

QUIRK  BOOKS

◦◦◦◦ PRESENTS ◦◦◦◦

SPRUCE UP YOUR HOME

Easy DIY Projects to
Brighten Up Your Space

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Thank you for downloading the *Spruce Up Your Home* sampler from Quirk Books!

As we continue to self-quarantine and practice social distancing, many of us are spending more time at home than ever before. We're also learning how important our home environments are to our productivity, mental health, and overall well-being. Even if your home is perfectly cozy, a spring refresh could put you in a lighter frame of mind to tackle everything you need to do, whether that's working from home, home-schooling your children, cooking more of your own meals, or just taking a well-deserved break. This sampler includes tips from Quirk Books on bringing the outdoors inside, capturing the best of social media in your physical space, and organizing your bookshelves so you can easily find the perfect read to suit your quarantine mood.

Your journey to a calm, bright, and happy home starts here!

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•••○ GIVE YOUR HOUSEPLANTS A MAKEOVER ○•••

Adapted from [Hello Color](#) by Rachel Mae Smith

Indoor plants improve the air quality of your home, elevate your mood, and are gorgeous to look at, but the containers they come in can often be neutral and, well, a little boring. Rather than springing for an expensive new pot for your fiddle-leaf fig or philodendron, tackle this fun afternoon project. It's a great way to use up some of that leftover paint in your basement, garage, or closet—and add a little color to your space. If your preferred pot already contains a plant, be sure to transfer the plant to a temporary pot and give your container a good wash and scrub before beginning your project.

MATERIALS

- Terra-cotta planter
- Spray paint
- Acrylic paints
- Paintbrushes in varying sizes
- Paper plate or paint palette
- Pencil
- Clear acrylic sealant
- Plant
- Potting soil

Paint easily chips off plastic planters, so to keep your hard work intact, opt for terra-cotta. The porous surface will absorb the paint, making it less likely to flake off. It also helps seal your planter to extend its life.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Paint your planter one solid base color.

For a smooth, even coat, spray paint works best, but you can also use acrylic paint and a brush. White is perfect if you plan to use a lot of colors throughout (you won't have to worry about clashing). Be sure to paint over

the rim and a few inches inside the planter so that some color peeks out after your plant is potted. Also, when you don't limit yourself to painting just below the exterior rim, you can go even bolder with your design!

2. Once the base color is dry, it's time to create your design.

If you're nervous about working freehand, use a pencil to lightly draw the shape/location of your patterns. Think of the planter as an oddly shaped canvas.

3. Get painting!

It helps to have all the colors poured out on your palette or paper plate, with a brush for each color. If you plan to overlap colors, let each color dry before you paint over it with another so that you don't muddy them. Consider adding a small pattern detail, like a cluster of dots or dashes, for variety. Keep painting and creating shapes until your planter is covered or until you're happy, whichever comes first!

4. Spray the planter with acrylic sealant, let dry, and then pot your plant.



START YOUR OWN INDOOR HERB GARDEN

If you were inspired to decorate a few extra pots, consider filling them with seedlings of fresh herbs! Growing an indoor herb garden is a great way to invite nature into your home, infuse your space with natural scents, and cut down on trips to the grocery store. And it's easier than you think! Find a sunny spot in your kitchen or a light-drenched windowsill, follow our tips for starting a garden, and refer to our handy guide to working with twelve popular herbs.

HOW TO START AN INDOOR HERB GARDEN

Adapted from [*Stuff Every Cook Should Know*](#) by Joy Manning

Having a little herb garden growing right in your kitchen is both pretty and practical. It saves you the premium you pay for herbs at the grocery store, and growing them yourself means you will have the freshest product possible. Follow these steps, and it can be easy, too. You'll earn your green thumb in no time.

- Choose herbs that like to be inside. Basil, chives, parsley, oregano, and thyme are all good options.
- Pick the sunniest space. Herbs need plenty of sunlight—five to six hours a day. Next to a south-facing window or under a skylight are your best bets.
- Start with small plants, not seeds. Starting seeds indoors can be tough. Just make sure your herbs are planted in quality potting soil in a container with good drainage.
- Water daily, but just a small amount. Add enough water to keep the soil moist—not wet. Many a kitchen herb garden has been lost to overzealous watering.
- Harvest responsibly. Trim herbs regularly, but don't go overboard. Each herb needs to be pruned in a specific way. Consult a gardening book or the Internet before picking up your shears.

THE TOP 12 CULINARY HERBS

Adapted from *Stuff Every Gardener Should Know* by Scott Meyer

Growing herbs is a simple, satisfying way to add homegrown flavor to your homemade meals. Here are the most popular ones for use in the kitchen.

BASIL (*OCIMUM BASILICUM*)

The fragrant leaves on these 2-foot-tall plants have a lightly spicy flavor that's the foundation of pesto. A cold-sensitive annual, basil thrives in summer just about anywhere.

Best varieties: You'll find sweet Thai, Cuban, and lemon- or cinnamon-scented basil, as well as the more familiar Italian varieties such as 'Profuma di Genova'.

Tip: Start trimming off (and eating) the top leaves while basil is small to encourage branching, which will produce a bushier, more productive plant.

CHIVES (*ALLIUM*)

These clumps of thin stalks come up every year, giving you green, oniony-flavored leaves all season long and pretty purple flowers. You can dig up a clump or chunk in fall, plant it in a small pot, and keep it in a sunny window to harvest as you need.

Best varieties: The most common variety of chives (*A. schoenoprasum*) has an onion-like taste, while Chinese or garlic chives (*A. tuberosum*) taste more like (no surprise!) garlic.

Tip: Chives are easy to dig up and divide every few years, so you can spread the plants throughout your borders or share them with friends.

CILANTRO (*CORIANDRUM SATIVUM*)

Cilantro leaves have a fresh citrusy flavor that's essential for homemade salsa. The dried seeds—known as coriander—are used to season chicken dishes, curries, and more.

Best varieties: When the weather gets hot, cilantro goes to seed and begins to taste bitter, a process known as bolting. 'Slo-Bolt' tolerates heat longer than other varieties.

Tip: If you want to use young cilantro leaves for garden-fresh salsa when tomatoes and peppers are ripe, plant some in midsummer.

DILL (*ANETHUM GRAVEOLENS*)

The ferny leaves of this annual herb are ready to harvest from the middle of spring all the way into fall. The plants are easy to start from seed or to transplant.

Best varieties: 'Fernleaf' stays small, so it's ideal for growing in pots indoors or outside. For bigger, bushier plants, go with 'Mammoth' (aka 'Long Island Mammoth').

Tip: Grow dill in or around your vegetable beds because the small yellow flowers it bears in summer attract beneficial insects that prey on garden pests.

MINT (*MENTHA*)

The mint family includes varieties with scents of apple, pineapple, and even chocolate. Nearly all are aggressively spreading perennials.

Best varieties: Peppermint has the most potent flavor; spearmint is milder. 'Mint Julep' has been bred for compatibility with its namesake drink.

Tip: Keep it in a pot, even if planting it in the ground.

OREGANO (*ORIGANUM*)

A shrubby low-growing plant with tiny flavorful leaves, oregano grows best in dry, sunny spots where soil fertility is low.

Best varieties: Many chefs prefer the flavor of Greek oregano to other varieties. Mexican oregano has a light citrus taste.

Tip: Oregano is notoriously difficult to start from seeds, but it's easy to grow from a transplant.

PARSLEY (*PETROSELINUM*)

Not just a garnish, parsley is a biennial but is typically grown as an annual.

Best varieties: Flat-leaf types, such as 'Giant Italian', have the strongest flavor; curly types, such as 'Extra Curled' or 'Green River', are milder.

Tip: Pick outside leaves so the center of the plant continues to develop new ones.

ROSEMARY (*ROSMARINUS*)

In warm winter climates, rosemary grows yearround and can become a large shrub up to 6 feet tall. Elsewhere it is grown as an annual.

Best varieties: 'Blue Spires', 'Gorizia', and 'Tuscan Blue' lack the turpentine undertones of other varieties. 'Arp' is the hardiest.

Tip: Prune off a few stems weekly to encourage tender new leaves, which have the best flavor.

SAGE (*SALVIA OFFICINALIS*)

Sage is a perennial that can survive moderate winter temperatures, but cannot endure soggy roots.

Best varieties: 'Berggarten', is the most flavorful. The red flowers on 'Pineapple' attract hummingbirds.

Tip: Plant sage where the soil drains quickly.

SWEET MARJORAM (*ORIGANUM MAJORANA*)

Sweet marjoram has a mild floral aroma and flavor.

Best varieties: 'Golden-Tipped' is a pretty variety with green leaves edged in bright yellow.

Tip: Add to food near the end of cooking—the heat makes the flavor much blander.

TARRAGON (*ARTEMISIA DRACUNCULUS*)

This perennial has a sweet, delicate, licorice-like flavor that complements chicken, fish, and eggs.

Best varieties: French tarragon, which can be grown only from divisions or cuttings, is the most pungent.

Tip: Cut back brown foliage in spring, and divide the plant every third year to renew it.

THYME (*THYMUS*)

Thyme endures for years even in cold climates.

Best varieties: Lemon thyme has the best flavor and fragrance. Variegated varieties such as 'Aureus' or 'Silver Queen' are prettiest. 'Argenteus' is ideal for hanging baskets.

Tip: Thyme works well as edging for gardens.

○○○ BRIGHTEN YOUR ROOM ○○○ WITH INSTAGRAM WALL ART

Adapted from [Hello Color](#) by Rachel Mae Smith

Our social media feeds and digital photo albums are treasure troves of memories and allow us to remember better times. But our relationship with social media in particular—and our phones in general—can be complicated. If you're looking for ways to reduce your screen time without sacrificing your access to happier memories, consider bringing the best of Instagram to your physical space with this colorful Instagram wall art project.

MATERIALS

- 4-inch-square photo prints
- 4-inch-square wooden blocks, about ½" thick
- Metal picture hangers, picture hooks with nails and hammer, or removable hook-and-loop strips (optional)
- Acrylic paint
- Paintbrush
- Paper plate or paint palette
- Mod Podge

If you don't have a printer, some websites will print your photos at a 4-by-4-inch size. If you have no access to a saw to cut your wooden blocks, look online (e.g., Etsy) for pieces already cut. The dimensions can differ from those suggested here; just make sure the photos and wooden blocks are the same size.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. If you plan to hang your blocks with nails, then first attach hangers to the backs of the blocks using the accompanying hardware (usually metal saw-tooth hangers come with small nails or screws). Or use removable hook-and-loop strips. They won't hurt walls, which is great if you're renting, and the art will hang flat. Or skip the hanging stage altogether! If the block is at least ½ inch thick, it will stand perfectly on its own.
2. Paint the edges of the wooden blocks. Don't worry if you get paint on the front and back since the back will face the wall and the photo will cover the front. Let dry.
3. Affix the photo to the block: Make sure your hands are clean so that you don't get fingerprints or smudges on your photo, then apply a thin layer of Mod Podge to the block and carefully place your photo on top. When the photo is in the desired position, lay the block flat to dry.
4. Using the picture hooks or hook-and-loop strips, hang the blocks on your wall in a grid, geometric or freeform shape, or any way you like. Sit back and admire!



○○○GIVE YOUR HOME LIBRARY○○○ A MAKEOVER

If you're a devoted reader, you understand the magic of reading the right book at the right time—and the escape it can offer when the real world feels a little crazy. But you're also familiar with the book-lover's biggest challenge: how to organize all your beloved tomes in a limited amount of space so you can find the perfect read exactly when you want it. These tips from the Quirk Books blog will help you freshen up your bookshelves, including purging books that you no longer want, cataloging them, and organizing them. There are many organizational systems to choose from, but don't worry—we've got you covered.

A SIMPLE GUIDE TO ORGANIZING YOUR HOME LIBRARY

Adapted from [“A Simple Guide to Organizing Your Home Library”](#) by Sarah Shotts
Originally posted on [QuirkBooks.com](#)

Organizing a home library can be overwhelming, whether you're moving or just trying to reorganize your living space. When we're done, you'll know what books you own, and be able to easily find every book you're looking for. You may even rediscover a hidden gem that you've been meaning to read for years! Here are three easy steps to help you get started.

STEP ONE: REEVALUATE

Look through your books for any that you are willing to part with. It's hard—and can be surprising—but it's essential, especially if you're moving or trying to free up space. Consider each title and weigh whether you see yourself reading it again (and be honest!)

Make separate piles for Sell, Swap, and Donate. You can sell some titles to a used bookstore for credit (yay, more books!). Some can go on to your friends. And you can always donate books to a local thrift shop or charitable organization. While choosing books to sell or give away, remember that you're making room for new books to come into your life and freeing the ones you part with to have adventures with new owners.

STEP TWO: CATALOG YOUR BOOKS

These days, cataloging books can be as easy as scanning the barcode with your smartphone. (Of course, older titles have to be typed in by hand.) There are several book cataloguing services that can help you with this, including LibraryThing and Goodreads. If you have a lot of books, this can be a daunting task. To keep from being overwhelmed you might just input one or two stacks a week and keep at it until you're done. Or you could marathon the Lord of Rings movies (or the epic trilogy of your choice) and see how far you get while watching!

STEP THREE: SHELVING YOUR BOOKS

Now you have a good idea about what your collection includes. You may have even found some forgotten gems. Now it's time to decide how to shelve them! Turn the page for more.

7 WAYS TO ORGANIZE YOUR BOOKSHELVES

Adapted from [“7 Ways to Organize Your Bookshelves”](#) by Maria Vicente
Originally posted on QuirkBooks.com

Proudly display your newly organized books with these shelving methods.

Alphabetical Order: This is the most common method of book organization since it so perfectly mirrors the way our favorite bookstores organize their shelves. Still, there are many options for the home library. You can organize by authors’ first or last names or organize by book title (for those times when you can’t remember who wrote what).

Color Coded: Like the option above, this method provides many options. Turn your bookshelves into a giant rainbow or mix and match colors to complement your home decor. An entire shelf of black and white spines makes a bold statement and a section devoted to bright, neon colors will surely get noticed by your future guests.

Publisher: If you don’t work in book publishing, you may not have considered the benefits of organizing by publishing houses. All your Penguins can sit in a row. Build a mansion of Random House houses. Proudly display your collection of Quirk books. And imagine how nice all those spines will look with matching logos!

Content: This is the easiest way to find what you’re looking for. There’s no need to look through all your books to decide what to read next when everything is separated by subject. Let YA books hang out together, separate fantasy and science fiction once and for all, and place all your poetry books together for when you need a quick read.

Emotional Response: Arrange your bookshelves based on emotions. The next time your friend asks you for a sad book recommendation, you can point them in the right direction. Possible labels: Books that make me cry. Books that make me laugh. Books that make me want to throw things. Books that make me nostalgic. Books that make me want to write love letters to my significant other.

Spine Poetry: Take the art of spine poetry to a whole new level. Make it a creative game: can you match up all the books in your collection and have every shelf tell a story?

Keep Them Secret: Turn the book spines facing in and keep the mystery alive. Choose your next read at random or lend books out to friends that way. You’ll discover something new every time.

REFRESH YOUR COMIC BOOK COLLECTION

Adapted from [“Organizing Your Comics”](#) by Rose Moore
Originally posted on QuirkBooks.com

The question is not whether to organize your comics collection—it’s how to do it. How can you store your comics in a way that is beautiful, useful, and keeps them in good condition (just in case they’re worth money one day)? Here are some recommendations for new ways to organize your growing comics collection.

SORT AND CATEGORIZE YOUR COLLECTION

Organizing comics can be complicated, especially for book readers who are used to shelving titles by author or genre, but this step-by-step method will make it much easier to find the exact comic that you are looking for.

Step One: Separate single-issue comics from trade paperbacks (collected volumes).

- Most people like to store and shelve these separately, even if they have both formats, because they are different in terms of size and physical requirements. Trades sit nicely on a shelf, whereas single issues need a little more care.

Step Two: Group comics by publisher.

- Most people choose to organize by publisher because it's convenient (and because it's how this would be done in most comics shops). Marvel comics will live on one shelf, DC on another, Image on another, and indie titles will be grouped together. This is optional, of course, but if you have a large collection, it will help speed up the search for a specific title.

Step Three: Sort comics by title.

- While traditional books are most commonly sorted by author, this is less common with

comics. Fans of a particular artist or writer may want to separate that one creator's work, but this makes reading through an entire series difficult, because multiple creators will have worked on a single title over the years. Sorting by title makes diving back in for a reread much simpler.

Step Four: Make sure titles are in numerical order.

- Simple enough! Comics are numbered, so stick to keeping each title in chronological order, unless you worship chaos.

Step Five: Alphabetize by title.

- Who doesn't love a good alphabetical order? Once you have everything organized by publisher, title, and number, alphabetizing is the last step to making sure you can find your comics as quickly as possible. You know, for all those comic book emergencies.

Of course, comics universes are wild and complex things, and there are plenty of spin-offs, prequels, and alternate universes that can get confusing. How you deal with these is up to personal preference, depending on how complicated you feel like making your life (or that of anyone coming by to borrow a comic). The simplest thing is just to go by title, although some collectors like to group by overall team, family, or character, so that a shelf might have all of the X-Men characters, the Flash family, the Avengers, etc., in one place, rather than scattered throughout the collection.

Now you should have some nice neat piles of comics, sorted by publisher, number, and title, waiting for a shelf to live on!

STORE AND STYLE YOUR COLLECTION

The traditional way of storing comics is simple: put single issues, in order, in a longbox. (A longbox is a specially designed box of heavy cardboard that is the perfect size and shape to store comics upright. They also fit smaller trades, although these are usually just shelved.)

However, the traditional way isn't necessarily the *best* way, especially if you want something that looks good in your living room. If a wall of plain white boxes doesn't appeal to you, here are some alternatives.

1. Invest in new shelves. Furniture store IKEA has a shelving unit perfect for comics: the Kallax (formerly Expedit). Its cube-shaped shelves are just the right size to hold trade editions, as well as any of the storage options we'll cover below. You can mix and match longboxes and trades, or display your collectibles. You can even get specially made drawers fitted. Perfect!

2. Decorate boring boxes. Longboxes aren't exactly pretty, but that doesn't mean they have to stay that way. Decorate each box with labels or a full collage of comics images that show exactly what is inside each one. If the thought of collaging with actual comics pages makes you gasp and clutch your pearls, print or photocopy some images, then get busy with scissors and Mod Podge. Or, if that sounds like too much work, take a color copy of your favorite cover, and simply stick it to the front of the box.

3. Get chummy with files and folders. If you don't have longboxes, don't like them,

or if they are too hard to get hold of, you can use magazine files or ring binders and plastic wallets. Decorate the magazine files just like the longboxes or use ring binders with comics art already on them if you aren't the crafty type! You could even match the ring binders to your decor, if you want something subtle. Both of these are smaller than longboxes, which means they're also lighter and easier to lift.

4. Invest in a comics rack. This is for serious collectors who have always dreamed of their home feeling like a comic-book store! You can buy rotating comics racks online. Just don't put your most valuable books on there, as they will be exposed to the light, which may fade them.

5. Get creative! Filing cabinets can also be a great way to store comics, and there are amazing new designs that don't look like they belong in an office. Pull-out shelving under beds is a great place, too, and then you don't even have to get up to read!

Whether you want your shelves to shout your love of comics from the rooftops, or you'd rather sneakily integrate your collection into a stylish home, there are so many options.

Visit QuirkBooks.com to learn more
about these books!

FEATURED IN THIS SAMPLER:



YOU MIGHT ALSO ENJOY:

