

THE JOY OF a favourite armchair

THIS MONTH IN OUR SERIES ON WHAT
MAKES A HOUSE A HOME, WE SETTLE
INTO A COMFORTABLE CORNER WITH A
PILE OF MAGS AND A CUP OF TEA

Words: CLARE GOGERTY

Here the armchair sits – well-padded, generous, unoccupied, – just waiting for that moment when work is over, dishes are washed and you can sink into its comforting embrace*. This is a piece of furniture that whispers seductively ‘It’s Me Time’. It is a place for one person, a throw and possibly a pet, to settle and doze, a magazine open on the lap, a cup of tea and a digestive at the elbow.

Once settled in an armchair, it’s hard to get out. No wonder then that it has become synonymous with laziness. Phrases such as ‘armchair traveller’ and ‘armchair critic’ suggest a dilettante approach to these activities, which seems entirely fair. There is a temptation not to go to the trouble of actually doing something when you can imagine it from the comfort of a button-upholstered, wing-backed armchair in your own front room. Or watch someone else do it on TV, another pleasing armchair activity.

The armchair often comes as part of a three-piece suite – it is the sofa’s outpost, sitting apart from the larger, more gregarious piece of furniture with a slightly superior air. Elderly relatives frequently lay claim to it – ‘That’s Uncle Jim’s chair’ – marking their territory with a TV remote and a copy of Reader’s Digest. And fair enough: everyone should have an armchair of their own. The variety of types and sizes available mean that even a room in a shared house benefits from this place to sit and read or pull on your socks.

It is also, as interior designers will point out, a way to bring some colour and pattern into a room. An entire sofa upholstered in fuschia pink or yellow tartan could be an expensive, irreversible mistake, but an armchair can take it and will add a colourful focal point. And if you decide it can’t, you can layer up the throws and cushions and no one is any the wiser.

But which armchair to choose? That depends on what you intend to use it for...

WHICH ARMCHAIR IS BEST...

... FOR READING The high-back chair

You need good back support (ie a back that is higher than your shoulders) to sit upright and pay attention to the words. Anything shorter just isn’t comfy enough, and anything slouchier will send you to sleep in minutes. Especially if you are reading in the warmth of the sun, gazing over the garden.

Accessorise with: a lamp with a concentrated beam that shines over your shoulder. Habitat’s Bip wood and metal floor lamp, £200, is elegant and adjustable and will beam above you like a benevolent aunt intent on improving your knowledge.



... FOR SNOOZING The wing chair

The human body’s tendency to flop all over the place when asleep necessitates contained comfort. Winged arms keep out the draughts and give you somewhere to rest your head without getting a crick in the neck. You will also be in position to feign alertness when disturbed by family members.

Accessorise with: a throw or blanket (see page 119 for our selection) to tuck around your legs ensuring further draught control. A cushion is also handy to soften any hard areas. »



Top: Hound Dog armchair, Loaf. Left: Lara armchair, Darlings of Chelsea. Overleaf: Crumpet armchair, Loaf; Bronte armchair, Couch

PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES

* Danish designer Hans Wegner ran with this idea with his Teddy Bear Chair, which has padded arms (or paws) to enfold you.



Where to buy

COUCH

www.couch.co.uk

DARLINGS OF CHELSEA

www.darlingsofchelsea.co.uk

GRAHAM & GREEN

www.grahamandgreen.co.uk

SOFAS & STUFF

www.sofasandstuff.com

SOFA.COM

www.sofa.com

LOAF

www.loaf.com

MADE

www.made.com

WILLOW & HALL

www.willowandhall.co.uk

That other four-legged friend, a footstool, extends your armchair experience

For lazy boys (and girls)

RECLINERS For the ultimate in indolence and self-indulgence, the La-Z-Boy recliner that raises your legs (or tips you back) at the press of a button takes some beating. Once the likes of Joey and Chandler take occupation of one in front of a plasma TV and Sky Sports, they are immovable. The only trouble being that a La-Z-boy takes up a lot of space and, to be honest, isn't that attractive. Better to go for a daybed or chaise longue if horizontal daydreaming is your thing. Made.com and Graham & Green both have velvet ones which look pretty dreamy to us.



...FOR CANOODLING
The cuddler chair

There is a new spirit afoot in the world of armchairs: the cuddler chair. Unlike the traditional love seat where the occupants faced in opposite directions, the cuddler enables both parties to cosy up. There is room enough for two, as long as both are entwined, or if the other party is a medium-sized dog.

Accessorise with: a bag of Tyrells, a bottle of wine and Netflix.



...FOR PUTTING THE WORLD TO RIGHTS
The club chair

Drawing on the tradition of Chesterfields, those button-backed sofas often found in gentlemen's clubs, this chair is best upholstered in slightly battered leather with a low, deep seat from which to make pronouncements to anyone patient enough, or within earshot.

Accessorise with: a glass of single malt and a broadsheet to rustle. **S**