

**IRENE
VIRAG**

New colors lead to new patio set

I finally broke down and bought a new patio set. And it got delivered, although the store made a mistake and sent the wrong umbrella and we're still waiting for the new one. Then the rains came, and I was too chicken to put the cushions on the chairs, even though they're supposed to be weatherproof.

But now the sun's washing the world, the agapanthus and torenia in the patio pots are showing their appreciation and I just had lunch at my new table. And I thought that when it comes to furniture, it's the same outside as it is inside. One thing leads to another, and there's always a time or a reason for change.

What happened was, we had the exterior of our house painted last year — from a goes-with-anything white to a Benjamin Moore shade called Abington Putty, which is somewhere between pea-green and mustard. The trim is Providence Olive and the shutters are Great Barrington Green. We obviously didn't choose the colors for their names; we picked them because they're subtle and we wanted the house to blend with the landscape.

We'd bought our old patio set — a 52-inch-round tempered-glass table with Kelly-green-and-white-striped chairs — when we got married and moved into our house 13 years ago. It looked great then, but now it seemed garish and out of place.

Life's funny. As a not-especially swinging single, I'd been a renter and lived with almost no furniture. And before we took the plunge, both of us had downsized our lives. As a kid, "patio set" meant a redwood table and benches. It was similar for my husband, who had lived in a new development in his first marriage. "Everyone had a redwood table," he said. "It looked like they came with the houses. And when it faded, you got redwood stain."

So we were pretty happy about the striped set. We bought it before we bought a dining room table — or even a kitchen table. It was spring, and since we didn't have any other tables, we ate breakfast, lunch and dinner on the patio.

We didn't mind because it was a simpler time and we

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Repainting the house leads to another patio set

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didn't know the sun was so bad for us. Besides, when we first looked at the house, the patio on two levels was the main attraction. So we ran to Fortunoff and got the striped set. What did I know? I was young and innocent when it came to decor. All I knew was that it didn't clash with our white house.

A few years ago, I wised up enough to change the original striped umbrella to a more subdued green market

umbrella but now even that looked putrid against the Abington Putty.

Also, the new set is teak, which I've wanted for years. The cushions are a subdued shade of fern green. As you might expect, it cost a great deal more than the old set but I'm glad I did it. I love it right now and judging by the teak benches in our garden, it will look even lovelier as it ages — the graying wood will echo the irregular bluestone that tops the patio wall.

And storage will be a lot

simpler. We can leave the new set out all year. Our house sits on a slab and doesn't have a basement to store things in. For the first few years, we used to bring the old set into the garage for the winter. But I'd rather not go there.

Actually, nobody should have to go into my garage, or my attic, either, for that matter. The garage is another instance of one thing leading to another. It was listed as a "one-and-half-car garage," but I've never seen half a car. We

park our cars on the driveway.

We'd love to renovate the garage but that would cost — well, my husband doesn't want to go there either. It would cost a lot more than the teak table. So we had to cover the old table and chairs and tie them down outside every fall. Last year, I tried one chair against the Abington Putty and put it right back under wraps.

I can imagine what my mother will say when she sees the new set. She thought I was a nut job when I put flimsy

plastic party cups in the recycling bin a few years ago instead of washing them and reusing them. "The old set's perfectly good," she'll probably say, and she'll be right.

"But it doesn't go with the house, Ma."

"Boy, you know how to spend money."

I do. But I just had lunch on the new patio set, and I felt great. When it comes to your home, one thing leads to another — and I'm glad that's the case.

*E-mail irene.virag@
newsday.com*