror will reflect the image and add a sense of space. Place a large mirror opposite an attractive fireplace as well as above it. This will catch the eye and make the room seem larger.

Paint one wall a darker colour than the rest of the room. Hang a mirror on the dark wall and a picture on the opposite, paler wall. This will have the effect of giving the dark wall more depth as it appears to recede to contain the picture.



Ornate purple Cherubino mirror from Paperchase, £25

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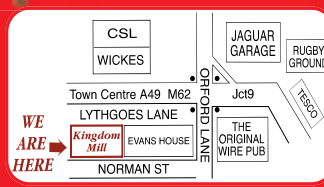
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Home & Garden

Time to ponder

SPRING is a crucial time, not only for sowing seeds, pruning to make way for new growth, rejuvenating lawns and preparing vegetable patches, but also for preparing your pond for the new season, as the rise in temperature brings about key changes in the water.

Rupert Bridges, fish expert and technical adviser at aquatics specialist Tetra, said:

"The warmer weather sees a shift in activity within the pond among the fish and other potentially harmful micro-organisms including bacteria, fungi and parasites.

"This combination, if left untreated, can cause major upset and imbalance to the well being of the pond and the fish. This is partly due to the increase in activity among your fish as they start to feed again and the production of waste increases."

The grouping of harmful micro-organisms and increased waste can have a detrimental affect on the balance of the pond if specific procedures are not carried out because when warmer weather comes the activity of these micro-organisms and the amount of waste produced may exceed the capabilities of the fish's immune system and of the filter to deal with them.

But if you follow some basic guidelines, you can ensure a healthy balance of your pond in the next few months.

Give your pond a spring clean before the weather warms up, removing sediment with a pond vacuum and problem plants such as blanket weed with a net or winding it round a stout cane.

Start to feed your fish in early spring – there are many brands of fish food available and floating pellets and flakes are popular because they encourage the fish to the surface where they can be seen.

Only feed the fish once every two or three days initially, increasing the rations as the water warms up. Don't overfeed them because this may lead to disease. Fish will also feed on live food, such as gnat lar-

vae, but you'll need to supplement this with high protein foods such as white worms or frozen live food.

Cut back old marginal vegetation from around the pond and contain vigorous perennials by planting them in aquatic plant baskets and topping them up with a layer of gravel to prevent fish stirring up the compost.

You should give your pond filters a spring clean by gently rinsing any biological media (material), often consisting of black rings, in a bucket of pond water and spraying off foam sponges under the hose. Biological media should never be washed under the hose as the chlorine contained in the water will kill any beneficial bacteria.

Keep a close eye on your fish during this period to allow you to react quickly to any signs of ill health such as white spot, fin rot and ulcers. If possible, testing your water quality every week will give you even more of an advantage, allowing you to check the pond is keeping well balanced. Simple-to-use test kits are readily available.

Spring is also a good time to re-assess your planting of marginals and deep water aquatics, which may have grown too big or are simply in the wrong place. As such, if you do have gaps, divide existing stock and replant them.

Spring provides the perfect opportunity to plan a pond that will add so much to the genuine quality and environment of your summer garden.

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