



**ON THE TILES**

'I fell in love with the floor tiles, which are a Bert & May collaboration'

# *I like to mix up*

## COME ON IN!



**ABOUT ME** I'm Temi Johnson, 37, a criminal defence lawyer and an interior designer (for my design services go to [temijohnson.com](http://temijohnson.com); @ahousemadeofbrass). I live here with my husband Benoit, 41, an actor and teacher, and our son Phoenix, four.

**MY HOME** A two-bed end-of-terrace in Stanstead Abbots, Hertfordshire, built in 1890 by the great great grandfather of one of our neighbours! We moved here in December 2018.

**WHEN WE MOVED IN** The bones of the house were good, but it needed modernising and replastering.

**AND NOW** It's beautifully colourful, with a new kitchen and laundry room.

**STYLE TIP** Have fun with it. Part of the joy for me is to scour car-boot sales to get those unique pieces.



# OLD AND NEW'

## UPCYCLED STYLE

'Our Ercol sofa and brass coffee table came from eBay and I've added my favourite artwork - my mum gave me the lady wearing the fez, so that is special to me'

Temi Johnson has decorated her beautiful home with unique finds and a vibrant colour palette that lifts the spirits all year round

**D**esigning my home was a life-changing move for me,' says Temi. 'It cemented my decision to pursue a career in interior design full time and led to me appearing on TV's *Interior Design Masters* this year.

'It was love at first sight when we spotted this house and we were thrilled it came in within our budget. At the time, I was living with my husband on a narrow boat while we saved for our mortgage, which is funny as when I first met Benoit I remember being distinctly unimpressed by the fact he lived on a boat and saying I wouldn't be joining him. Fast forward a few years and I'd not only moved onto the boat, but also found that I really enjoyed living on the water. It was that time that actually led to us buying our house in this village, as we used to take the boat into the Hertfordshire countryside in the summer and always said that when we bought a house, it would be here. In fact, in a funny turn of events, we somehow ended up living right next door to the boat yard we used to take the boat to for repairs!

## Instant attraction

This house has good links to London, yet you feel like you're in the middle of the countryside with the nature reserve, canals and the river all on your doorstep. It wasn't only the location though - I knew I wanted a house with two double bedrooms, which this place has, plus we'll probably consider a loft conversion at some point and the second bedroom is large enough that it can potentially lose some space to a staircase if needed.

## Challenges ahead

It wasn't going to be easy sailing, however, as the house needed a lot >>

## IDEA TO STEAL

Furniture on legs will help a small footprint seem bigger'



**UNIQUE PIECES**

'The old radio is another piece I inherited from my mother. She wasn't even using it; I think it had been in the shed. The lamp was a present from Benoit's mum'

**'I GREW UP IN A HOUSE FULL OF ANTIQUES AND VINTAGE FINDS - YOU CAN'T BEAT THE CHARACTER AND CHARM OF SOMETHING OLD'**

**3 of the best VIBRANT COLOURS**

Paint boring walls with a mood-lifting pop of colour



**GOLDEN TOUCH**  
Gamboge pure flat emulsion, £56.50 for 2.5ltr, Paint & Paper Library



**SKY BRIGHT**  
Passionate Lilac matt paint, £21 for 1ltr, YesColours



**FIERY HUE**  
Bamboozle modern emulsion, £59 for 2.5ltr, Farrow & Ball



**BRIGHT ADDITIONS**

'When we moved in the shutters were already in place. I bought the Ercol chairs from eBay. They're my best bargain buy'



**IDEA TO STEAL**

*'In the summer, use your fireplace as a spot for plants'*

» of work doing to it. Every room needed modernising and redecorating – the bathroom even had the old soil pipe visible, which oddly we didn't notice when we viewed the house. That said, the original parquet flooring was still intact and the previous owners had installed a small kitchen extension, so at least we had enough space for a nice kitchen area.

We completely ripped out the downstairs kitchen and old shower room, turning the space into a kitchen and laundry room instead, with a downstairs loo. This was supposed to take around six weeks, but due to building issues the whole thing took nearly three months – that's a long time to be washing up in the bath tub! I knew I wanted a decent-size kitchen as I love to entertain and for me, food is life. Up until recently when we redecorated our bedroom, I would have said the kitchen was my favourite room as it's the heart of the house and where we spend most of our time when we have friends or family over. It's such a nice space to entertain in while I'm cooking. Our dining table was left by the previous owners, and they'd made it from an old boat, which felt really fitting seeing as we lived on one before moving in here. I don't think I'd fully realised the state »



**HAPPY HOUR**

*'The guitar belongs to my husband – it tends to come out after he's made one of his famous cocktails!'*

» that the place was in, as pieces of furniture had been covering some holes in the walls when we'd viewed it. Safe to say, it was a bit more than the cosmetic makeover I had been hoping for! Despite that, we got stuck in, ripping up all the carpets, sanding the floorboards and painting each room.

### Adding colour

Because these houses are tiny, our aim was to use colour and furniture to make the space feel bigger and more inviting, and I think we've achieved this, especially in the living room. I chose paint for all the walls as I have an irrational dislike of »

**'YOU CAN'T BEAT THE CHARACTER AND CHARM OF SOMETHING OLD'**



#### HIDDEN STORAGE

'The pantry is probably my favourite thing other than the island. It's a literal godsend and hides everything'



#### FARMHOUSE FEEL

'I wanted a traditional country-style kitchen, so I chose a butler's sink, while the taps and cabinetry handles are all in brass'



**IDEA TO STEAL**

'Use lighting in the same finish to keep your style consistent'

**DREAM KITCHEN**

'The cream Esse cooker was kept from the existing kitchen. The units are from Olive & Barr. I knew I wanted a green kitchen - a shade that could feel traditional but also fun'



**OUT OF SIGHT**

'The laundry room is a life saver, especially as the washing machine and dryer are neatly hidden away'

**'DON'T RUSH WHEN IT COMES TO DECORATING – TAKE TIME TO FIND ITEMS YOU REALLY LOVE'**

» wallpaper! The bright orange paint in here is an eco-friendly limewash from Francesca's Paints. She hand-mixes all her paints in her studio in Clapham, and I went to visit her to choose the colour.

**Upstairs changes**

The bathroom was a bit of a hidden surprise for us as not only had we not noticed the hole in the bottom wall or the exposed soil pipe when we first looked around the house, but the room had also been modified for disability. Strangely, someone had put a plastic sheet across the wall above the bathtub and drilled a hand rail onto it, so there weren't any tiles or anything of that nature.

We didn't change the layout, but I bought a bath and sink secondhand on eBay, and then swapped out all the plumbing so it was all fresh. I'd definitely change a couple of the details in here, mainly to do with the quality of one or two of the fittings, but I can always upgrade them later down the line.

**Unique style**

Putting our stamp on the place was the best bit, and I think the majority of the items in our house are secondhand. I »

**Do it... SHOP SECONDHAND**

★ If you're shopping for a piece of furniture or larger item, make sure you've taken accurate measurements beforehand. You'll need to measure not only the space it's going to fit in, but also any doors or entrances that it will need to pass through. Take a tape measure with you while shopping, so you can ensure your chosen piece will fit.  
★ Once you've found your preloved item, check it thoroughly. Often, vintage pieces won't be immaculate and

that's all part of the charm, but you don't want to get home to find that drawers or doors don't open, or that it has woodworm.  
★ When it comes to car-boot sales, be prepared to haggle. If you're picking up a few pieces, why not ask the seller for a deal as you're buying more than one?  
★ Think about how you can transform pieces – maybe it's not in the right colour for your scheme, or you don't like the handles, but these are all factors you could easily change.

**SNUG SPOT**

'Investing in a raised bed from Ikea allows us to store all of Phoenix's toys underneath, as well as giving him space to play'

**PLAY TIME**

'The tepee was a gift from Phoenix's godmum - he uses it as a little snug area or as a spot for hide and seek'



**IDEA TO STEAL**

'Make tidy-up time fun by storing toys or clothes in a cute basket'





### IDEA TO STEAL

'Bring the outside in by growing a plant around the headboard or posts'

## Do it! USE BOLD COLOURS

★ You don't have to have large rooms to use bold colours. Instead, ramp up the cosy feel with rich, dark colours or go for all-out drama with fun, vibrant shades.

★ Paint walls and woodwork the same colour to help maximise the space from walls to ceiling, creating the illusion of height.

★ If you're not brave enough to paint your walls in a bold colour, why not try a standout piece of furniture instead, such as a dining table, island unit or a bookcase?

★ Choose a colour with warmer tones for a north-facing room, where the light is colder, whereas south-facing rooms are ideal for darker, richer shades.

'I FIND PINTEREST INSPIRING WHEN I HAVE AN IDEA IN MY HEAD AND WANT TO SEE IF ANYONE ELSE HAS DONE IT AND WHAT IT LOOKED LIKE'

» love antiques and vintage finds and in my opinion, you can't beat the character and charm of something old. I like to mix in the old with a bit of modern, so I think my style is a combination of traditional meets modern vintage with a shed-load of colour thrown in! Not only will buying secondhand save you money, but it's better for the environment and things were often made much better "back in the day", so you won't compromise on quality. I started to do a weekly car-boot story on my Instagram page before winter came because I was there every

weekend without fail. I'm obsessed! There's a lot left to do, and so much snagging to fix which definitely gives me a twitchy eye whenever I see it, but for the budget we had I can't complain and I'm pleased with how the house has turned out and what we've achieved so far.'



Find more clever ideas to style up your home by going to [pinterest.com/styleathomemag](https://pinterest.com/styleathomemag)

FEATURE LAURIE DAVIDSON  
PHOTOGRAPHS LIZZIE ORME

**PASTEL SCHEME**

'Our bed is a birch bed from Ikea and I was shocked by how good the quality was. The walls are painted in Dulux's Bright Skies, while the door colour is matched to Farrow & Ball's Arsenic'



**Where to buy Temi's style**

- \* **THE EDITION 94** A treasure trove boutique filled with beautiful pieces from makers and artisans, along with vintage homeware.
- \* **HOMEPLACE** An eclectic mix of vintage, mid-century, retro and contemporary furniture, lighting, accessories and homeware.
- \* **HUTCH COMMUNITY** An online community, full of inspiration. You can buy, sell and browse secondhand interiors and furniture.
- \* **MAYFLY VINTAGE** Find original vintage furniture, lighting and homeware, with everything from industrial to French style.
- \* **ETSY** An online marketplace where you can purchase unique items from across the globe, with a focus on handmade or vintage pieces.



**HANDLE IT**

'I had the wardrobe built to fit an alcove in the bedroom and asked for curved door inserts for interest'



**NEUTRAL CHOICE**

'The bathroom is small and I knew I wanted a design that wasn't typical for a small space. The brass really stands out with a neutral colour scheme'