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# Republican

OCTOBER 17, 2018 ■ PAGE 1B-40B

## Garden Solutions

**SANDI HILLERMANN MCDONALD**

I am going to focus on trees and pumpkins for this month's article. Quite a different combination, but both need attention this time of year.

### There are many benefits of planting trees

Consider all the benefits listed below, and remember fall is the perfect time to plant trees for an increased success rate next spring.

- Trees are perfect for planting as living memorials, or to commemorate significant events in our lives.
- Tree lined streets have a traffic calming effect, moving more slowly and safely.
- Trees can be placed to screen unwanted views or noise from busy highways.
- Trees improve our air quality by filtering ozone, carbon monoxide, and sulfur dioxide from the air we breathe.
- Trees give off oxygen that we need to breathe.
- Trees reduce erosion and pollution in our waterways and may reduce the effects of flooding.
- Trees provide food, protection, and homes for many birds and mammals.
- Trees can reduce cooling costs in the summer by

shading the south and west sides of your home.

- Evergreen trees on the north side of your home can act as a windbreak for winter warmth.
- The value of a well landscaped home with trees and shrubs can be as much as 10% higher than a similar home with no landscaping.

### Now let's change the focus to HALLOWEEN

What a great time to decorate and enjoy the season. Here are "tips for selecting and preserving your pumpkin."

When selecting a pumpkin choose one that does not have any bruises. Check for discoloration and soft spots. The size will not matter, however, to most children and some adults, bigger is better.

Look for pumpkins with a sturdy stem. Check the bottom of the pumpkin to see if the base is damaged. If the pumpkin feels heavy and sloshes, put it back

If you place a pumpkin in a washtub of cold water, it will absorb the water and become very firm. Cut open the top of the pumpkin and clean out the seeds. If you have fine detail work to do, you may want to let your pumpkin soak overnight. This will firm up the pumpkin flesh



Garden - continued on page 3B

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## How to banish pet odors from a home

**D**ogs, cats, birds, and lizards have evolved from wild animals and outdoor companions to become beloved, largely domesticated members of the family. The number of pets in homes across the country continues to grow. According to Statista, as of March 2017, 94.2 million cats and 89.7 million dogs were estimated to live in the United States as pets. Canada's Pet Wellness report estimates that there are approximately 7.9 million cats and 5.9 million dogs in Canada.

Over time, pet owners grow accustomed to their pets' antics, messes and even their odors. Dealing with smells is par for the course for pet owners, and many become desensitized to certain common smells. But when company is on the way or people are thinking about selling their homes, pet odors must be addressed. Even though it will take effort, homeowners can freshen their homes and eliminate unpleasant pet-related smells.

- Find ways to ventilate. Odors can build up inside closed environments and prove overpowering. Opening windows when applicable, using exhaust fans and encouraging cross-breezes can air certain odors from the home.

- Clean frequently. Cats and dogs can leave behind fur, dander, food messes, and more. Eliminating the debris that pets create can reduce odors. Sweeping, vacuuming and mopping floors can help as well. Don't forget to vacuum draperies and furniture, and consider

purchasing cleaning appliances specifically designed for homes with pets.

- Keep on top of accidents and litter boxes. Puppies and even adult dogs may have their share of accidents. Cats may avoid litter boxes if they are not cleaned frequently and then soil around the house. Be sure to clean up pet waste messes promptly. Baking soda and vinegar solutions are all-natural ways to clean up and can help remove urine odors more readily. Also, look for safe deodorizing cleaning products that can be used on carpeting, flooring and upholstery.

- Purchase an air purifier. Air purifiers can help remove odors and allergens from the air. They're relatively inexpensive and can be placed in rooms that pets frequent.

- Wash pet blankets and beds. Launder pet beds, cloth toys, blankets, and any other items that pets lounge on. Sweat, saliva and dander can cause these fabrics to become stinky, and, in turn, make the house smell worse.

- Keep pets clean. Most pets are very good at self-grooming, but can benefit from a spa treatment once in awhile. Dogs that spend ample time outdoors or frequently get wet and dirty may need routine baths. Ask a professional groomer what he or she recommends to address potent pet odors.

Neutralizing pet odors takes effort, but it can make for a more pleasant-smelling home environment.



**Garden - Continued from page 2B**

and allow you to do intricate carving. You can add a small amount of bleach in the water to prevent mold and bacteria growth.

Once you have carved your pumpkin add a thin amount of petroleum jelly on the exposed cut edges. This will help seal moisture. If the pumpkin dries out you can try to revive it by soaking it in a bath of cold water for one to eight hours.


You can prepare your pumpkins ahead of time and keep them fresh for a future party or gathering. Wrap them in plastic wrap to hold and store them in the refrigerator. They will stay fresh for a very long time.

Once you remove a wet pumpkin for display, dry it off. This prevents mold from having a chance to grow.

Now, enjoy all that the month of October has to offer and I will...

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## Protect your home (and more) from winter's freeze

**F**reezing temperatures may be good for ice skating or building snowmen, but sub-freezing temperatures can be dangerous for the average person and his or her home.

Cold weather often leaves people scurrying to do whatever is necessary to safeguard themselves from the big chill. But it's important homeowners also protect their homes in cold weather.

### Plumbing

Plumbing and pipes may be vulnerable to cold weather. Frozen pipes may burst and cause substantial damage to a home, potentially causing flooding and structural damage.

Homeowners should disconnect and drain garden hoses before winter arrives. Water to outdoor hose bibs should be turned off, though the valves on these outdoor faucets should be left open to drain. Also, outdoor faucets can be covered with insulating foam covers.

The Red Cross says pipes that freeze most frequently include pipes in unheated areas, such as basements, attics, garages, and crawl spaces. Close vents to the outside in areas like attics and basements to limit the amount of cold air that gets indoors. Think about insulating unheated areas, as well as using pipe sleeves, heat tape or wraps on exposed pipes.



By opening kitchen and bathroom cabinet doors, homeowners can allow warm air from a home to reach pipes under the sink. During extreme freezes, keep cold water dripping from a sink to prevent pipes from freezing.

### Service HVAC systems

It's important to ensure that heating systems are working properly prior to the cold-weather season. It may only take hours for the interior of a home to reach dangerously low temperatures without adequate heat. Homeowners should schedule annual checkups of furnaces and

hot water heaters. Inspect the heat exchanger for cracks, install a clean air filter and make sure all thermostats are working properly.

### Have fuel ready

Homeowners who heat their homes with oil, wood or coal should make sure they have plenty of fuel on hand in advance of winter. Shortages can occur, and it may take some time for new fuel to arrive in the midst of a cold snap.

As a precaution, homeowners can rely on portable space heaters to fill in the heating gaps during freezing temperatures. Exercise extreme caution with these devices, turning them off when leaving the room and remembering to avoid overloading outlets.

### Protect outside

Drain birdbaths, clean out downspouts and remove water from other items where water can freeze and cause damage. Inspect roofing prior to the snowy season, but stay off roofs during freezing weather.

Remove snow shovels and other winter gear from storage and make sure the items are easily accessible during snowstorms.

Winter's bite can be severe. Homeowners can protect themselves and their properties when the freeze sets in.

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# How to choose the right window treatments for your home

**P**lantation shutters? Mini-blinds? Cafe curtains? Formal draperies? Homeowners' options in regard to window treatments for their homes are extensive, which can make outfitting home interiors challenging for novice decorators.

Some people do not pay a lot of attention to window treatments, failing to realize just how great an impact the right window treatments can have on a space. According to the design experts at Hunter Douglas, window treatments are often an afterthought because residents may not consider them necessities. As a result, homeowners may install whatever is on hand or accept window treatments that came with a house or apartment. But ignoring window treatments, especially when they can fulfill certain needs, is a missed design opportunity.

One of the first steps to choosing window treatments is determining your end goal. Is privacy your main goal? Are you seeking more natural light in a room? Is there too much light and you need to darken the room? Window treatments can serve multiple functions, and some treatments may make better fits depending on homeowners' ultimate goals.



## Semi-sheer window treatments

Semi-sheer window treatments are often fabric and can help brighten rooms with natural light but offer little privacy. They're usually appropriate for spaces where people gather, such as living rooms, dens or dining rooms. Semi-sheer curtains may be paired with another complementary window treatment so privacy can be customized as needed. For example, sheer curtains let light into a bedroom, but shades can be drawn at night.

## Maximum privacy

Bedrooms, work spaces or bathrooms can benefit from extra privacy. While some people may think that privacy comes at the cost of light, that's not always the case.

Functional curtain panels can be drawn closed when privacy is desired and then opened to let in light. The thickness of the fabric will also dictate the amount of privacy the panels create.

Tiers are hung on a short rod-pocket panel and usually cover the lower one-third of a window. They're popular choices to let light in from the top, but obscure views from the bottom portion of the window.

Cellular shades are another option that provide privacy but still let light in. Cellular shades come in hard and fabric varieties and their use depends on the room. Many cellular shades are constructed with a honeycomb design, offers the design resource Houzz, so they can insulate as well as decorate windows.

## Blackout shades/shutters

Perfect for rooms where babies nap, shift workers rest during daylight hours or external lights, such as that from a street lamp, need to be blocked out, blackout shades do just what their name implies. A dense fabric lining helps keep light out entirely.

Shutters also can block out light but add to the character of the room. They can be painted a bright color to make a statement or match wall colors to blend in seamlessly.

When selecting window treatments, shoppers can choose retail options or custom treatments. Many designers recommend custom window treatments because they are measured, manufactured and installed specifically for homeowners' windows. However, there are many DIY options available at budget-friendly retailers.

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# Basement remodeling tips

**A** basement remodeling project can add valuable and usable space to a home. For many years, homeowners overlooked the potential of a basement remodel, perhaps thinking it would not be a smart return on investment. But that's no longer the case.

The latest "Cost vs. Value" report from Remodeling magazine says the average basement remodel can cost around \$61,000 with a 70.3 percent recoup rate. In addition, HGTV says architects and contractors indicate the cost of redoing a basement is roughly one-third to one-half less than the price of putting an addition on a home.

Before remodeling a basement, homeowners should think about how they want to use the space. Homeowners also must focus on some potential obstacles in a basement that will need to be addressed so that the area can be as functional as possible.

Basements can be chilly and damp. That means moisture issues and heating and cooling needs must be addressed prior to any construction. Homeowners may have to consider the installation of



a dehumidifier and run venting through the basement to allow for proper climate control. If a basement takes on water, either through the walls or a concrete slab, a professional waterproofing company can come in and fix these issues so they will not damage drywall and flooring afterwards.

The presence of insects and pests also must be addressed. Exterminators can help homeowners figure out which insects are in their basements and how to make the space less hospitable to these unwel-

come guests so that the room will become comfortable for human occupants.

Space is often at a premium in basements, which may contain HVAC units, water heaters, filtration devices, ductwork, pipes, and the other appliances. Qualified contractors can suggest solutions for cordoning off appliances and camouflaging pipes and wires so they won't detract from the finished product. However, building access panels into the design will make it easier to service or repair features as necessary. Homeowners also may want

to wrap pipes before drywall is installed to quiet noisy drainage pipes.

Uneven basement flooring will need to be smoothed out and flattened before carpeting or tile can be laid down. A self-leveling underlayment can be applied to fill in gullies, while larger crack and holes will need to be patched.

Once the structure of the basement is addressed, then the design work can begin. Many professionals advise against drop ceilings, which can take away from ceiling height and look cheap. Basements can be dark, so the addition of plenty of lighting can help brighten the room. Small basement windows can be replaced with larger ones to add more light as well.

Homeowners can mimic built-ins and architectural details from elsewhere in the home so the basement is aesthetically cohesive and doesn't seem like an addition. Bookcases and shelving can add valuable storage space as well. Decorate the basement with bright, neutral colors so they make the space feel more inviting.

With some effort and financial investment, basements can be as beautiful and functional as other rooms in a home.

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## Autumn is a prime time to tend lawns and gardens

**A**utumn is gardening season. That statement may not seem right to those who think of the spring as the peak time to care for lawns and gardens. However, autumn is an ideal time to get into the garden and ensure that flowers, trees and garden beds will over-winter successfully.

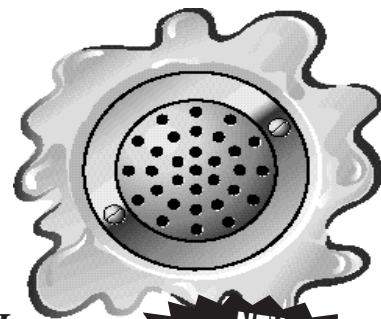
A number of things make autumn a prime gardening season. The cooler days of fall enable gardeners to spend ample time outdoors without the threat of blazing heat. In addition, soil harbors a lot of residual warmth in autumn. Also, the colder temperatures haven't yet arrived in autumn, nor have the leaves completely fallen, making fall a prime time to assess what's already in the landscape, what needs pruning back and where to address planting for next year.

Gardening enthusiasts can focus their attention on these areas this fall.

- Pamper perennials. As annuals and perennials start to fall back, mark the spots where perennials are located so they can be easily identified later on. This way, when planning spots for spring bulbs or other spring layouts for next year, perennials won't be overlooked or covered over.
- Prune shrubs. Look at shrubs and trees and cut out dead or diseased wood.
- Clean up borders. Weed and tidy up borders and lawn edging.
- Install pavers or rock wall. Embrace the cooler temperatures to work on labor-intensive projects, such as putting in a garden bed, retaining wall or walkway.
- Remove spent summer veggies. Take out vegetable garden plants that have already bloomed and borne fruit. Tidy up vegetable gardens and start to sow cooler weather plants, such as onions, garlic, beans, and sweet peas.
- Rake and compost. Rake the leaves and gather grass clippings to add to the compost pile.
- Plant spring bulbs. Get tulips and other spring bulbs ready for planting so they'll burst with color next year.
- Dig up herbs. Relocate herbs like parsley or basil to indoor gardens. Otherwise, strip all leaves and freeze for storage during winter.
- Consider mums. Chrysanthemum plants are perennials. While they look beautiful in pots, if planted, maintained and winterized, they can bloom every fall.
- Fertilize the lawn. Fertilizing in autumn helps ensure grass will stay healthy throughout the winter.
- Add mulch and compost to the garden. Replenish spent soil with mulch and compost so garden beds will be revitalized for spring planting.
- Prune hedges. Tidy up hedges, as they won't be growing much more this year.
- Clean and store equipment. Clean, sharpen and oil all equipment, storing lawn and garden tools properly so they are ready for spring and not lying out all winter.

Autumn may not seem like gardening season, but there are plenty of lawn and garden tasks to tend to during this time of year.

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## How to create an eye-catching gallery wall

**G**allery walls, also called moment walls, are one of today's hottest home decor trends. Gallery walls enable homeowners to create visually appealing groupings of photos, frames, wall art, and much more to dress up any room in the house.

Gallery walls can make a statement in the living room, add finesse to an entryway or showcase special items along a staircase. One need only do a quick internet search or browse through lifestyle magazines to see examples of gallery walls for inspiration.

### Anyone with a little determination can design a gallery wall.

- Find your muse. The first step to creating a gallery wall is to choose a theme. If floral prints are your thing or you love abstract art, build your gallery around these elements. You can even use color or frame style as the coordinating factor.

- Take your time. Some people rush into creating gallery walls, and that can be a mistake. Spend time picking out pieces and trying different combinations before you take out the hammer and hardware. The mix should be captivating and look like it was a curated collection. Some pieces can be high-end, while others may be picked up at flea markets or even be

your own artwork or photography.

- Experiment with dimensions and levels. Gallery walls need not be restricted to flat photos on a wall. Texture and depth can be used in wall designs. Interperse shelving, sconces, wooden letters, clocks, and more to make the gallery even more eclectic. Feel free to build the gallery around items that are in the house, such as windows or televisions. This can help electronics blend into the design.

- Establish your focal point. Pottery Barn suggests making the center of the display at eye level, roughly 66 inches off the ground. Then build the gallery out from around that focal point. There are many patterns that can be built into the gallery, from "spiral" to "centered" to "reflection" designs.

- Create a template. Lay the gallery design on the floor and cut newspapers or other paper to the size of each piece. Use masking tape to position these guides on the wall, trying a few arrangements until you are happy with the finished product. Then replace the paper with the artwork.

- Hang items with precision. Don't skimp on technique. Use a ruler, level and the right tools. This ensures pieces are straight and in line with others.

Gone are the days when large pieces of artwork fill empty walls. Gallery designs add statements and can balance rooms in creative ways.



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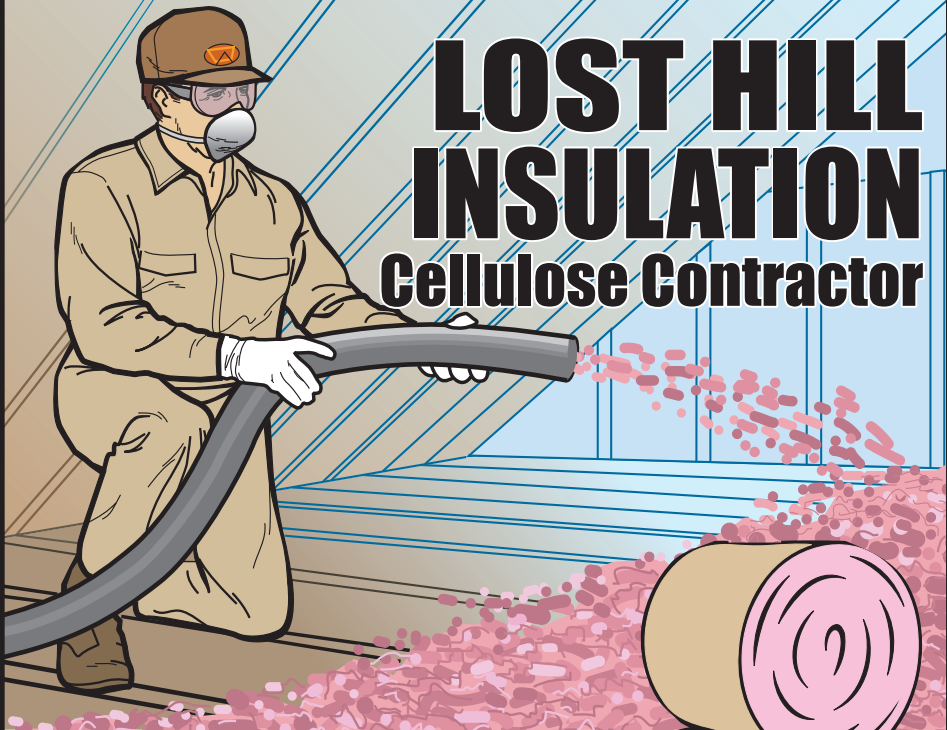


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**R**elaxing at a spa each week may be a luxury reserved for celebrities and socialites. For many people, a day spa is a treat enjoyed on special occasions or while on vacation. However, home bathrooms can be designed to provide the same types of amenities offered at day spas right in the comfort of one's home.

The American Psychological Association says that money, work and the future of the country are particularly strong stressors today. Eighty percent of workers feel stress on the job and learning how to manage stress is a top concern, according to the American Institute of Stress. Creating a Zen-like retreat at home can help alleviate stress and improve health.

Homeowners whose renovation plans include turning a bathroom into a spa oasis will need to choose which features they desire most. These suggestions can spur on more ideas to create the ideal retreat.

- **Soaker bathtub:** There's something to be said about a luxurious soak in a tub. Tubs come in different sizes and shapes, like the highly recognizable clawfoot tub and other freestanding units. These types of tubs, as well as corner tubs, can offer deep-seated luxury by way of a relaxing and restorative soak. Pair with scented bath bombs or salts for a true spa experience.

- **Steam shower:** Steam showers are self-enclosed units that feature generators that deliver steam through steam heads. The steam fills the space and can help a person unwind before a refreshing shower or bath. According to the retailer Modern Bathroom®, modern steam showers come with digital controls, which makes it easy for users to activate the shower, adjust the length of time that the shower will operate and adjust temperature controls. Extra features like music, mood lighting and aromatherapy can be included as well.

- **Heated floors:** Heated floors provide the utmost in comfort when stepping out of the bath or shower. They can warm the room and make using the space more comfortable in cold weather.

- **Vessel sinks:** A vessel sink typically features a bowl or basin that looks like it was placed on top of the vanity. Vessel sinks can elevate the ambiance in spa bathrooms.

- **Plush towels and robes:** In addition to fixtures and other functional components of the bath, linens are key. Soft-spun Egyptian or Turkish cotton towels and robes are a must-have luxury for the full spa experience.

- **Comfortable seat:** A bench or chair nestled by a bathroom window is the perfect spot for pedicures or catching up on some light reading.

- **Natural light:** Skylights or privacy-ensuring windows are a must to create a relaxing space close to nature.

A spa bathroom at home is within reach. With a few touches, any bathroom can be transformed into a luxurious oasis.



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## Defining hardscape and how to use it

**C**urb appeal is beneficial in various ways. Curb appeal can make a home more attractive to prospective buyers and give existing homeowners a place they want to come home to. In its study of the worth of outdoor remodeling projects, the National Association of Realtors found standard lawn care and overall landscape upgrades were most appealing to buyers, as well as the most likely to add value to a home.

Although plants, grass and other items can improve curb appeal, homeowners should not overlook hardscaping.

Hardscaping is an industry term that refers to the non-living features of a landscape. These features can include everything from decks to walkways to ornamental boulders. Introducing paths or paver walls to a property helps develop that home's hardscape. Hardscape and soft elements often work in concert to create inspiring landscape designs.

DIY landscape designers can heed certain tips to make the most of hardscape features on their properties.

### Choose materials.

As with many landscaping projects, homeowners must first determine what types of additions they would like on their properties. Common hardscape features include patios, decks, walkways of pavers or bricks, and retaining walls. Hardscape elements can be functional or simply decorative features that add whimsy to the yard.

### Choose a theme.

The right style allows hardscaping and softscaping materials to work together. For example, homeowners may want to give their yards an eastern feel, complete with a koi pond and decorative bridge or trellis. A formal English garden, however, may include manicured paths with stepping stones and ornate topiaries. Mixing too many styles together can take away from the overall appeal.

The pros suggest looking at the overall plan of the design, even if all of the work can't be completed at once. This way the eventual finished project will be cohesive.

### Think about the purpose.

Hardscaping can look good but also serve key purposes. Pebbles or gravel can mitigate trouble areas that don't grow grass or plant life well. Retaining walls hold back soil in yards with sharply inclined hills. Mulch can set perimeters around trees and shrubs, as well as planting beds. Fencing, another form of hardscaping, is essential for establishing property boundaries and adding privacy.

### Consult a professional.

While many hardscaping additions can be handled by novices, large-scale projects, such as patios and decking, can change the grading of the yard. Professionals can map out how to handle drainage issues and meet building codes. In addition, professional installation can ensure hardscaping features last for years to come.

Hardscaping should blend with the nature around it and take its cues from the surrounding environment. This can help softscaping and hardscaping work as one.

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# Signs it is time for new windows

**W**indows help regulate the temperature in a home, let in natural light and keep insects, weather and outdoor elements outside where they belong. The right windows also can add value to a property by providing aesthetic appeal and increasing curb appeal.

Although homeowners can typically get many years out of their homes' windows, ultimately windows will need to be replaced. Homes that are more than 20 years old and still have their original windows could be due for an upgrade. Aluminum- or wood-framed windows also may be ripe for changing. Here are some signs that it's time to replace windows, courtesy of Good Housekeeping, Centra® and the real estate website Redfin.

- **Drafty feel in the home:** Window frames can begin to shrink as they age, allowing air to flow from the outdoors in and vice versa. Homeowners may notice drafts when standing near windows or hear whistling on notably windy days.

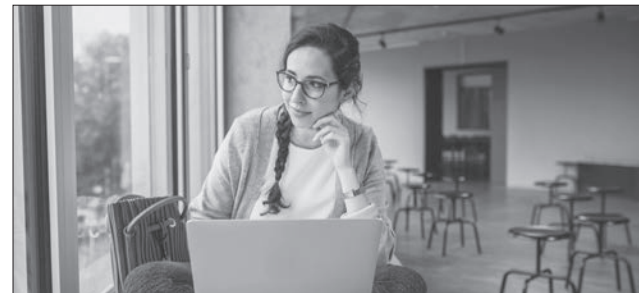
- **Rising energy bills:** If energy bills are inexplicably on the rise, then old windows could be to blame. Aging, drafty windows can make it necessary to run HVAC systems more often and at higher or lower temperatures in order to keep homes comfortable.

- **Windows are difficult to open or close:** Homeowners may get used to the quirks of their windows, but those that are difficult to open or close may require replacement. In addition, if windows need to be propped open, it's time to replace them.

- **Water infiltration:** Warping or decaying window

frames can make it easy for rain or snow to get into the home. Wood frames are particularly prone to moisture decay. If frames are warping or allowing water into the home, it's time for an upgrade.

- **Condensation on windows:** Fog or condensation buildup on windows can occur if the seal between panes is broken. In this instance, replacement windows are necessary.



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## Quiet home noise with soundproofing

**M**any people want their homes to be comfortable, relaxing retreats. While much thought will be given to layout and decor, the noises in and around a house also can affect how enjoyable a space is or isn't.

Certain offenders are driving up the noise levels in homes. New building materials that are lighter than those used in the past can make it easier for noise to travel between rooms. In addition, open floor plans make it easy for noise to travel from room to room, while handheld personal devices can make rooms noisy. Homeowners who want more peace and quiet in their home can take the following steps.

### Add more drywall

Homeowners may not be able to add walls of sturdy brick to block sounds, but they can add more drywall in noisy rooms. Consider adding more drywall to a library or reading nook. The home improvement resource HomeLogic notes that drywall can be used to isolate noisy rooms, such as those where kids practice playing musical instruments.

### Beef up dense materials

Heavy curtains, fluffy furniture and thick carpets can make rooms quieter because they help absorb sound waves. Such items and materials also can help prevent echoes. Bare walls and floors will only make sounds bounce around.

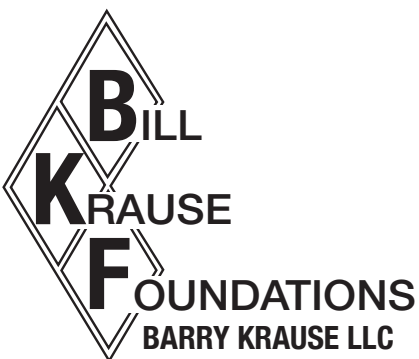
### Seal holes and cracks

Noises from outside can sneak around gaps in windows, doors and siding. Making sure gaps are sealed will not only make a home more energy efficient, but also help block out some exterior noises.

### Fix squeaky floors

Wood floors can shrink and expand, leading to movement and the development of squeaky areas. By fixing squeaky floors, homeowners can reduce noise created when people walk through their homes.

Soundproofing a home can be a relatively easy and effective



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# Let locations inspire design

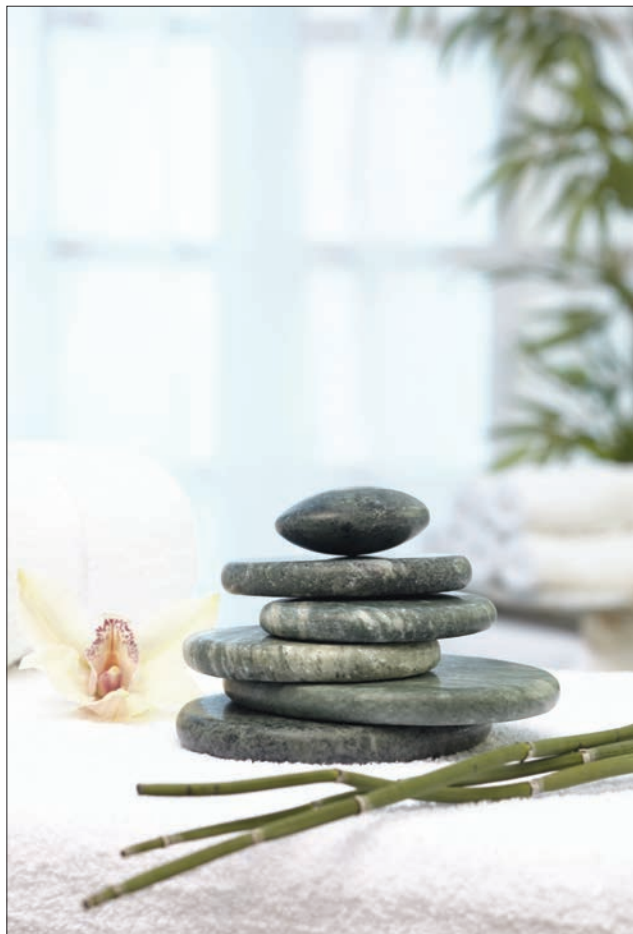
**H**omeowners looking to add flair to their homes can find inspiration anywhere. Style can even be tailored to reflect places homeowners have visited.

Whether they call to mind the narrow streets of London, the sand-bleached beaches of a Caribbean island or the urban buzz of New York City, designs can reflect one's travels and evoke some of the same feelings homeowners got when visiting their favorite places. Professional interior designers often pull inspiration from unique places, and so can homeowners who love to travel.

Those who want to illustrate their wanderlust through their home's decor can consider these tips.

## Work with colors

Think about the colors that signify a particular locale and bring those hues into the space. The color palettes of the beach, for example, include grays, beiges, blues, and greens. The popularity of gray-tone neutrals allows homeowners to bring in these colors as a neutral backdrop, and then add a splash of whimsy with a few decorative accents.



## Try natural materials

Vacation hotspots like Hawaii, Southern California and other areas of the Pacific tend to put heavy emphasis on natural materials. Items like bamboo, sea grass, stones, and woven baskets can invite the outdoors into a home.

## Embrace the vibe

Urban centers are awash in energy and color. This spirit can be reflected with modern architecture, bold prints, metallic accents, and innovative lighting.

## Pick an inspiration piece

Homeowners can direct their focus to one particular memento from a vacation or excursion. A vivid piece of artwork, a piece of furniture, a sculpture, or even a wardrobe element can serve as a catalyst for an entire room. Use this piece to match colors and textures.

Remember, to evoke the spirit of an area when decorating, keep it subtle. Too many details or over-the-top replication might seem like one is dressing a stage set rather than his or her home.

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**H**omeowners looking to add more space to their homes do not necessarily need to make major renovations. They simply have to see the possibilities in outdoor living spaces.

Outdoor living spaces are coveted niches in a home. The American Home Furnishings Alliance says more than 70 percent of American households have outdoor living spaces, and nearly 70 percent of people use these spaces at least once per week in-season. Furthermore, homeowners are increasingly interested in enhancing these spaces to make them more usable and comfortable.

A recent survey from the online home design and remodeling resource Houzz found that more than 4,500 users were planning a landscape update. In addition, 56 percent of homeowners surveyed were making updates to improve their yards for entertaining.

While the creation of outdoor living spaces can cost thousands of dollars depending on the renovation, homeowners have more budget-friendly options at their disposal as well. The following are some ways to create inviting spaces no matter how much square-footage is present.

### Revamp a garage or shed

Rather than turning a storage area into a catch-all for items time forgot, clean out the space and put it to better use. For instance, kids may appreciate their own clubhouse away from the main living area. These spaces also can be handy bonus rooms for when Mother Nature doesn't cooperate and backyard guests need to seek shelter. Wall art, curtains, a pendant light, and some comfortable outdoor-compatible furniture can quickly transform a space.

### Create a relaxing nook

Whether there's a ledge, overhang, small terrace, or porch off the house, turn it into a relaxing area for reading a book or sipping a beverage. Use a few outdoor pillows, pull up a small folding table and dress the area with hanging lights and potted plants for a quiet retreat.



### Add privacy to a porch

If it's privacy you covet, install curtain rods and hang lightweight mesh or another translucent material that obscures neighbors' views without blocking out natural light. Invest in outdoor sofas and chaises to create an outdoor living room right on the porch. If your budget allows, consider closing in the porch as a true three-season room so it can be used throughout fall, spring and summer.

Outdoor living spaces are booming and highly achievable, and many such spaces need not be expensive.

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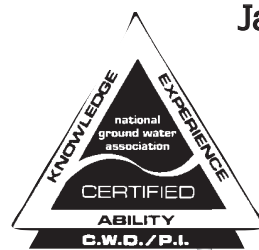
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## Laundry room renovation ideas



**T**o former apartment dwellers or those who have never enjoyed the benefit of a dedicated laundry area, even the smallest washer and dryer space can seem like a luxury.

The benefits of dedicated laundry rooms abound. However, disorganized laundry rooms can nullify such benefits. Depending on the needs and preferences of each homeowner, laundry room designs can be customized for convenience.

### Employ vertical space

Floor space may be at a premium in a laundry room, especially for those who want to devote as much space as possible to bulk-size washer and dryer units. Therefore, utilizing wall space is key. Use shelving, wire racks, hooks, and other organizational tools to store items on the wall. Shelves can be tucked into just about any space, and there are different options that can fit into corners or shallow areas. These are a great option for keeping detergent or other laundry essentials nearby.

### Clean designs reduce clutter

Simple, clean designs can be an asset in a laundry room. If budget and space permits, cabinetry built into the design will help keep items out of sight in

the laundry room. Cabinets hung directly above the appliances can store detergent, bleach and fabric softener. Use cabinets elsewhere in the room as catch-alls for cleaning supplies used in various other rooms around the house.

### Incorporate a sink in the design

Some older laundry room setups have a slop sink to drain discharged water from the washing machine. However, newer homes may have plumbing installed directly through the floor or walls. It is still a worthwhile idea to have a sink in the laundry room for rinsing out stains, handwashing items and having a go-to sink for messier cleanup.

### Utilize a tension rod

A rod installed between two cabinets or across a narrow width of space in the laundry room is a handy spot to hang shirts or pants to prevent wrinkling. Repurposing a ladder and suspending it from the ceiling also creates a spot to hang clothes.

### Consider laundry room flooring

It's important to select flooring materials that will not be damaged by contact with moisture or spills.

**Laundry - continued on page 19B**

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## Did you know?

Outdoor remodels and landscaping projects can add valuable curb appeal to homes. The National Association of Realtors and the National Association of Landscape Professionals agree that certain projects offer significant returns when selling a home. The NAR says these are the 10 most appealing outdoor features to buyers.

- Standard lawn care
- Overall landscape upgrade
- New patio
- New wood deck
- Softscaping
- Sod lawn
- Seed lawn
- Outdoor firepit
- Outdoor fireplace
- New pool

### Laundry - Continued from page 19B

Vinyl, tile and some composite products often make good laundry room floor materials. Resilient flooring that mimics the look of hardwood may add a classy touch, and give the appearance of wood without having to worry about damage. To alleviate fatigue while spending long moments in the laundry room, invest in a memory foam mat that can be placed underfoot.

### Keep lighting in mind

Lighting can be important in the laundry room. Rely on task lighting, under-cabinet strip lighting and overhead lights as needed for efficiency.

Laundry room design can maximize the space available and make it more convenient to launder and sort clothes.

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## Refresh your home's appeal with furniture paint

**F**urniture, bookcases, cabinets, and doors present opportunities to add or change color throughout a home. Woodcraft offers an extensive line of furniture paint, tools and supplies necessary for successful painting projects. In addition, Woodcraft retail store associates are always ready to help customers, and extensive how-to material is a click away at woodcraft.com.

Lori Harper, Woodcraft public relations manager and blogger, offers some advice about updating a kitchen: "Painting kitchen cabinets is a big job, but it can transform the look of your kitchen at a fraction of the cost of new cabinets. It may sound daunting, but breaking it down into bite-size steps can take away the fear factor."

To read her project blog, visit Woodworking Adventures on Woodcraft.com and search for "Kitchen Cabinet Conundrum."

### Paint & Color Selection

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Furniture paint - continued on page 21B



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## Furniture paint - Continued from page 20B

- General Finishes Milk Paints are premixed water-based acrylic paints suitable for a variety of interior or exterior applications from furniture to crafts.

- General Finishes Gel Stains are heavy-bodied gels formulated to flow evenly for consistent color control.

Before you pick up a paint brush, consider which colors are best for the area you plan to refresh. Choices will need to complement wall color and colors of other pieces or accents in a room. Two handy color guides are the 36-page General Finishes Milk Paint Fan Deck and the Black Dog Salvage Furniture Paint Color Recipes (available for download as a free PDF on Woodcraft.com).

For more than just a change of color, consider creating decorative effects, such as distressing, antiquing, faux marble, or rag rolling. Choose General Finishes Pearl Effects to make it easier to create specialty finishes.

### Repair

If furniture, cabinets and other surfaces need repair prior to painting, the Mohawk PermaFill Wood Touch-Up and Repair System is an easy answer. Just pop in a color cartridge (six color families available), power on the battery-operated dispenser, aim, fill and level this durable repair. Briwax ChaiRX is perfect to fix loose parts in chairs. Drill a small hole, inject ChaiRX, and in 12 hours the thin unique formulation will penetrate the wood cells and permanently swell the joints and bond them together. Visit <https://youtu.be/iWMu6OKyOUE> to watch a video that demonstrates these products.

For more extensive repairs, use the Kreg Jig R3 Kit to reinforce weak parts with pocket holes and avoid complete disassembly of your project.

### Clean and Prep

Use Krud Kutter TSP Substitute to remove dirt, grease, smoke, mildew, food stains, crayon, wax, and more from surfaces to be painted so paint will adhere better. For

Furniture paint - continued on page 23B

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## Minimize dust while renovating

Even though dust is ever-present both inside and outside of a home, when renovations are in full swing, dusty conditions are often exacerbated. Whether a home is new or old, numerous substances can be stirred up when removing walls, refinishing floors, removing tile, or expanding living spaces. These include silica from drywall, lead, asbestos, paint particles, and even waste from bugs or rodents.

Homeowners who want to remodel with minimal construction debris floating through the air — both for health purposes and general cleanliness — may find these proactive steps helpful.

- Prepare dust-containment plans. If a contractor is involved, it is often his or her responsibility to minimize dust. Do-it-yourselfers must make dust containment a priority. Protecting the floor and keeping the dust confined only to work areas can be achieved with plastic sheeting and other barriers.

- Designate an entrance and exit. The experts at This Old House say it is best to choose one doorway as the only means in and out of a work area. Ideally, this doorway should lead to the outdoors. All other doorways should be sealed on both sides.

- Remove extraneous items. It's best to remove clutter from the room, including any furniture that can be taken out of the space. This helps items from becoming dirty and hazardous particles from settling into nooks and crannies.

- Close vents and registers. If forced air systems are part of the home, it's best to divert air away from the work area. Block vents and intake registers so that dust does not clog the system or transfer to other rooms.

Dust - continued on page 23B

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### Dust - Continued from page 22B

- Cut items outside. Design advice site Houzz says that some power tools have vacuum extractors to suck up dust at the point of contact, removing 90 percent of dust where it is generated. For those who do not have access to these tools, cutting and sanding can be done outdoors to keep dust outside.
- Open a window. If weather permits, an open window can provide ventilation. Another idea is to create an air vacuum in the work area. Picking a window at

the far end of the work area and mounting a window fan blowing outward can suck dust out and away from other areas of the house.

- Clean up daily. By keeping on top of dust, including sweeping and vacuuming the work area frequently, dust will not accumulate and migrate elsewhere.

Dust is a common side effect of home renovation projects, but it can be minimized.

### Furniture paint - Continued from page 22B

sanding chores associated with painting, consider the Porter-Cable Restorer Handheld Drum Sander with attachments, which is designed to remove paint and finish from wood, brick and fiberglass, as well as remove rust and polish metal. The Porter-Cable 382 5" Random Orbital Sander and the Norton 5" Random Orbital Sander are other good choices. For sanding with hand power, the Preppin' Weapon Sanding Block Kit and Norton 4 1/2" x 5 1/2" SoftTouch Sanding Sponges are handy helpers.

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For painting by hand, Black Dog Salvage Furniture Paint Round Brushes, made from both natural and synthetic bristles, and Redtree Matey Synthetic Bristle Brushes work well.

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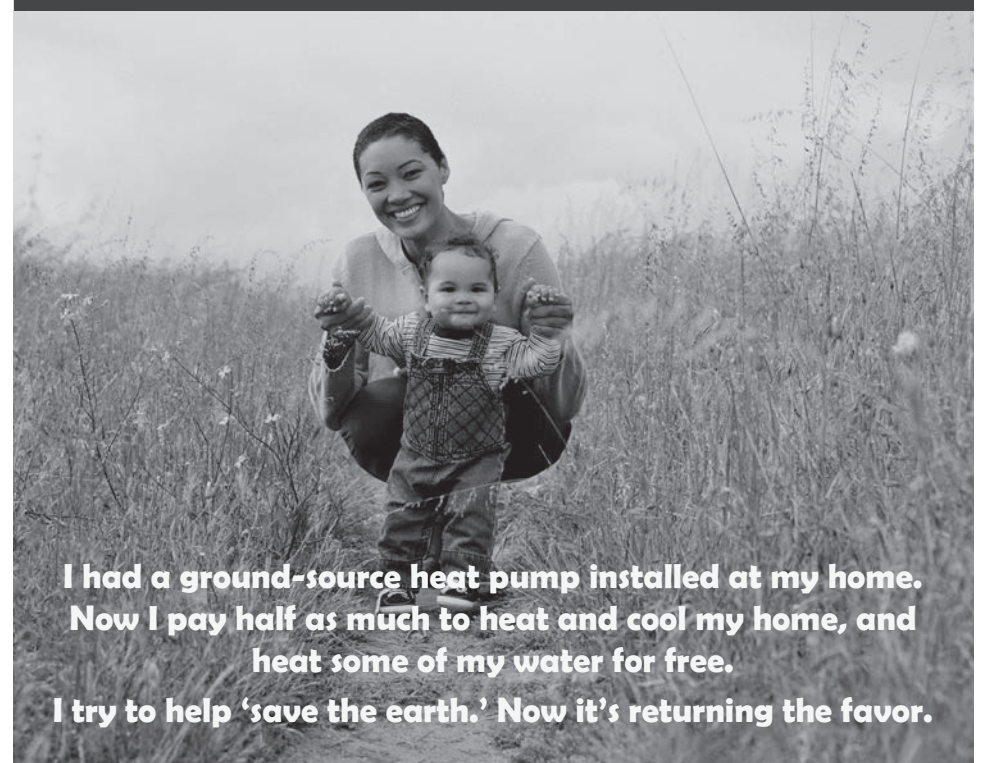
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# Transform bathrooms with technology



Technology is infiltrating every room of the house. Many new home buyers are millennials, and this tech-savvy demographic covets technological innovations.

A recent survey by Better Homes & Gardens Real Estate indicates 77 percent of Generation X and Y home buyers want their homes equipped with the tech capabilities they have grown accustomed to. Many of these involve smart innovations, including those that can transform one of the most private rooms in the house — the bathroom.

Automated home theater rooms and Wi-Fi-enabled home security systems have become the norm, but what tech improvements are available to make the powder room more in touch with today's digital lifestyle? According to the home improvement resource The Spruce, bathrooms have the most potential of any rooms to be improved with technology. The following are just some of the bathroom gadgets and gizmos no one should resist before giving

a try.


- Automatic faucets: Infrared sensors have been helping keep public restrooms more hygienic for years. The same technology can be used in home bathrooms to curtail water waste and keep faucets and sinks from becoming infested with germs. In addition, faucets with built-in timers can be programmed to set tasks for brushing teeth or washing your face.

- Musical shower: Instead of having to blast the volume on the portable speaker you use in the bathroom, a wireless speaker is built into some showerheads. This enables those who like to sing in the shower or listen to podcasts while washing up to enjoy this luxury effortlessly.

- Smarter weight management: Bathroom scales have gone high-tech as well, with various options enabling users to measure weight, BMI and body fat percentage before sending the data wirelessly to a phone, tablet or computer. This can put you in greater control of fitness goals.

- High-tech toilets: Borrowing ideas

Bathrooms - continued on page 25B




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## Did you know?

According to Energy Star, the U.S. Department of Energy and Consumer Reports, homeowners who want to curb their energy consumption can consider upgrading, repairing or replacing the biggest energy consumers in their homes. The following appliances tend to consume the most energy in a typical home.

- Heating & cooling unit: Nearly half of all energy used in a home is consumed by HVAC systems. Regularly inspecting and servicing the system can conserve energy and save money.
- Water heater: Energy Star suggests replacing water heaters that are more than 10 years old. Also, washing clothes in cold water can reduce energy consumption.
- Kitchen/laundry appliances: Trade in old appliances for new models, which are more energy-efficient. For example, an Energy Star-rated refrigerator uses 50 percent less energy to run than a refrigerator manufactured 15 years ago. Innovations in laundry appliances also help make units more efficient without compromising on performance.

### Bathrooms - Continued from page 24B

from bidets and trends around the world, modern toilets do not require hands or paper. These toilets have temperature-controlled water, spritzing wands and air dryers to clean and sanitize. Self-cleaning toilets help busy professionals save time and are ideal for those who always want their bowls as clean as possible. And if you desire extra comfort, toilet seat warmers are available, while LED lights can make nighttime restroom visits easier.

• Soaking tubs: As fast as stand-alone showers were introduced to the modern bathroom, tubless designs have been replaced with streamlined soaking tubs. Tubs come with different features, including chromatherapy, which employs colored lights to enhance mood. Air baths are controlled electronically and provide different levels of sensation for those who are skipping the hot tub.

Round out these innovations with automated lights, chilled medicine cabinets and aromatherapy, and your bathroom will indeed become a technological spa.

## Advertiser Index on Page 38



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## Signs that more insulation is necessary

Insulation serves dual purposes in a home. In the winter, insulation prevents heat loss and keeps homes comfortably warm, while in the summer it buffers a home from the heat and prevent cold air from escaping.

Insulation also is one of the most cost-effective ways to make a home more energy-efficient.

Homeowners may recognize the importance of insulation, but be unaware of how to recognize when insulation needs to be replaced or even if they have adequate insulation in their homes. According to the United States Department of Energy, a qualified home energy auditor can check a home's insulation as part of a whole-house energy assessment. An energy assessment, also known as a home energy audit, also helps to identify areas of the home that are in need of air sealing.

Homeowners also can do their own visual assessments to determine if their homes need more insulation. The following are a handful of signs that indicate you may have an insulation deficit in your home.

- If the snow melts on your roof but

not on your neighbors', this may be a sign that you need more insulation in the attic. Melting snow means heat is escaping from the attic or under the eaves.

- Bare spots in the attic and insulation that does not extend to the edge of the roof may indicate a need for more.

- Check the level of insulation in the attic. If it is level with or falls below the ceiling joists, an extra layer should be installed.

- If energy bills are higher than normal for the time of year, that may be due to a lack of insulation. Notice whether the HVAC system is running more than usual.

- An unusually warm second story during hot weather also may be indicative of an insulation deficiency. Such a situation suggests hot air is infiltrating the home through the roof.

When adding insulation, choose the right R-value for your home. R-value measures how well certain materials, such as insulation, resist heat. The higher the R-value, the greater the insulation. Therefore, insulation with a higher R-value will perform better than insulat



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# Surviving a home renovation



**PLANNING, PATIENCE** and an understanding of what the project entails can make home improvements easier to survive.

**S**omeowners invest large sums into improving their homes to make them more comfortable living spaces or to increase their odds of selling quickly. The Remodeling Futures Program at the Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University predicted U.S. spending on home renovations and

repairs to peak at \$327 billion in 2017.

Whether one is doing a large renovation or a small remodel, life may be turned upside down during the project. Furniture may be moved out of the room, walls may be demolished, water or electricity may be turned off, and appli-

**Survive - continued on page 29B**

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## Survive - Continued from page 28B

ances may be missing or not hooked up. Home improvements often drum up dust and disarray. Such projects can try the patience of any homeowner, and things may get worse before they get better.

Even though remodeling can be taxing, the end result is often worth it. Here's how to look forward to the silver lining and come out unscathed.

### Discuss the project before it starts.

All family members should be in agreement before the first hammer is swung. Decide on as many details as you can ahead of time and have a firm plan in place. Establish back-up choices for tiles or color schemes in case the items you want are out of stock. Trying to make decisions under duress may result in bad choices.

### Do one project at a time.

It's tempting to want to improve as much as possible at once to maximize motivation and renovation materials. However, having no place in which to escape the mess can elevate stress levels. Do not think about renovating kitchens and bathrooms all at once, or you will not have any working fixtures for tasks like washing up.

### Have everything in place ...

Before demolition even begins, have building materials bought and stored, contractors and subcontractors lined up, and see what you can do to minimize the time workers need to spend in your home.

### ... but expect delays.

In a world where things move at lightning speeds, renovations have not gotten the memo. Home projects take lots of time and will likely take longer if you are doing the work yourself in your free time. Build lots of extra time into the project so you are not disappointed when delays happen — even when you've done your best to avoid them.

### Plan an escape zone

Construction environments can be messy, loud, smelly, and a host of other unsavory adjectives. The chaos that ensues when life is turned upside down can be overwhelming, particularly for the person who spends the most time in the home while work is being done. Build escape moments into the plan and make sure everyone else at home is on board. During the real grind of the project, a night or two at a hotel may be a welcome respite.



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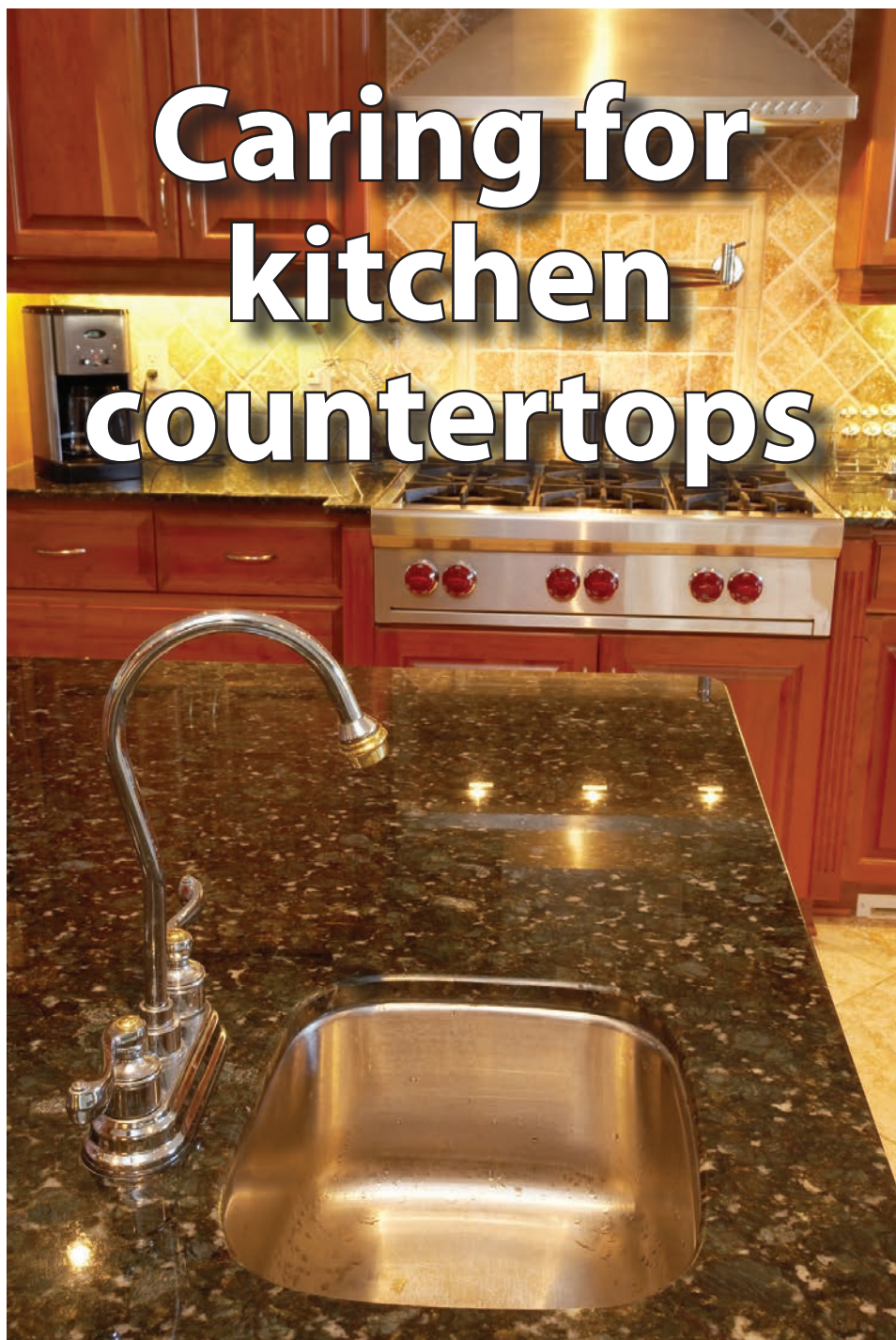
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## Caring for kitchen countertops

**K**itchen remodels are a popular home improvement project that help homeowners recoup large percentages of their initial investments at resale. A kitchen remodel can invigorate a home and make the most popular room in the house more functional.

According to HomeAdvisor, a home-improvement informational guide, homeowners spend an average of \$22,000 on kitchen remodels. However, lavish projects can cost more than \$50,000. Protecting such investments is important and requires that homeowners understand how to properly maintain kitchen features so they have the longest life possible. This includes the new countertops that make the kitchen look complete.

Countertops come in various materials, not all of which should be treated the same way. Quartz, granite, marble, laminate, and tile countertops require different types of maintenance.

### Quartz

Engineered quartz countertops are popular. Quartz countertops are nearly maintenance-free and resistant to stains, scratches and even heat. Quartz will not need to be sealed like natural stone and can be cleaned using just a damp cloth with a mild, nonabrasive soap.



Countertops - Continued from page 30B

### Granite

Polished or honed granite countertops offer a high-end look that adds instant value to a kitchen. Natural variations in granite give each kitchen a custom look. To keep granite countertops clean, avoid abrasive cleansers that can scratch, and opt for warm, soapy water instead. Stains are possible, but can be remedied with a baking soda paste left to sit for a couple of hours, advises Angie's List. Wipe up oils, acids and soda promptly to avoid stains, and follow advised sealing routines.

### Marble

Marble is a natural stone that is porous and will need to be resealed periodically. Because marble has high levels of the mineral calcite, it can be reactive when acids come in contact with it, and etch marks may appear. Promptly wipe away tomato juice, lemon juice, perfume, or toothpaste. Marble is softer than granite and will wear at a faster rate. Avoid scratching and exercise caution when using knives or sharp objects around marble.

### Laminate

One of the more budget-friendly materials, laminate countertops can be fabricated to mimic the look of natural stone, wood or even quartz. Laminate is less resistant to damage than other materials and will need a gentle touch. Formica® says to never use abrasive cleansers, scouring pads or steel wool when cleaning laminate countertops. For tough stains, an all-purpose cleaner should suffice when applied with a nylon-bristled brush. Test any cleanser in a discreet area first.

### Tile

Cleaning tile countertops requires getting into crevices along the grout lines. A toothbrush and a mildew-fighting cleaner or bleach diluted with water is advised. Also, unglazed tiles need to be sealed yearly. Some soap may leave residue, which can be removed with a solution of vinegar and water.

Check with the manufacturer or installer of the countertops to learn more about the ways to clean and maintain new counters.

## Advertiser Index on Page 38

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## Design a more functional pantry

**M**any homeowners wish they had more storage space, and kitchens are one area where people seemingly can always use more storage.

Despite a desire for more kitchen space, until recently, kitchen pantries fell out of favor. Builders and architects may have thought that close proximity to supermarkets as well as multi-use cabinets in kitchens would offset the need for pantries. But according to a recent survey from the National Association of Home Builders, a kitchen pantry is the most desirable kitchen feature for buyers in the market for a new home.

According to a 2016 survey from ReportLinker, 98 percent of Americans say cooking at home is their preferred way to prepare a meal. And despite the wide array of restaurants, prepared meals and fast food options nearby, more than one-third of people cook at home daily, with nearly 50 percent cooking between three and six days a week.

In order to accommodate for spending more time in the kitchen, homeowners are directing additional attention to kitchen preparation and storage features. In fact, one recent trend in kitchen renovations is creating custom-designed pantries.

### Locate the appropriate space

Ideally, pantries should be in or adjacent to the kitchen. But not every home layout allows for this setup. Some homeowners need to move storage pantries into the garage, the basement or a mud/laundry room.

Various factors should be considered before placing a pantry outside a kitchen. What is the climate? Will food spoil? Is there a possibility that vermin or insects can infiltrate the room and access food? These factors will dictate whether to have closed cabinets,

**Pantry - continued on page 33B**



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# The secrets to being an organized family



organized. But with some motivation, all families can become more orderly.

## Manage mornings

Families can usually use more help getting out of the house each morning in a timely manner. Each member of the household should have a designated area where they keep the items they will need for the next morning. Backpacks and briefcases should be prepacked, and lunches made the night before. In addition, sort the next day's clothes before going to bed. Such efforts should make it easier to get out of the house on time each morning.

## Sort the entryway

Home entryways are usually hubs of traffic. Such areas are the first and last place family members go when entering or leaving the house. As a result, these areas are in need of some routine organizational attention. Use sorting bins for shoes, hooks for coats, trays for mail or homework, and other sorting equipment to keep things tidy and orderly.

## Embrace the purge

Take a hard look at what you use and what you don't use around the house. Holding on to items you rarely use can contribute to clutter and create a disorganized home. Save only a few sentimental items, donating, recycling or discarding the others.

**M**odern families seem to be juggling more than ever before. When time seems to be a luxury, an ability to stay organized can help families manage the hustle and bustle of daily life more effectively.

An online survey conducted by an internal research team on behalf of The Huffington Post polled more than 1,000 American adults in 2013, revealing 84 percent of recently stressed Americans say they worry that their home isn't clean or organized enough. Within that group, 55 percent cited disorganization at home as a source of recent stress.

Disorganization does not occur overnight, and neither will getting re-

Many organizational experts suggest going through items one by one and asking oneself if this is something that has been used recently. If it's been collecting dust for a year or more, it can go.

## Sensible storage

Analyze what you have and then find sensible storage solutions. Store belong-

ings in the same place each day so items are easy to find when needed. Frequently used items should be easily accessible. Seldom used items, such as holiday decorations, can be stored out of the way.

It takes commitment and time to get organized. However, life tends to move along much more smoothly in organized homes than homes marked by clutter.

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## Pantry - Continued from page 32B

air-tight bins or open shelves or if other modifications must be made to the room prior to building.

## Choose the type of pantry

Accessibility is essential in a pantry. Everything should be easily reached and grabbed as needed without having to move too many things. Ideally, foods should be arranged in a single layer so that all items can be viewed at a glance. Shelves of various depths and heights can accommodate items of different sizes. Adjustable shelves are ideal because they can be modified as foods change. Sliding drawers can improve reach in cabinets.

In smaller spaces, French door-style reach-in cabinets are convenient and flexible. In complete kitchen remodels or new constructions, walk-in pantries offer the most space and flexibility.

## Must-have features

Pantries serve different functions in different homes. For the bulk shopper, a pantry with plenty of room for large items will be needed.

Lighting can be beneficial in all pantries. Lights can improve visibility when trying to locate items. Others prefer an outlet for charging hand-held vacuums or other small appliances. Counter space in the pantry enables homeowners to unload groceries directly onto pantry shelves.

For pantries located outside of the kitchen, built-in freezers can maximize storage possibilities, especially for those who freeze-and-eat after bulk shopping ventures.

Pantries are popular features that homeowners can customize depending on their storage needs and the amount of time they spend in their kitchens.

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## How to avoid electrical mishaps around the house

**A**ccidents around the home happen. Some are minor and easily brushed off, while others can lead to serious injury or financial peril.

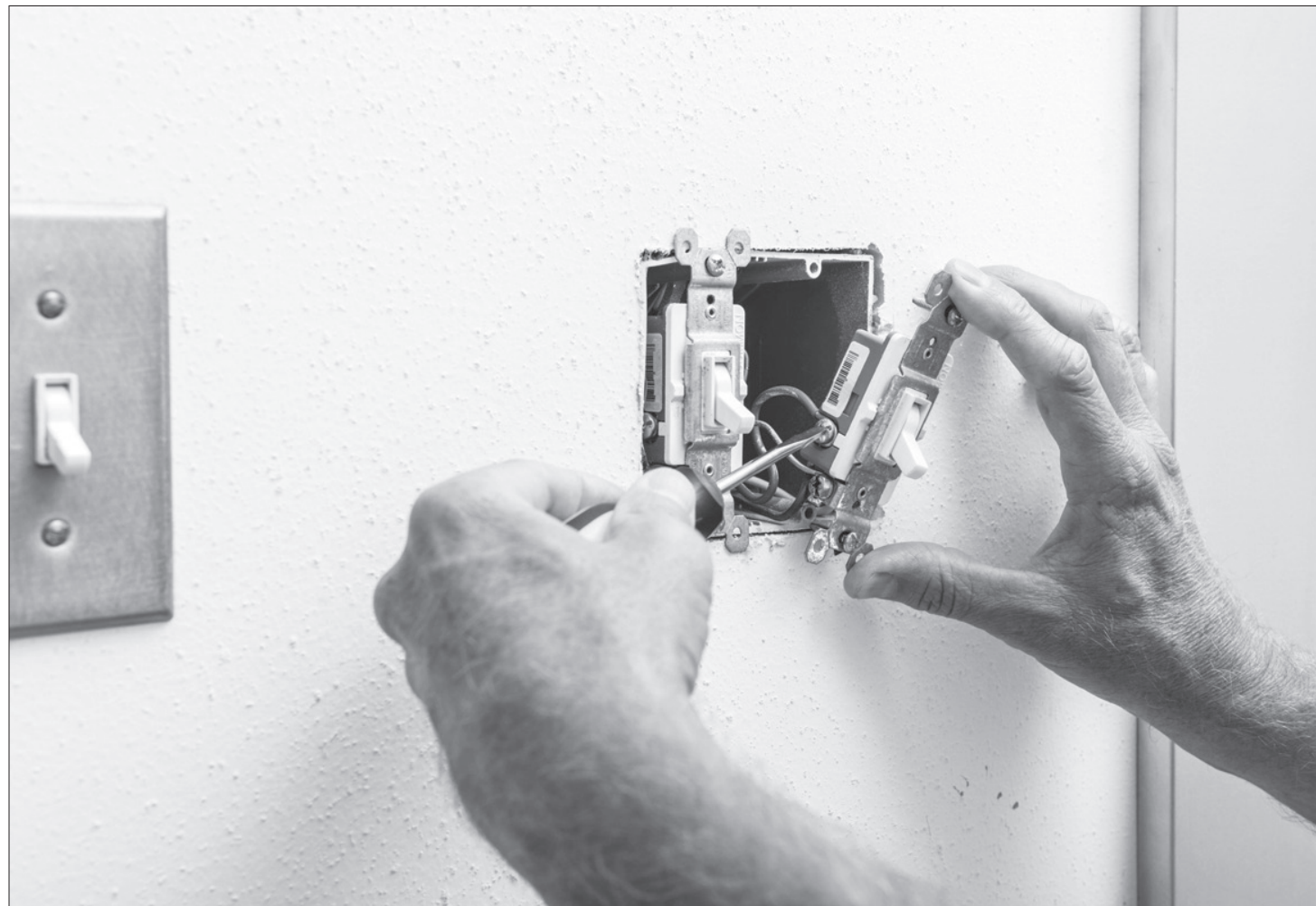
Many accidents, even those that are relatively minor, can be prevented. Such is often the case with electrical accidents, which may be more common than many people think. According to the Electrical Safety Foundation International, home electrical fires account for an estimated 51,000 fires each year, resulting in roughly 500 deaths and more than \$1 billion in property damage.

Homeowners who want to do all they can to reduce the likelihood of electrical mishaps at home can employ various strategies.

- Be mindful of cords and plugs. Cords and plugs can be found throughout the typical home. While few people may perceive cords and plugs as threats, they can serve as catalysts for accident and/or injury. Cords and plugs should always be kept clear of heat and water sources, and cords should not be placed in areas where they can pose any tripping hazards. Even if residents grow accustomed to cord locations and know to maneuver around them, guests won't be as familiar. When pulling plugs from outlets, always pull the plug, and not the cord, to reduce injury risk.

- Periodically take inventory of electrical appliances and components. Some electrical appliances age well, while others may not. Periodic inspections of appliances and their components, such as their cords, can reveal wear and tear that can lead to fires or injuries. Replace any items that pose a threat and stop using these items immediately.

- Avoid DIY electrical work. Many homeowners are handy with hammers and other tools, but professionals are better trusted to perform electrical work on a home. The risk of accident or injury when working with wiring and other electri-



cal components is simply too great for untrained homeowners to do on their own.

- Unplug appliances before flipping a fuse. Fuses blow from time to time. Some may be knocked out by especially powerful storms, while others may blow because they're overloaded. Regardless of why fuses blow, homeowners should turn off appliances on blown fuses before flipping those fuses back on. Leaving appliances running when flipping a fuse can increase the risk of fire or accident. Turn off appliances, unplug them and then turn them back on one by one after the fuse has been flipped.

- Be especially cautious if anyone smells gas. Gas leaks are often detected by the aroma of the gas in the air. When such leaks are detected, homeowners should not touch or turn any electrical switches. Doing so may create a spark that can react with the gas in the air, leading to fire. If a gas leak is detected, go outside and contact a local emergency service.

Many home electrical mishaps can be prevented if homeowners exercise caution and hire certified electrical contractors to handle wiring and other electrical tasks around their homes.

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**Advertiser Index on Page 38**

## Did you know?

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, inadequate ventilation in a home can increase indoor air pollution levels. Those pollutant levels rise in a poorly ventilated home because not enough outdoor air is making its way into a home to dilute emissions from indoor sources of pollution. In addition, in a poorly ventilated home, indoor air pollutants are not being carried out of the home, leaving the pollutants to linger and potentially putting the health of the home's residents at risk. Though it might seem counterintuitive to allow outdoor air into a home during winter, when such air tends to be at its coldest, such outdoor air can protect a home's inhabitants from the immediate effects of indoor air pollution, which include irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, as well as headaches, dizziness and fatigue. Long-term effects of prolonged exposure to indoor air pollution can include respiratory disease, heart disease and cancer. But homeowners who want to increase outdoor air infiltration in their homes do not have to open the windows even when temperatures dip. A simple inspection of mechanical ventilation systems, such as bathroom and kitchen fans and air handling systems that employ fans and ducts to remove indoor air and distribute filtered and conditioned outdoor air throughout a home, may be all that's necessary to ensure indoor air stays healthy during the winter. If such systems are in need of repair, homeowners should ensure those repairs are made prior to the arrival of winter.



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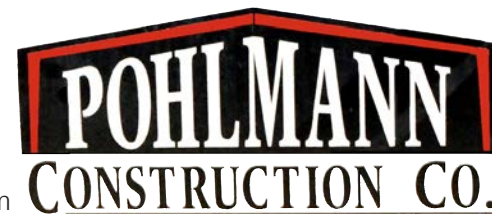
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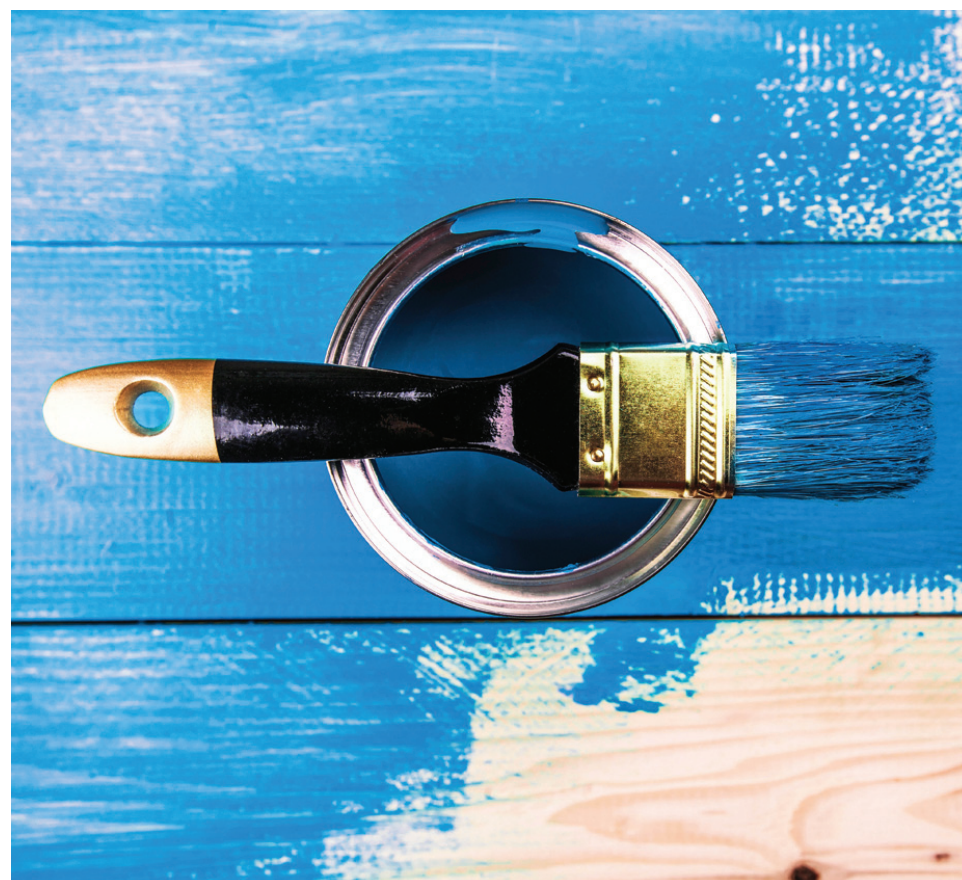
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# Complete these home improvements over the weekend

**H**ome improvement projects ramp up when the weather warms up, as homeowners channel the rejuvenating feelings of spring and tackle their home to-do lists. Large-scale renovations can greatly affect a home, but smaller projects can yield impressive results and be completed over the course of a single weekend.

If time is of the essence, these weekend or one-day projects may satisfy homeowners' desires to fix up their homes.

- Create an accent wall. Painting a focal wall in a home can create a serious impact. The bonus is it will not take as long or require as many materials as painting an entire room. Accent walls frequently feature a bold color, so decide on placement and tackle this project in less than a day.

- Install stair runners. Dress up hardwood stairs with decorative carpet runners. Runners come in elongated pieces of carpeting or individual pieces that can be

placed on each step. If carpeting doesn't fit with the home's design, painting individual stair treads also can create visual appeal.

- Dress up the entryway. An entryway is a guest's first impression of a home. Many entryways can use a minor overhaul, both inside and outside. Paint the front door a different color so it pops from the curb. Install a new mailbox or decorative house numbers. A new welcome mat can change the look as well. Inside, consider laying a new floor. Resilient vinyl tiles come in many different patterns and can mimic the look of wood, travertine or



marble. Installing a floor can take a day or two.

- Install a new faucet. Instantly improve a kitchen or a bathroom with new fixtures. New faucets can provide aesthetic appeal and low-flow faucets can help conserve water.

- Create a gallery on the staircase. Gather and arrange framed photos, artwork or wall accents so that they ascend the wall of a stair-

case. This creates a designer touch and can dress up an often barren area of wall space.

- Install a fresh light fixture. Improve drab spaces with a little illumination. Bet-

ter Homes & Gardens suggests replacing an existing fixture with something new and vibrant. If hanging a new fixture is not within one's skill set, free-standing table or floor lamps also can cast a new glow on a space.

- Add molding. Molding can add instant aesthetic appeal to a room. Molding is appropriate near the floor, at the top of walls where they meet the ceiling, or even mid-wall as a chair rail. Some homeowners like to create framed molding on walls in formal living spaces.

- Update kitchen or bathroom hardware. Replacing hardware is a fast and easy project, but one that can have immediate impact. Swap out tired or outdated hardware for newer brushed metals and more impactful shapes and designs.

Home renovations do not need to take weeks or months. Many projects can be completed over the course of a weekend.

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## Carbon monoxide remediation

**C**arbon monoxide is a colorless, odorless gas that can be deadly. Because carbon monoxide is found in the fumes produced when fuel is burned, it is present in and around homes. As a result, homeowners should be aware of carbon monoxide and make every effort to detect its presence.

CO forms most readily when there is insufficient oxygen to complete combustion and produce carbon dioxide. Hot water closets, furnaces in crawlspaces, heating appliances in attics, and other contained areas are common areas where CO can form.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says that thousands of people visit emergency rooms and are hospitalized because of CO poisoning every year. While CO is a risk for just about anyone, infants, the elderly, those with breathing problems or chronic heart disease, and people with anemia are most likely to get sick from CO.

CO has earned the moniker “the silent killer” because it cannot be identified without the presence of a carbon monoxide detector. If a person believes he or she is smelling carbon monoxide, that person

is probably mistaking the odor for other combustion byproducts that the human nose can sense.

CO is a byproduct of vehicle exhaust, boat engines, stoves, lanterns, grills, furnaces, and fireplaces. CO is produced anytime something is burning. That is why it is essential that products designed to be used outdoors are used exclusively outside, and that indoor appliances are properly vented to the outdoors. CO can build up indoors and poison people and pets who breathe it in.

Some people may not recognize that CO is problematic in a home until multiple residents start complaining of similar symptoms. Common CO poisoning symptoms include nausea and vomiting, dizziness, chest pain, confusion, headache, and other flu-like symptoms, advises the consumer advocacy group Carbon Monoxide Kills. Those with repeated exposure to high levels of CO may eventually develop cerebral edema, which is a swelling of the brain. CO can compress brain cells and destroy them, leading to neurological issues and death. CO poisoning is actually the result of the head and heart not receiving sufficient oxygen.

CO detectors can save lives and should be installed in all homes and apartments. The National Fire Protection Association says CO detectors “shall be centrally located outside of each separate sleeping area in the immediate vicinity of the bedrooms.” Individuals should follow the manufacturer instructions regarding where on the wall or ceiling the CO detectors should be mounted. As an added

safety precaution, CO detectors should be placed on every floor of the home.

Gas sensors in CO alarms have limited life spans, so they should be replaced generally every five to six years, because calibrating and testing for CO is more difficult than simply replacing the alarms.

Installing or replacing carbon monoxide detectors is an easy improvement that can help save lives.



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