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House & Home

The 30-Minute Decorator
Betterway Books
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This home improvement book, part of the Home Magic! series, takes do-it-yourselfers quickly through a series of simple decorating projects intended to add charm and character to rooms. Most of the 300 projects look like they'd succeed, with little time and little cash invested.

Brief, easy-to-follow instructions take home lovers through painting projects like stenciling pillows, frosting glass and decorating tile. Helpful color photos illustrate the end results, which can be achieved in less then 30 minutes. Other chapters focus on window treatments, decorating with found objects, arranging flowers and herbs in readily available containers (rosemary in brioche molds, for one), and fixing up with fabric sans a sewing machine.

The style of projects varies through the book - from elegant fleur-de-lys slipcovers to whimsical button-covered picture frames to rustic driftwood headboards - making it suitable for a variety of tastes. The scope varies from quick whole-room overhauls, such as stenciling seashells on a bathroom wall, to creating simple accents, like potpourri from garden flowers.

Many of the materials are already at hand. The book instructs how to arrange photos, display glass containers and plates, and use such accessible items as painted leaves and extra fabric or wrapping paper to gussy up storage boxes and lamp shades. For help with special occasions, the book shows how to add panache to gifts, set a party table with intriguing objects (a translucent shower curtain), and get creative with napkin rings by using shells, beads and surplus ribbon.

This book's quick tips, inexpensive materials and mostly solid results make it worth the price for do-it-yourselfers who want to add a little charm without a lot of fuss.

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