

# The chill-out zone

Picture: Fired Earth

We all need to chill out from time to time, and creating a peaceful haven at home is paramount — especially when your outside life is frantic, writes Ewa Shephard

If you are in need of a cocoon to envelop you and restore your spirits, think tone, think texture, think luxury. Most of all, avoid very bright colours throughout the home. Red is a confrontational colour, which is why it is often used in dining rooms to encourage discussion and discourse and a lively evening.

If you want to bring passion into your bedroom then choose colours from this palette — although the exact opposite is suggested to create the calm oasis needed to relax. Creams, taupes and coffees all blend with texture: silk, linen, velvet and crisp, cool cotton sheets. Perhaps add a touch of colour to bring a little cheer; a minimal hint of plum or teal would blend beautifully with a neutral palette.

Exactly the same palette and range of textures can be used in any room in the home.

In the living room, try a squishy linen-covered sofa with oversized cushions in toning colours but varying textures, and a cashmere or lambswool throw in the contrasting shade which you can snuggle under with your mug of cocoa while watching a weepy black and white movie on a rainy Sunday afternoon... having munched on some comfort food earlier of course!

Think of toe-curling deep-pile carpets in coffee, full-length draping curtains in a raw silk, or textured linen in mocha or caramel, plus taupe tones on the walls with beautiful art to add a splash of colour.

Or try the elegant version of our cocoon: a more formal sofa, perhaps in textured linen-look fabric, which would not squish and crease as much as our casual variation, with a similar collection of cushions (not oversize this time, just a mix of sizes and shapes) and a throw. Team with a floor of beautiful polished oak, or softly toned limestone with individual rugs, modern or traditional, in areas where comfort is needed: in front of seating and possibly in front of the fire or television.

The importance of texture cannot be overstated. By using an exclusively neutral palette, the eye must have something to linger over to help us feel at ease — a variety of surfaces, or texture, will break the monotony of the tones and give visual and touchable interest.

Neutrality isn't for everyone, some prefer to be soothed with colour — but that's another story, so watch this space!

Ewa Shephard, formerly an interior designer for Fired Earth, is a partner in the family business The Shephards Group, artisan craftsmen and specialist tillers focusing on creative bathroom solutions managed from start to finish. The company will work with your own chosen products, or can provide a design and/or sourcing service. Please call or email for an informal chat 01395 567503 or [shepherds@mac.com](mailto:shepherds@mac.com) [www.theshephardsgroup.co.uk](http://www.theshephardsgroup.co.uk)

