
Interior Design Without Limitations- Our Tropical Paradise of Puerto Vallarta

New products and materials have removed the boundaries on design and decoration in PV

Puerto Vallarta is an amazing, beautiful place to live; there is no doubt about it. Luckily for us, paradise has become more cosmopolitan with all possible amenities. Still, our climatic paradise poses a number of challenges when designing and decorating.

Interior design is dependent on the use of materials such as paint, wood and fabrics. Without the specialized knowledge of an interior designer, a project in Vallarta can quickly go awry due to our climatic conditions.

We may live in paradise, but we all know that the sun, heat, humidity, and heavy rainfall can wreak havoc on our homes. The trick is to choose materials wisely. We now have a wide array of products available to us that make great design possible without constant maintenance.

The following are some tips when working with interior design materials in Puerto Vallarta:

Color Palettes: When picking your colors in Puerto Vallarta anything goes. Keep in mind that cool breezy colors create that casual, cool feeling that many of us are going for. Lighter colors are often better, but warm feelings may be evoked without feeling hot or heavy.

A blend of Mexican and modern color palettes is very popular in some of today's most popular homes. Monotone and neutral colors coupled with art and accent accessories provide just the look many residents are looking for.

Furniture: All wood furniture in your home should be a solid hardwood. Primavera or Parota woods are two popular choices in our part of the world.

If you fall in love with an antique or rustic piece of furniture that is pine or a soft wood, you should certainly have it sprayed for termites and check it periodically.

Upholstery: With the availability of hardwood frames, Dacron, foam, umbrella fabrics, and other durable weather-proof cotton, any style upholstered furniture is available to us. We are not limited to the old Vallarta style concrete bases built in banquettes, which are not all the comfortable and limit design.

It is important to still be careful to have some type of wood or man-made material feet on furniture to keep the furniture up off the floor. This provides space for adequate cleaning and helps keep things dry.

Slipcovers are always an excellent option in Vallarta. These wonderful accoutrements are easily washable and easy to keep mold free. If stained, slipcovers are always replaceable, unlike the furniture they are protecting.

Window Coverings: Window treatments and shades are much better in Puerto Vallarta than other choices. Great window cover designs and technology specifically designed for sunny, humid climates are a wonderful innovation.

If curtains are a must for your decor, make sure they are sun resistant and tightly woven/stable fabrics. Some fabrics easily shrink or stretch in our humidity and sun. Remember that your hard surface floors require cleaning and this can also be problematic with curtains.

Art: If you choose wood frames, use hardwood frames whenever possible with your hanging pieces. Once again, termites and mold can be quite problematic.

With the popularity of both traditional and modern oil paintings in interior design, special care must be taken to protect these special pieces from sun damage. Window shades, tinted glass, or shaded overhangs are preferable when protecting your precious works of art.

Paint: Ensure that you purchase paint with a high quality mold resistance. Primer is also critical to prolonging painted finishes. High quality mold resistant paints may seem expensive, but will save money in the end.

Floors: Floors should always be a hard surface in a tropical climate; stone, marble, ceramic, porcelain, or concrete are preferable. Wall to wall carpets are not advisable. It is almost impossible to keep carpets dry and odor free.

Wood floors are possible but highly problematic. These flooring materials are highly susceptible to humidity and warping.

Just remember that where dampness and humidity are king, so are stone-based floors or other hard surface flooring materials.

Area Rugs: In order to create a defined area with color and pattern, area rugs are a must in Puerto Vallarta. Once again, just be sure that the rug you choose is easy to clean and mold resistant. Also, keep in mind that hard surface floors must be cleaned frequently, and area rugs can create more maintenance.

If you use area rugs, make sure that they are easy to move so you can clean under them with ease.

Shade: With our hot sun, shade is always a consideration for residents of Vallarta. Sun and heat loads can be severely hard on finishes, art and furniture. Properly placed shade can help curtail any problems.

The French style retractable awnings are a great solution if you do not wish to block the sun for the entire day. If you are using these type of awnings, the only good fabric choice is sunbrella. Palapas are of the true old Vallarta style and create a perfect ambience. Many clients prefer traditional designs material such as the Palapas. Unfortunately, these require quite a bit of maintenance. Luckily, every year new products that imitate the Palapas look through synthetic material are more and more available.

Terrace Furniture: MicroTex rattan furniture is great and easy to maintain. Aluminum with mesh is also a great lightweight option. Cushions must be covered in sunbrella or a similar material. Also, be aware that in the rainy season it is impossible to leave these cushions outside, so plan an area where they can be easily stored.

During the rainy season, it is also important that you store lightweight aluminum outdoor furniture indoors. High winds can easily destroy these pieces.

Sun Position: If there is no shade protection, your interior may easily face the possibility of sun damage. Always remember that the sun in Vallarta changes position drastically from winter to summer. A terrace that only received gentle sun during the winter may face harsh afternoon sun in the summer months.

Air Circulation: Being able to enjoy the natural climate and open-air feeling is one of the pleasures of paradise. Be sure to check for good cross-ventilation.

Ceiling fans are a wonderful, aesthetically pleasing way to create great cross-flow. Ceiling fans not only circulate the air, but also help with mosquitos and other annoying bugs.

Air Conditioning: The hot summer months often require air conditioning for comfortable sleeping. Mini-split air conditioners are very popular here and are often the perfect answer to the air conditioning conundrum. With good design and planning, you can control zones of your living space without full-house central air.

When purchasing mini-splits, it is advisable to go a little oversize for the area you need to cover. There are virtually unlimited amounts of brands available. Always remember the old adage; you get what you pay for. This is especially in the case of mini-split air-conditioning units.

Roofs and Rain: Make sure that all terraces and roofs are checked yearly before the rainy season to avoid costly damages that could be avoidable through maintenance.

Plants: In Vallarta, you can keep a veritable jungle of indoor plants. After all, we are living in the "jungle." Just remember that the environment can also cause mold and fungus to take root on your indoor plants. Always check and spray these plants as necessary.

Closets: Air circulation is critical in closets. Without a humidity control device or running an air conditioning unit, items left in closets need to be checked and aired out periodically to avoid mold damage. Shuttered doors or wood lattice doors allow some circulation and are recommended.

Hire an Interior Designer for Peace of Mind

Hopefully, some of these tips will get you thinking about your homes, decorations and interior design materials here in Puerto Vallarta. Whether you are a new resident or have lived here your entire life, keeping your homes and decorations in tip-top condition is important.

Hiring an experienced, local interior designer with specialized climatic knowledge is a smart thing to do when designing. Local professionals take all of the climatic challenges into consideration when planning a design. If you do-it-yourself, make sure that you are as well versed as possible to all possible climatic respects.

For a more complete look at materials what work well in our climate as well as more tips and tricks on interior design, head to www.umbertostudio.com/Design_Tips.html