



Laundry Rooms

A space in the home that is often neglected aesthetically is the laundry room. We spend a lot of time in this area, but the laundry room is generally regarded as a functional space only. What, after all, do you need to do a load of laundry? A washer, a dryer, and box of detergent...an occasional hanger or basket, and everything comes out smelling like a rose.

For those of us fortunate enough to have an entire room devoted to laundry, the possibilities for improvement are endless. Some of the most daring paint colors and creative wall coverings I have seen were on the walls of a laundry room. Think about it: this is one of the safest places to experiment with color, because it is a space with few outside visitors. If a terra cotta orange or bright yellow paint color appeals to you, but you feel it may be too overwhelming in a living space, the laundry area is a perfect place to experiment.

Just because it's primarily a functional space, there is no reason a laundry area should not be decorated and enjoyed as a separate yet important area of the home. Add a touch of style by pouring your dry detergent and scoop into a large glass jar, maybe wrapped with a ribbon. Laundry rooms can be decorated with artwork, antique objects, such as washboards and old irons, and collectibles like old boxes of detergent or antique signage.

If you have a mudroom adjoined to the laundry area, it is especially appropriate to keep this space organized and functional. Since a mudroom usually provides an alternative entry, family members and guests pass through this area daily. Keep shoes in baskets, and provide hooks for jackets and backpacks, and storage for keys, mail and paperwork.

If your laundry area is in the garage, assign the surrounding space to the things you need to maintain clothing and home. Shelves over the washer and dryer can hold bleach, detergent, and fabric softener, as well as stacks of clean rags, a sewing kit, and possibly beach towels or extra sheets. A peg rack or extra hooks may be hung on the wall nearby, to hold clothing items that need to be air dried or mended. Accent the wall with something colorful and decorative, like a framed poster or colorful wreath.

Overhead shelves or cabinets can be filled extra light bulbs, flower vases, baskets, infrequently-used pots and pans, and cleaning products, with storage bins containing other household items like seasonal home decorations, wrapping supplies, candles and out of season clothing.

Inside the house, laundry areas are sometimes installed behind folding or closet doors. These areas are often small, and usually have shelving built over the appliances. Use all the wall space possible for storage, by either adding additional shelving, or installing cabinets. This area is often under utilized, so if storage space is a challenge in your house, look to the wall of your laundry area for possible storage solutions.

If your laundry room is visually separated from the rest of the house, take advantage of this and make it a room unto itself. No need to match your home décor in color or style: if you have some items that you love, but are not sure how to integrate them into your home, use these items as the inspiration for decorating the laundry room.

In my home, I am lucky to have a separate laundry room off the kitchen. I bought ready-made frames for my kid's fourth grade western posters, on which they describe themselves in imaginative and insightful 10-year old detail. No one generally appreciates this kind of art as much as mom and dad, so the laundry area is the perfect place to enjoy them on a daily basis.

I also bought a hanging wall unit, complete with cubbies and peg hooks, at a local silent auction. I have a few collectibles, candles and photos on the top, and small baskets in the cubbies for the loose change, buttons and lip balm I often find in the dryer. A few small pieces of art are hung over the appliances, and a painted chair is on the other wall, under a large set of closed cabinets. A small mason jar filled with paintbrushes rests on the back of the sink, a checked valance dresses the window and a colorful rug softens the floor.

It's just the laundry room, but it's also an area of the house that receives a lot of wear and tear. Take some time to give it some extra attention, and it just might become one of your favorite areas of your home.

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