

# Home & Garden



Contemporary seating adds to the versatility of a Morristown great room, designed by James Girouard; the live tree and oversized painting both take advantage of the ample natural light.

PHOTO BY JERRY McCREA

## Living

# 'Great rooms' demand great strategies

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STAR-LEDGER STAFF

Too much space! Sounds like an embarrassment of riches, right? But in many contemporary houses, it presents a real challenge.

The affluent '80s saw the proliferation of the "great room" - with its soaring ceilings and vast windows - everywhere from luxury developments to medium-priced communities. It frequently comes with a fireplace and flows into the dining area or kitchen.

But that seductive grandeur can become intimidating once the homeowner tries to figure out how to fill all of that space. A favorite sofa suddenly looks like it's scaled for kids; old drapes hang several feet too short for that towering Palladian window. What to do?

Michael Callori of Callori Architects, Leonia, acknowledges that great rooms can be a challenge. "The biggest problem is that they need to be so many things to everybody in the house," he says. "You need to see the fireplace, the view and the TV, you want a connection to the kitchen, and you want to be comfortable."

Interior designer Marianne M. Golden admits to feeling intimidated by the oversized rooms in the Bridgewater house she bought two years ago. When she walked into one with a 12-foot-high ceiling and huge

windows, she says, "I felt like Alice in Wonderland."

Boonton interior designer James A. Giourard points out that such a room can be truly "great," however, for the family that entertains a lot or has several children who need room to play. "I try to encourage people to really use the room," he says.

From their experiences, they offer these tips for the do-it-yourself decorator:

■ Create various seating areas - one near the fireplace, another near the TV, and maybe one around a piano or game table that also lets you admire the view. In a contemporary decor, use modular furniture that can be adjusted for different purposes.

■ Opt for larger furniture, but within reason. This is the place for that overstuffed sofa and the big comfy chair with the matching ottoman. A good-sized armoire, either antique or contemporary, will break up the space while hiding your TV in style.

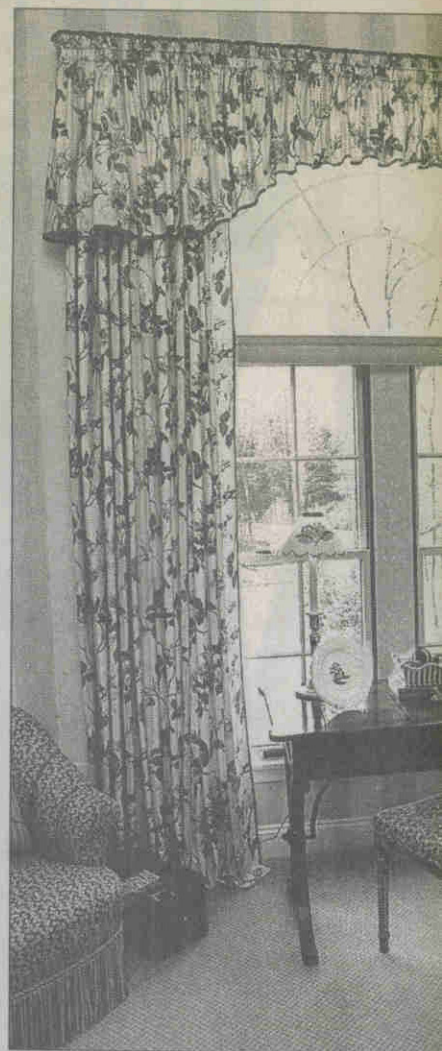
■ Supplement the recessed ceiling lights with plenty of table and floor lamps, to create a more human sense of scale. (It's also a lot easier to change a bulb in a lamp than in a "high-hat" recessed into a 24-foot ceiling!)

■ With few unbroken walls and such a large expanse of floor, you'll want to "float" furniture in conversa-

In the great room of an Oradell home, architect Michael Callori has created several seating areas and used table lamps for more intimate lighting.



PHOTO BY KERRIE HAGY



tional groupings. A long table placed behind the sofa can hold extra lamps and help establish the traffic flow.

■ If you have an enormous window, don't break your budget on draperies. Create a pretty valance for the top, and maybe panels at the sides, but use a pleated shade or lightweight blinds to pull down for privacy. Most of the time, you'll probably want to enjoy the view.

■ You also don't have to spring for luxurious wall-to-wall carpeting. If the room will see hard use from either children or party guests, opt for terra-cotta tile, polished granite or a nice hardwood.

■ Dark colors in walls and furnishings will make the room seem smaller, cozier and more traditional. Neutrals, whether dark or light, will let you change your decor to suit the season - important when you've got a dramatic view.

■ Fill those empty corners with sculpture and live trees, both of which will benefit from the natural light.

Golden offers a final encouraging word: "Although it can be frightening, everything shows off better in a large space."