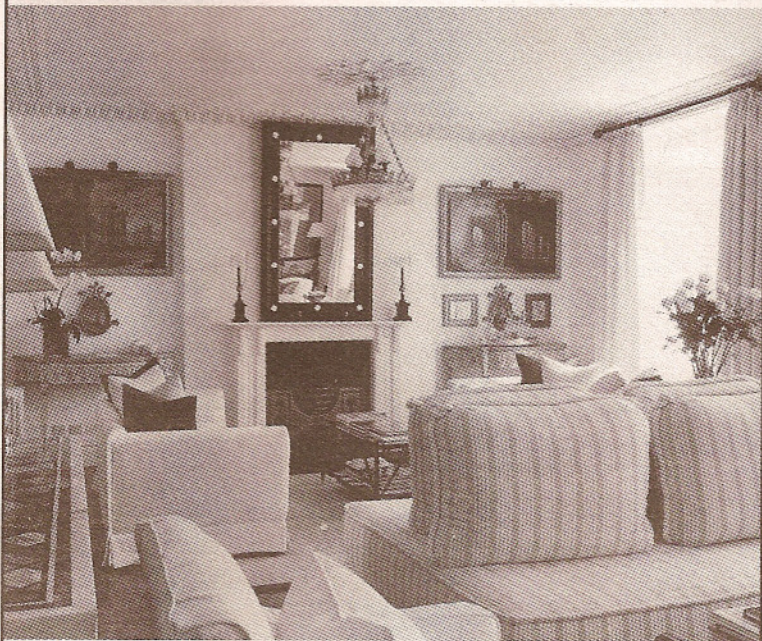




Mantel arrangement



Dara Wyton

Your mantel does not have to be a collection of clutter and disarray but can be a blank canvas just waiting for you to arrange a masterpiece. Keeping your arrangement simple and well planned will give you a focal point worth looking at.

This is one occasion when bigger is better—tiny tidbits just get lost and are messy. Keep in mind the design basics of balance and proportion, and you will have a worthy mantel. There are many different styles you can use when designing a mantel, including symmetrical, asymmetrical, and radial.

Symmetrical: The most common and easiest style to achieve, symmetrical is usually associated with a formal design, but it works well with any style. Start with a focal accessory, usually the largest piece, and place it in the centre of the mantel. Flank this piece with a series of identical items on each side. It's not essential that the items be exact duplicates of each other—similar items in terms of colour and pattern can be used to create an interesting, balanced mirror-image arrangement. The reason this choice is so popular is that it just about guarantees success.

Asymmetrical: More casual than symmetrical arrangements, successful basic asymmetrical arrangements have good balance, yet each side is not a mirror image of the other. In this design, the items on each side of the mantel, while different, have equal visual weight. This can be achieved by grouping several smaller items on one side and a single larger item on the other. To add visual interest, always group in odd numbers. Clearly this kind of arrangement takes a bit more practice.

Radial: Items swirling around a central point define a radial arrangement. The item in the centre, regardless of shape, is the anchor that allows the items around it to circle pleasantly. This kind of arrangement has the high visual movement of an asymmetrical design, but it is usually best done in a close-to-symmetrical format. It's a pleasant combination of formal and informal elements. ■

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