The Cure for Houzz Envy: Closet Touches Anyone Can Do

These easy and inexpensive moves for more space and better organization are right in fashion

For this week's Acute Houzz Envy cure, I think it's appropriate to talk about closets. A new year means making resolutions to get organized and purge that stuff you no longer use, donating it to those who need it and giving the things you need some breathing room. Read this ideabook for inspiration. Then when you have a day to really dig in, check out Get It Done: Clean Out Your Bedroom Closet to get everything deep cleaned and then put your favorite ideas into action.

My first case of extreme closet envy occurred when I saw the movie Broadcast News. Jennifer the TV journalist had reassigned an entire bedroom in her apartment as a closet, and I've dreamed of doing the same ever since (it's never happened, but I like to make my closet look organized and pretty). According to what I come across on Houzz, it seems a large percentage of the population has incredible custom closets that are bigger than my bedroom, appointed with chandeliers and ottomans. Don't let it get you down in the dumps and think that everyone except you has a closet like the one Nate Berkus designed for Oprah — most of us are in the same cramped closet boat. Let's steal ideas from them instead.

More cures for Houzz envy: Kitchen | Dining room | Guest room | Living room | Entryway | Bathroom
While I dream of a closet like this, when I was at my childhood home for the holidays, I looked at the small closet (just one narrow door wide) I was using, and it made me happy.

There were six sweaters, two blouses, four pairs of pants, a dress, two pairs of ankle boots, a pair of sneakers and two pairs of flats in there. It looked so streamlined and lovely, and I realized it was really all I needed for the season. (Also up top, there was a Laura Ashley hatbox circa 1988 full of photos from high school.)

However, the truth is that most of us want more space. If your closet is tiny, you can make it hold more, or you may even want to spread your things out into other parts of the house.

**Add fresh flowers.** OK, I’m kidding. I just say that for almost every room, and I couldn’t find any photos of closets with plates on the walls. On to more practical ideas …

**Make the most of height.** Lots of two-door, non-walk-in closets have only one shelf above the rod, and there is often wasted space. Fill that space up to the ceiling by adding another shelf and keeping a folding stepladder or sturdy stool nearby.

**Paint the inside of the closet.** A fresh color inside is a fun surprise; it turns a closet into a little jewel box.
Wallpaper is fun to add, too. Because your clothes will cover a lot of whatever you cover the walls in, think about spreading the wallpaper to the ceiling, like in this closet. This goes for the paint idea too.

Organize your shoes. If you love your shoes, you want to be able to select them easily and keep them dust free.

Whether you keep the original boxes or buy new ones, snap a photo of each pair and affix it to the front. If you have an over-the-door shoe organizer, you can attach the snapshots with binder clips. Yes, this advice is coming from a shoe hound.

Style a little with beloved items. You know, with $15,000 Hermès bags and Louis Vuitton luggage. Shoot, if I had that much money I’d blow it on building a *Broadcast News* Jennifer closet.

Seriously, though, I love to leave a favorite handbag or scarf hanging from my closet door. It’s a little preview of what’s inside.

Use pullout cabinetry in deep closets. Just as they help out in the kitchen, trays that pull out offer lots of easily accessed extra storage.

Color coordinate. There are all kinds of smart ways to organize a closet, but color coordinating is one of the most visually pleasing.

Make a dressing room area. If your bedroom has the room, think about taking it over with a closet theme.

While built-ins may not be in the budget, imagine a *Parsons desk* or another table with a mirror on top, some fashion photography hanging over it and a few items next to it, such as ...

... a purse tree. Purse lovers, this is something you can leave in another room, a hallway or a niche and admire it; after all, if you have a purse collection, you want to be able to enjoy looking at it.

Also, scarf racks and jewelry racks are another great addition to dressing areas. They also work for ties and belts, guys.
Use painted pegboards for jewelry. This also works for hats.

You also can store your jewelry on top and in the drawers of a desk. Consider whether going all-out with built-ins (next photo) or a ready-made closet system someday is something you want to invest in.

Get the lighting right. Even if you are dealing with a closet much smaller than this, you can have a ceiling light installed so you can see your clothes better.

Make your workspace work a little harder. A home office is another place that’s great for extending the closet into.

Use attic space. Hang those out-of-season clothes on a rod, out of the way but still neatly organized.

Add a little bling. The bling in my closet is framed subscriber-issue covers of Harpers Bazaar magazine — they are spectacular. I squeezed them into cheap frames from CVS and Ikea. I also have my hero, Tina Fey, on the cover of Esquire, and Prince on the cover of Ebony. (My closet has a big drywalled duct in it where I can’t hang anything more than thumbtacks, so that’s where they go.)

This ideabook has been too girly. I’ll end it with a super-duper manly shot.

Tell us: Do you remember your first instance of closet envy? Cher in Clueless? Lisa Vanderpump on The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills? Please share it! Also, if you are working on a closet or dressing area project, please share a photo in the Comments section when you are done.