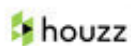


The latest apps for home layouts, inside and out

March 6 2018, by Katherine Roth



This March 2018 photo provided by Houzz shows different devices displaying the Houzz App. Houzz has more than 16 million photos of professionally designed interiors and exteriors to provide inspiration. (Houzz via AP)

Planning out how to arrange furniture in your home—or plants in your garden—used to involve a pencil, graph paper, a measuring tape and a lot of imagination.

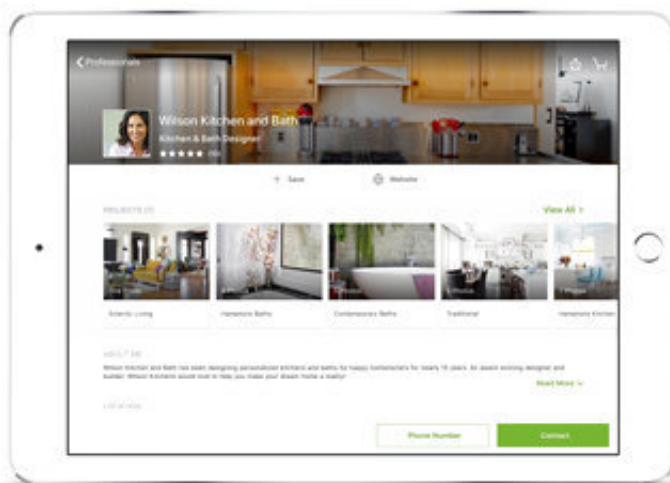
The process has gotten easier—and way more streamlined—thanks to a burgeoning selection of home and garden apps.

Furniture companies, interior design firms and even landscapers have been rolling out a new generation of apps and online programs to make the process more foolproof for novices and pros alike, often using virtual and augmented reality technology.

"Design apps are really great for generating ideas, and deciding on materials and sources for do-it-yourself projects," says Margaret Mayfield, an architect in Los Osos, California. "And they're also very helpful for communicating design ideas to contractors and architects."

The technology allows you to see what furniture would look like in your home before you buy it, using just the camera on your phone, for example, instead of dealing with the hassle—and back pain—involved in returning, say, an ill-chosen sofa.

And the design apps do not stop at the door. With spring around the corner, there are landscaping apps to help take the guesswork out of deciding what to plant and where and when.



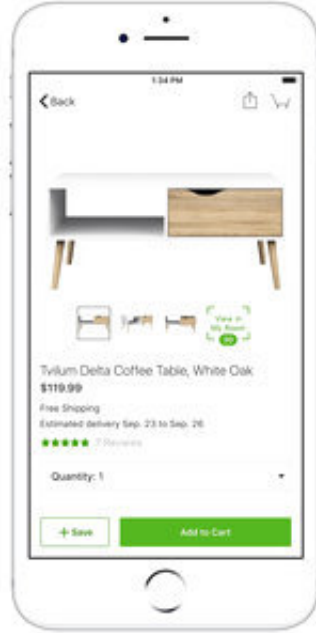
This March 2018 photo provided by Houzz shows a device displaying the Houzz App. Houzz has more than 1.5 active home professionals across 65 categories to help people with their home projects. (Houzz via AP)

Among the most popular home apps is Houzz , a free app with 40 million users around the world each month, according to Liza Hausman, vice president of industry marketing for Houzz. Features include a huge database of design photos—searchable by style, country or color, for example—to create a personalized "idea book."

The site's "Visual Match" feature allows visitors to order furniture and other products that are the same or similar to those seen in the magazine-type photos. You can work with a friend by using the "Invite a Collaborator" feature, or, through "Directory," contact local designers, architects or landscapers.

One of the newest features is "View in My Room 3D," which invites you look at your room through your phone and then—using augmented reality technology—place a selected piece of furniture there to see what it would look like.

Other indoor design apps include Hutch , Home Design 3D, and Home Design 3D , Room s, and interior design apps from stores like IKEA and Overstock.com.



This March 2018 photo provided by Houzz shows a device displaying the Houzz App. Houzz has more than 10 million products available for purchase directly through the Houzz Shop. (Houzz via AP)

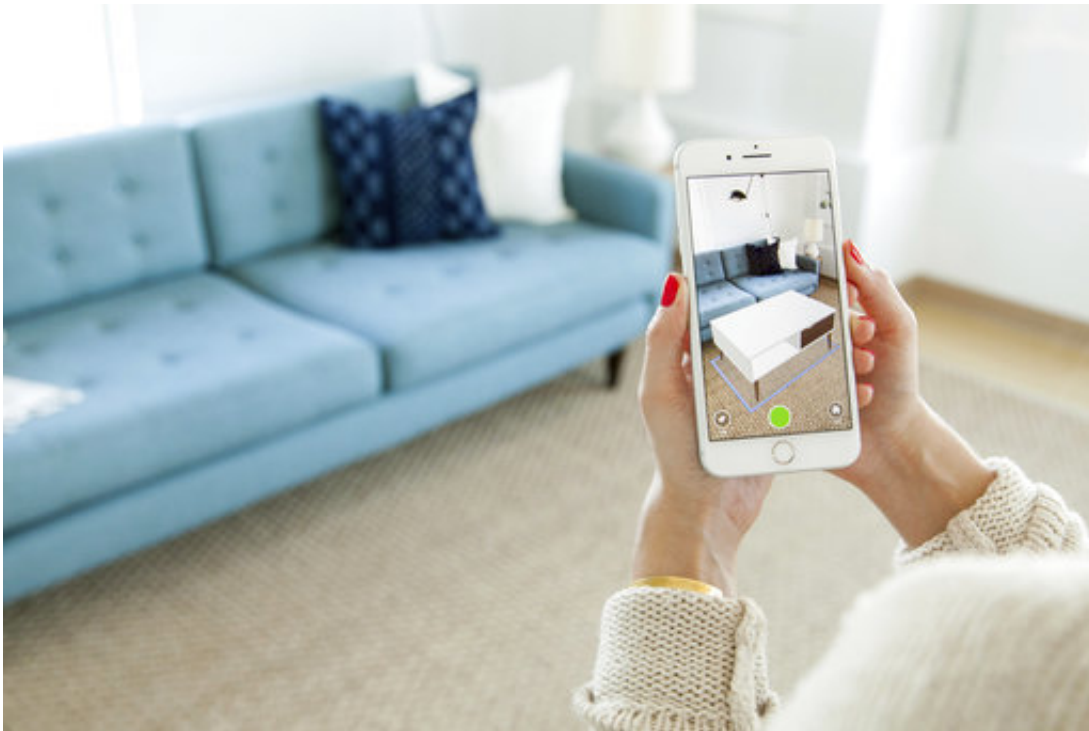
For outdoors, Houzz features articles and advice from gardening pros, and a forum where home gardeners can share ideas and suggestions.

Another popular landscaping app is iScape , which helps you visualize your garden, save and share ideas, and buy gardening products.

As with all technology, though, the apps have a learning curve that in some cases is far greater than the old graph paper and pencil method of laying things out. And professionals warn that for major jobs, it's still best to seek out a pro.

Just don't be surprised when your landscaper or designer pulls out their phone to consult an app.

Matt McMillan, a landscape designer in Pound Ridge, New York, says, "My designs are very focused on drawing nature into the garden. So I frequently consult the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Merlin app. I also have apps for dragonflies, butterflies and mushrooms. I can't live without the 'Toolbox' app in general, and specifically its compass."



This March 2018 photo provided by Houzz shows their View in My Room 3D, an augmented reality tool in the Houzz app that lets people preview over 1 million furniture and decor products from the Houzz Shop in 3D, within their homes, before they buy. (Houzz via AP)

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