

The ultimate...

OCTOBER 20, 2021
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Autumn HOME

Improvement and Contractors Guide



INSIDE:
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Five Eye-Catching Ways to Update Your Home

Your home is a reflection of you, and your decor should match your tastes. With some simple home upgrades, you can create the perfect space for you and your family, even if your design preferences change over time.

“When we’re designing our ideal home, too often we may only think about what we want others to see and enjoy when they visit,” said Jack Goldman, president and CEO of the Hearth, Patio & Barbecue Association (HPBA). “The reality is visitors account for less than 1% of your in-home time.”

Consider these ideas to get started: ADD A FRESH COAT OF PAINT

One of the easiest home improvement projects, a fresh coat of paint can change the entire look of a room. Whether you choose to paint the entire space one new color, opt for an accent wall in a vibrant shade or simply freshen up the trim, paint can go a long way toward adding

visual appeal and reflecting your personality. Patterned wallpaper, board and batten, stone and tile can also be added to create textured accents.

BRING WARMTH AND AMBIENCE WITH A FIREPLACE

“A fireplace is for you and your family, a personal addition that serves you and your household in more ways than you may realize,” Goldman said. “October is National Fireplace Month, a time to celebrate the warmth, comfort and ambiance a fireplace or stove can bring to a home.”

More than 3 in 5 homeowners have a fireplace or other hearth product in their homes, according to the HPBA, and including a fireplace in your construction or renovation plans is a gift of warmth, comfort and ambiance you can give yourself. Whether it’s a centerpiece for your living room or family room, or an

See **Eye-Catching** on Page 3B



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Eye-Catching • from page 2B

accent to your bedroom, bathroom or study, a fireplace can provide an artful design element for your home and a safe, reliable heat source in the event of unexpected weather.

UPDATE LIGHTING FIXTURES

Proper lighting can bring rooms to life and make spaces look larger and more welcoming. You can brighten up your home in a variety of ways, from strategically placing table and floor lamps that fit your design style to replacing older ceiling and wall-mounted fixtures with more modern styles.

GIVE CABINETRY A FRESH LOOK

There are numerous easy ways to update your kitchen and bathroom cabinets to create a more updated look. One of the easiest is swapping out older cabinet pulls and knobs for more modern options. With a variety of finishes - stainless, bronze, brushed nickel, black, copper and more - and styles available,

you can match your cabinets to nearly any design style in a matter of minutes. Adding a coat of stain or paint is also a relatively quick and easy way to update some of the most-used spaces in your home without completely replacing the cabinets.

UPCYCLE FURNITURE

You can breathe new life into your current furniture by making simple changes. The easiest would be simply rearranging your pieces and moving some to different rooms to create an updated look. You can also add decorative covers to sofas, chairs, throw pillows and more, or take your upcycling a step further and refinish a bookshelf, table or other wooden furniture with a fresh coat of paint or stain, or give it a more weathered look with some sandpaper.

Find more ideas for upgrading your home at HPBA.org/house-warming.

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

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

Freezing 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.

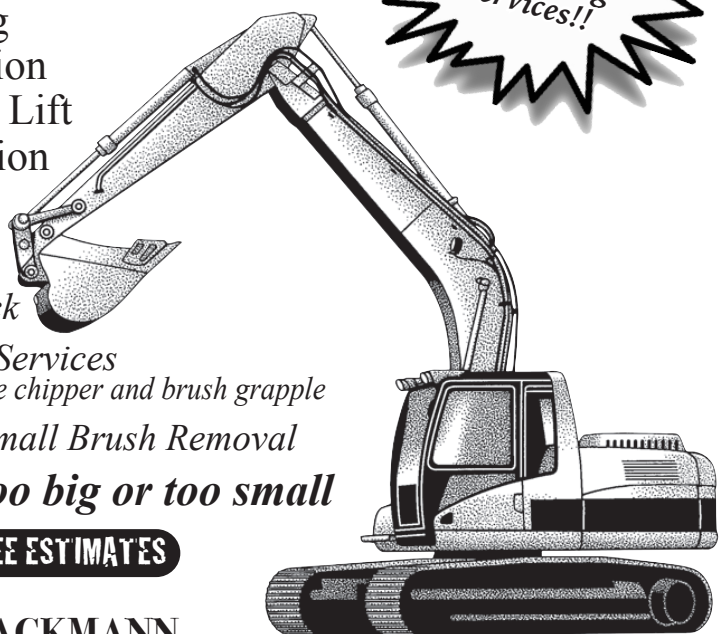
Remove snow shovels and other winter gear from storage and make sure the items are easily accessible during snowstorms.

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

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Design a more functional pantry



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

See **Pantry** on Page 7B

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Pantry • from page 6B

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.

Must-have features in your bathroom remodel

Veteran homeowners recognize the value of remodeling their kitchens and bathrooms. Kitchens and baths tend to appear dated more quickly than other spaces, such as living rooms and bedrooms, which can always be revamped with some fresh paint and new furnishings.

The home improvement pricing resource Home Guide indicates an average bathroom remodel costs anywhere from \$5,500 to \$15,000 depending on the size and scope of the renovation. However, a bath redo can increase a home's resale value and can return as much as 68 percent of homeowners' investments. As homeowners plan their bathroom renovations, it's a good time to consider improvements that will improve function and add design appeal for years to come.

• **Floating vanity:** Add an airy feeling to the room by creating space between the vanity and the floor. A floating vanity can be a counter with a vessel sink or even have cabinets, as long as the vanity doesn't extend to the floor.

• **Freestanding traditional sink or tub:** There's something elegant about a freestanding tub or pedestal sink. Such features can lend a classic vibe to a space. However, freestanding fixtures

also come in modern or eclectic forms, so there are options for any design style.

• **Frameless showers:** Switch to a walk-in shower option, which improves aesthetics and makes it easier to "age in place" in a home. Pair that frameless shower with clear glass shower doors so sightline in the space remains unencumbered.

• **Natural textures:** Create a calm and serene sanctuary in the bathroom with light, natural hues and materials. Nature-inspired colors on tiles, walls and vanities can add to the spa vibe.

• **Dual sinks and vanities:** With a double vanity, two people can share the space and easily use the bathroom without getting in each other's way. One vanity with two sinks works, but homeowners can create even more personal space by dividing vanities and mirrors.

• **Small textured tile on shower floors:** Small textures are appealing and add safety. The added texture and grouting will keep feet from slipping on wet floors. Also, opt for mold-resistant grout to make cleanup even easier.

• **Special shower heads:** Invest in shower heads that can run the gamut from creating steam showers to rainfall effects. Some showers will have multiple shower jets to offer an invigorating experience.

• **Improve drainage:** Increase the diameter of the drain pipe in the bathroom from the standard to a two-inch drain pipe. This will reduce the risk of clogs and overflow leaks.

• **Install a window:** Natural light and air flow can reduce the risk for mold and mildew growth, and windows add some aesthetic appeal to a space. Just be sure to choose frosted privacy glass.

Additional considerations for a bath remodel include heated floors, well-placed and attractive storage options and a toilet enclosure (water closet) for added privacy. These and other bathroom renovation ideas can add value and improve the appeal of the room.



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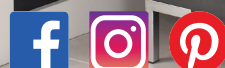


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Signs it is time for new windows



Windows 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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Complete these home improvements over the weekend

Home 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 staircase. 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. Better 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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Award-Winning Outdoor Space Inspiration

Renovating your home's outdoor spaces not only enhances the aesthetic but can also provide a host of recreational benefits. Taking a look at award-winning projects can help many homeowners draw inspiration while also identifying capable, reputable contractors to take on the project.

For example, selected by a panel of industry experts based on functionality, aesthetics, craftsmanship, innovation and degree of difficulty, these 2021 National Association of the Remodeling Industry

National Contractor of the Year (CotY) Award Winners showcase a variety of ideas for upgrading your outdoor spaces. Find the complete list at nari.org/cotywinners.

Residential Landscape Design/Outdoor Living Under \$100,000

The clients wanted to upgrade a poorly draining, impractical backyard into an attractive, functional outdoor entertainment space that flowed from the renovated basement. The project included an outdoor

See **Outdoor space** on Page 11B



ELITE

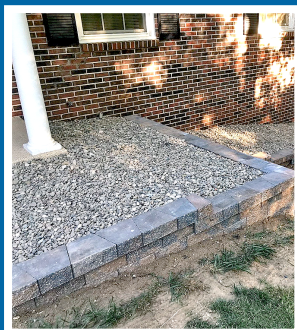
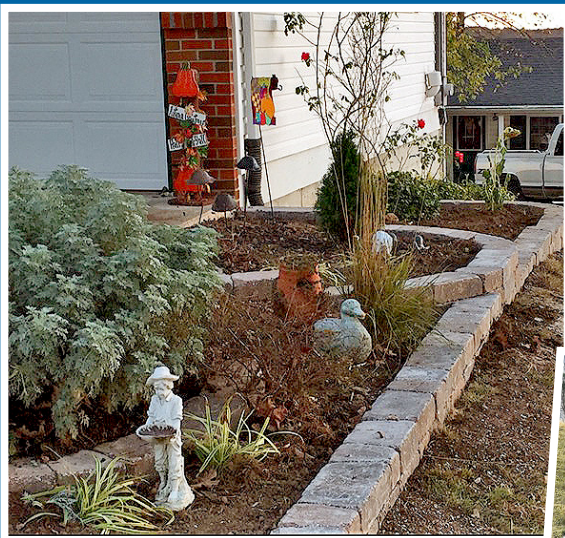
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Outdoor space • from page 10B

area for entertaining, outdoor kitchen, spacious patio with a custom concrete fire pit, oversized ceiling fans, ample storage and landscaping complete with native plants around the perimeter.

“By working on this project, we learned how important it is to take a holistic look at what clients are trying to accomplish with their renovations,” said Thomas Boyce, president of Boyce Design & Contracting. “Often with outdoor living projects, designers and contractors look at the exterior of the home in isolation. We learned to look at how the interior and exterior of the home connect to each other to make sure the features and floor plan flow and work well together. By taking this approach, we were able to achieve a better finished product that is more functional and attractive for our clients.”

Residential Landscape Design/Outdoor Living \$100,000-\$250,000

A young, active family was looking to create a distinct outdoor living space with multiple entertainment spaces that tied in with the existing aesthetic and elevated the home amongst its neighbors. The low-maintenance backyard now features an outdoor dining area, sunken living room, entertainment area and additional storage space built with the home’s current architectural features while also maintaining a large enough yard for the kids and their friends to play.

“The aesthetic of the outdoor areas was designed not only for function but also to reflect the interiors and keep the inside-outside living feeling continuous,” said Tim Johnson, owner and founder of Livit Site + Structure. “For example, the shiplap used on the fire table is the same shiplap featured inside the home. Likewise, the Douglas fir timbers used on the pergola are the same as the interior ceiling beams.”

Residential Landscape Design/Outdoor Living Over \$250,000

A 4,000-square-foot project built at four different elevations, this client wanted to include a safe way to move from the upper level to the backyard without coming through the house, a structure for shade and protection from mosquitoes and a pool with features that reflected the home. Adding a covered screen room with individually controlled wall panels, see-through fireplace, fountain, pool with sheer descent waterfalls, recycled rock walls and staircase from the upper elevation while enclosing it all within a stone wall met those expectations.

“A sound piece of advice for anyone building anything in the backyard: get a plan,” said Ken DePratt, owner of KD Pools-capes, Ltd. “Have it match your expectations list. Then, and only then, will you know if it matches your budget. We would recommend doing your research when taking on a pool project of any size. It’s hard to push that hole around once it’s dug.”



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Seven efficient home improvement projects

The best home upgrades not only make spaces more livable and energy-efficient but are also cost-effective. Making energy-efficient improvements is a savvy way to save money on utility bills, curb energy usage and add to the house's value.

Consider a variety of home improvement projects, both big and small, that can reduce the financial burden of maintaining your home throughout the year and improve energy efficiency.

ADD INSULATION

A cost-effective way to save on heating and cooling bills is adding a layer of insulation in the attic where heat loss is typically greatest due to hot air rising. While many newer homes are adequately insulated, those that are several decades old (or older) may benefit from an upgrade in not only the attic but other common problem areas where air can escape such as basements, crawl spaces, fireplaces and ductwork.

SEAL DOORS AND WINDOWS

Windows and doors are common culprits for energy loss. While a complete replacement of doors and windows can be pricey, adding exterior caulk and weather stripping to fill in gaps where air can escape around these openings can make a noticeable difference for a fraction of the cost and make it cheaper to heat and cool your home.

INSTALL SKYLIGHTS

Skylights are a cost-effective option for transforming any room in the home with natural light while also delivering energy-saving benefits. For example, Sun Tunnel Skylights from Velux can be installed in as little as 90 minutes and funnel natural light from the roof through the attic and into the room below with an aesthetic that resembles recessed lighting. Customizable with six diffuser film styles to complement interior design, the skylights can make a home more energy-efficient by reducing reliance on

See **Energy usage** on Page 13B



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Energy usage • from page 12B

artificial lighting. An optional daylight controller makes it easy for homeowners to adjust natural light entering a room, and a solar nightlight provides a moon-like guiding light at night. Installed with the solar nightlight, the skylights qualify for a 26% federal tax credit on solar property.

ADD REFLECTIVE WINDOW FILM

When the sun shines through windows, it can heat up the home's interior quickly and trigger the air conditioner to turn on. Window coverings, such as blackout curtains, can help, but adding low-e reflective window film to your windowpanes, particularly southern-facing ones, can provide an additional shield from the sun's hot rays and reduce energy costs.

INSTALL A PROGRAMMABLE THERMOSTAT

A programmable thermostat is an efficient way to control the climate inside your home, and those with smart technology take programming to a whole new level. Today's smart thermostats not only let homeowners control temperatures from their smart devices while on-the-go but can also learn daily habits and adjust the temperature accordingly with no other manual adjustments necessary. In addition, some utility companies offer incentives like money back at the end of the year for installing a smart thermostat because the energy savings are so substantial.

REPLACE APPLIANCES

Because appliances like refrigerators and ovens, among



others, are major energy users, investing in more efficient models provides both cost and energy savings. Additionally, homes more than 15 years old could benefit from updates to the air conditioner or heater as systems 15-20 years old or older may be candidates for replacement as they're inefficient by today's standards.

ADD CEILING FANS

In comparison to running your air conditioner consistently, the cost of running a ceiling fan (or several) is significantly less. Particularly on days that may not require cooling the entire house completely, fans can provide a gentle breeze and circulate air in the spaces you use most often. Simply adjust the switch to the counterclockwise position to ensure it's pushing air downward during warmer months.

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Signs it is time to overhaul your kitchen



Remodeling a kitchen adds value to a home. Remodeling Magazine’s “Cost vs. Value Report” indicates mid-range kitchen remodels cost about \$66,000, and homeowners can expect to recover about 60 to 80 percent of that cost at resale.

Homeowners may wonder if remodeling their kitchens is worth the investment. But homeowners should not just consider cost, but also the current conditions of their kitchens when deciding if a renovation project is the right move to make. These signs indicate it may be time to renovate a kitchen.

- Breakers are triggered: If the lights go dark from a tripped circuit breaker every time you try to microwave and run the toaster oven at the same time, your wiring is likely not up to the task of handling the workload and could be out of date. A kitchen remodel will assess wiring load needs and an electric overhaul may be necessary.

- Lack of storage: One of the biggest hassles home-

owners encounter in their kitchens is a lack of storage space. If making a meal involves a Jenga-like stacking and rearranging of kitchen tools, or if an avalanche occurs whenever you search for an item, you might need more storage. A carefully planned redesign can achieve this, even in a smaller kitchen.

- Outdated appliances: Even if your appliances are not avocado green or mustard yellow relics of the 1970s, they might still need to be replaced. According to CRD Design, appliances are only expected to last around 10 to 15 years. If appliances have become unsafe or energy hogs, it could be time for a remodel.

- Family is expanding (or shrinking): Kitchens often are the heart of a home. They need to meet the needs of the family that resides in that home. A remodel can add space as needed. On the flip side, when a couple becomes empty nesters, kitchens can be redesigned and downsized to reflect their new needs and desires, such

as the addition of a wine chiller or espresso station.

- Poor lighting: Task lighting is essential in a kitchen, but older homes may not be equipped with lighting where it’s most needed. A carefully designed remodel can improve lighting with under-cabinet lights, pendants, overhead lighting, and even natural light to make the space attractive and more functional.

- Frequent run-ins: The notion that you can have too many cooks in the kitchen refers to having too many people trying to pitch in or offer their opinions. However, it also can apply to when too many people are gathering in a small space. Redesigning a kitchen can improve the efficiency of a space and make the room feel larger.

- Aesthetic appeal: Many kitchen remodels have been inspired by unsightly kitchens. Cosmetic changes can lead to big improvements.

Kitchen renovations can add instant appeal and help address issues that tend to plague outdated rooms.

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How to maintain hardwood floors

Hardwood floors have long been sought after by home buyers. In its 2019 “Remodeling Impact Report,” the National Association of Realtors® revealed that new wood flooring was the fourth most popular project to attract buyers.

Of course, hardwood floors aren’t just for buyers. Homeowners who already have hardwood floors know just how impressive these floors can be, especially when they’re well maintained. Maintaining wood floors is not necessarily as straightforward as it may seem, and homeowners may benefit from a tutorial on how to keep the floors under their feet looking good.

TO POLISH OR NOT TO POLISH?

Polishing floors is an inexpensive way to keep them looking good. But the home improvement experts at BobVila.com note that not all floors can be polished, and determining which ones can depends on the finish. Floors with waterproof barriers such

See **Hardwood** on Page 16B

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How to banish pet odors from a home

Dogs, 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 drap-

eries 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.



Hardwood

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as urethane will benefit from routine polishing. However, floors with penetrating finishes like tung oil will need to be waxed rather than polished.

WHAT FINISH IS ON THE FLOOR?

The Hardwood Distributor's Association recommends a simple way for homeowners to determine which type of finish is on their hardwood floors. Homeowners are advised to rub a finger across the floor. If no smudge appears, then the floor is surface sealed. If a smudge is created, then the floor has been treated with a penetrating seal. The HDA also notes that recently installed wood floors are likely surface sealed.

HOW OFTEN SHOULD FLOORS BE POLISHED OR WAXED?

Wood flooring professionals recommend polishing floors that can be polished once every few months. Waxing wood floors does not need to be done as frequently, and most can benefit from a fresh coat of wax every 12 to 18 months.

WHAT CAN I DO ON A DAILY BASIS?

Some simple tricks and daily maintenance can help wood floors maintain their impressive look.

- Utilize floor mats. The HDA notes

See **Hardwood** on Page 17B

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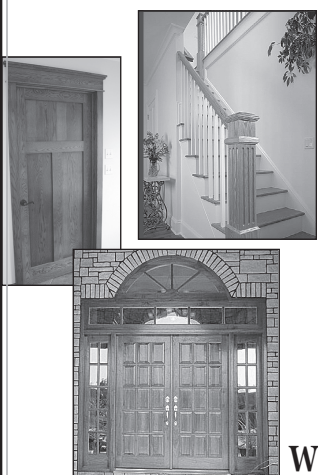


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Should I DIY?: Three questions to determine if it's best to renovate on your own

A do-it-yourself mentality has taken hold in millions of households across the globe. Popular television channels like HGTV and DIY Network as well as accessible home improvement content on apps like YouTube has inspired many homeowners to tackle renovation projects around their homes. Taking such initiative is admirable, though it also can prove costly if homeowners end up biting off more than they can chew.

Home improvement videos and television shows have a tendency to oversimplify renovation projects, potentially giving homeowners a false sense of confidence in their DIY abilities. A concerted effort on the part of homeowners to determine if it's best to renovate on their own or

hire a professional should always be the first step of any renovation project. No two homeowners are the same, but the following three questions can help homeowners determine if DIY is their best option.

1. Can I afford to DIY?

Professional home improvement projects are costly for a variety of reasons. Materials can be costly, but so are the tools and labor necessary to do the job right. Homeowners may not have the tools necessary to complete complicated projects. Specialty tools can be expensive to purchase or even rent, and the cost of acquiring such tools should be included in any DIY project cost estimates. Labor also factors heavily into professional projects, and for good reason.

Talented contractors have unique skills that have been developed and perfected over many years. Those skills can ensure projects are completed quickly and correctly. Labor may seem costly, but such costs may ultimately prove to be a bargain compared to the cost of fixing DIY mistakes. Projects that are minor in scope and don't require the use of potentially costly specialty tools may be better suited for weekend warriors than more complicated renovations.

2. Do I have the time?

Homeowners must determine how much time they have to complete a project before deciding to do it themselves. No one wants to spend months

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Hardwood • from page 16B

that floor mats near entryways can reduce the time it takes to clean hardwood floors and reduce the wear and tear they endure. For example, tiny particles like dirt can scratch the floor and contribute to the kind of minor damage that adds up to significant scarring over time. Floor mats near entryways ensures that most of that dirt never makes it to the wood floors.

- Vacuum without a beater bar. Some vacuums contain beater bars, which are designed to pick up human hair, dog hair and other things that conventional vacuums may not be able to pick up. The HDA advises vacuuming without the beater bar, as it can contribute to small scratches in the floor. Sweeping with a high-quality broom or microfiber cloth is another way to pick up dirt without damaging floors.

- Use manufacturer-recommended cleaning products. Local home improvement stores sell a host of hardwood floor cleaning products, but the HDA notes that many flooring manufacturers now sell their own hardwood floor cleaners designed specifically for their floors. These products are likely homeowners' best bets. Homeowners who can't find them can seek recommendations from a local flooring retailer.

Hardwood floors are attractive for many reasons. And they look even more stunning, and last much longer, when homeowners make an effort to maintain them.

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Lighting is a key component of curb appeal

Curb appeal can affect prospective buyers' perception of a home. When addressing curb appeal, homeowners may be inclined to focus on features that are easily seen from the street during the day. But what can a homeowner do to improve on his or her home's nighttime aesthetic?

Outdoor lighting is one aspect of curb appeal that is often overlooked, advises the home improvement experts at The Spruce. Homeowners may fail to recognize the importance of how proper illumination can provide their homes with a warm glow and make it look beautiful after the sun has set. For example, think of how cozy and inviting neighborhoods appear during the holiday season when homes are strung with twinkling lights. Homeowners can replicate that look all year long with lighting elements.

Lighting for evening hours also helps maintain a safe environment for people who are visiting the property. Illuminating walkways and doorways provides a clearly visible and safe path to and from the home.

The following are a few ways to improve outdoor lighting.

- Focus on architectural features. Outdoor lighting can focus on the external features of the home's architectural

style. Use light to draw attention to interesting gables, dramatic roof lines, dormers, or curved entryways.

- Play up landscaping. Stylish lighting can highlight trees, shrubs, pathways, gardens, and all of the elements of softscapes and hardscapes on a property. The lighting experts at Vernon Daniel Associates say that soft lighting can make homes feel warm and cozy. Uplighting trees or other elements can add a dramatic effect.

- Light up all doors. Make sure that doors, both entry and garage, are properly lit for ease of entry and egress from the home. Safety.com, a home and personal security resource, says a home burglary occurs every 15 seconds in the United States. Installing motion-activated lights or lights on timers can deter break-ins. Consider using home automation to control porch lights and other outdoor lights remotely, if necessary.

- Create entertaining areas. Outdoor lighting can be used to extend the hours residents can spend outside. This is great for entertaining and can be an excellent selling point.

Homeowners are urged not to overlook outdoor lighting as a vital part of their plan to improve curb appeal.

DIY • from page 17B

staring at an unfinished renovation project. Homeowners who are already pressed for time may not be able to complete projects in a timely fashion, which can make homes less comfortable and even less safe.

3. Can I pull this off?

DIY projects can instill homeowners with a sense of pride in their homes, but it's imperative that homeowners considering the DIY option conduct an honest assessment of their skills. A lack of renovation experience does not necessarily mean a homeowner

cannot successfully complete a DIY project. But in such instances, it may be best to start with small, straightforward projects and then gradually move up to bigger, more complicated projects as skills are fine tuned. And homeowners who have never been at their best with a hammer in hand should not be ashamed to leave the work to the professionals.

Television shows and online tutorials can make renovations appear easier than they actually are. Homeowners considering DIY renovations can ask themselves a handful of questions to determine if they're ready for the challenge of renovating their homes on their own.



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Fall Home Improvement

WED. OCT. 20, 2021 ■ PAGE 20B **Unterrified Democrat**

Defining hardscape and how to use it

Curb 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

See **Hardscape** on Page 21B

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Hardscape

• from page 20B

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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Fall Home Improvement

WED. OCT. 20, 2021 ■ PAGE 22B

Unterrified Democrat



Budget-friendly dining room renovation ideas

If the kitchen is the heart of the home, then the dining room may be akin to one of its arteries. The mood created in the kitchen spreads to the dining space where family and friends gather to eat and enjoy one another's

company.

Dining rooms can get lost in the home renovation shuffle, as many homeowners tend to focus on renovating kitchens

See **Dining room** on Page 23B



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Dinning room • from page 22B

and bathrooms instead. Homeowners do not have to invest a lot of money in renovations to give their dining spaces awe-inspiring makeovers. Here's how to do so on a budget.

- **Lighten and brighten.** Dining rooms were once very formal spaces. Dark woods, large pieces of furniture, over-the-top chandeliers, and other details could be found in many homes. But now that houses are being built with open floor plans, dining rooms can blend with other spaces, which have moved to lighter colored walls, flooring and furniture. A fresh coat of vibrant paint can work wonders and it doesn't cost much. If you can't remove a floor, cover it with a brightly colored area rug.

- **Switch things up with slipcovers.** Slipcovers can be changed each season to dramatically alter the look of a dining room for little investment. Slip covers also protect chairs and can be easily laundered after spills.

- **Add floating shelving.** Floating shelves provide much-needed storage or display space without the need to invest in another piece of furniture. Depending on the shelving, they can work in modern design schemes or even farmhouse dining spaces.

- **Clear out the clutter.** It might be

time to say "so long" to that large curio cabinet and the knickknacks within it. Curio and china cabinets used to be de rigueur, but plenty of people now prefer more open and airy dining rooms. For those who want to keep the cabinet, try decluttering inside to only include the very best display pieces and see if the cabinet can be refinished with paint or a lightly colored stain.

- **Improve lighting.** Make the chandelier the statement piece of the space. Go for a bold color or an innovative design. Then add accessories throughout the space that coordinate with the chandelier.

- **Add bench seating.** Those who need additional seating may not have to get entirely new furniture. Swap out some chairs for benches, which can fit a couple more guests than chairs.

- **Create depth with color.** HGTV says that using various shades of the same color in a space can add depth. Coordinate drapes, walls, seat fabrics, and accessories for a cohesive design.

Renovating a dining room doesn't require a large investment of time and money. A few simple steps can give dining spaces a whole new feel without busting homeowners' budgets.

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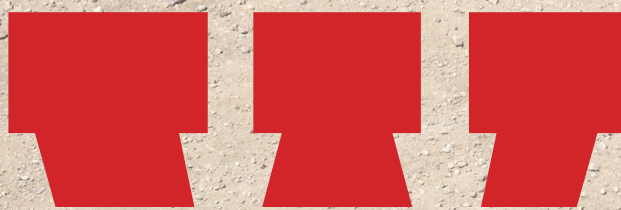
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