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SCHEDULE OF SEMINARS

SATURDAY:

- 10:00 am **Fall Garden Cleanup**
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- 11:30 am **Soil Testing For Homeowners**
with Master Gardener Clint Walker
- 1:00 pm **Attracting Beneficials & Pollinators**
with Lori Metz of Carriage House Landscape Design
- 2:30 pm **Organic Garden Methods & Techniques**
with Master Gardener Lynn Dautrich

SUNDAY:

- 10:00 am **Fall Lawn Care Tips**
with Herbein's Grass Man, Dan Sivco
- 1:00 pm **Fall Pond Maintenance & Winterizing**
with Thomas Hodgins of Holmes Farms

SATURDAY & SUNDAY:

- 10:00 am & 1:00 pm **Birdhouse Construction** (kids)
- 11:00 am & 2:00 pm **Scavenger Hunts** (kids)



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Reap Garden Rewards Even In Fall

Gardening is a rewarding hobby that can help people relax and produce an enviable landscape. Many gardeners even find their meals are more fresh and flavorful when using items they grew themselves. While many gardeners do the bulk of their gardening in the spring and summer, certain plants thrive in cooler temperatures. That group includes autumn vegetables that are ripe for the picking when leaves begin falling.

Fall gardens provide a reason to enjoy the oft-enjoyable autumn air. So many different vegetables come to life in the autumn, and they can make wonderful additions to the dinner table. Broccoli, kale, collards, spinach, squashes, artichokes, and beets are just some of the many autumn planting options you can try. Celery also is best in the fall, and its harvest continues through winter in temperate cli-

mates. By replacing crops that have been harvested through the spring and summer with fall-friendly alternatives, you can keep your garden productive for most of the year. Begin the process by counting back 12 to 14 weeks from the expected first frost date for where you live. Begin seeds for your autumn plantings indoors, because summer heat and dryness are not the best conditions to nurture young seedlings. Enrich the soil with compost so that you can replenish the nutrients lost from the last crop harvested.

Each region is different, so learn about when to put plants in the ground for your region. Many plants still need the sun and warmth of late summer to thrive and produce well into the fall. If you are unsure, consult with a local garden center, where you can learn about various aspects of autumn gardening. Onions, shallots and garlic are best planted mid-fall after the soil has cooled. Gradually introduce seedlings to more sunlight and outdoor temperatures before they go in the ground, as they need time to adjust to the unfiltered sun. Be sure to thoroughly water the garden. Newly planted beds should be kept moist to germinate and so established plants can take root. In addition, consider a shade covering so that the soil doesn't dry out or get baked in the sun. Mulch also can help retain moisture and keep the conditions ideal for your autumn vegetables to grow.

Remember that moisture and cooler temperatures can attract garden pests, so you may need to employ some strategies to keep them under control. For example, insect barriers and all-natural baited traps can keep slugs and snails from munching on your autumn plants. Fall vegetable gardens can be worthy endeavors, yielding plenty of crops and providing the fun and fulfillment of gardening into the fall.

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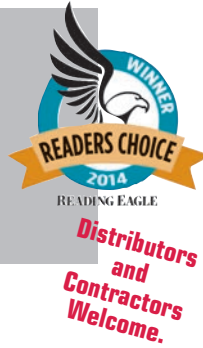
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5 Weekend Projects To Try Now

Home improvement projects range from major construction overhauls like bathroom remodeling jobs to smaller renovations that may entail something as minor as painting the walls. Smaller projects can often be conquered in a typical weekend but still provide a strong sense of accomplishment. The following are five projects tailor-made for weekend warriors.

1. Improve storage in the entryway. Home entryways are the first places many people drop mail, shed their shoes and toss their keys upon arriving home. As a result, entryways can quickly be overrun with clutter. Solutions can include putting in a desk or hutch with baskets underneath to store umbrellas and backpacks. Or hang a coat rack and create a shoe rack to store shoes until the time comes to leave the house once again.
2. Shed new light. Add some design appeal to your home by

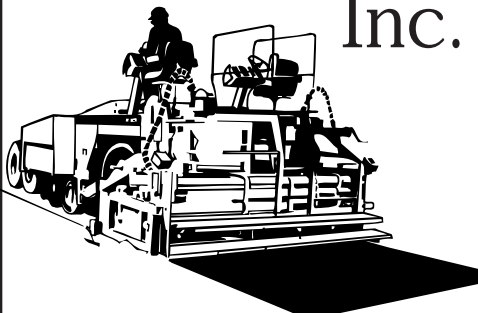
replacing an old lighting fixture with something more modern. Such a task is relatively easy, and you need not possess the skills of a trained electrician.

3. Add molding for a finishing touch. Dress up spaces with crown molding or a decorative chair rail that goes around a room. You can even use molding to frame new or existing artwork. Find a molding style that complements the architectural style.
4. Update hardware in the bath and kitchen. Switch the handles, draw pulls and knobs on cabinetry with new hardware. The time commitment is practically nil, but you might just give rooms a whole new feel.
5. Patch and paint walls. Spend a weekend filling in holes left behind by since-removed wall hangings. If the patches dry quickly, paint over them. If not, resolve to do your patchwork one weekend and paint the ensuing weekend.



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Find The Right Fencing Fit

Homeowners choose to erect fences on their properties for various reasons. Parents may find fences provide peace of mind during those times when their youngsters are playing in the yard, while other homeowners prefer fences for the privacy they can provide.

Whatever compels homeowners to consider fencing for their properties, those that have decided to install fencing will soon realize they have numerous options. Finding the right fencing material for your property requires considering a host of factors, including budget and personal style.

ALUMINUM: Aluminum fencing is ideal for those looking for something that's both ornamental and functional. Aluminum fencing may not appeal to those homeowners whose biggest priority is privacy, as aluminum fences are not solid walls. But aluminum fences are typically low maintenance, and they can be effective at keeping both kids and pets in the yard. Aluminum fences painted with a rust-inhibiting primer may require even less maintenance than aluminum fences painted without primer.

BAMBOO: Bamboo is a less traditional fencing option that may appeal to homeowners who want to do something that's both different and eco-friendly. Bamboo grows naturally, which should appeal to homeowners who want their homes to have as little negative impact on the environment as possible. Bamboo provides ample privacy and comes in various styles. Homeowners should consult with a fencing specialist before choosing a style so they can be certain they choose the most climate-appropriate option.

CHAIN-LINK: Chain-link fences may not add the aesthetic appeal homeowners are looking for, but they are relatively inexpensive, durable and functional. Chain-link fences are low maintenance, though homeowners looking for fences to provide some privacy may need to get creative if they install chain-link fencing. Planting flowers, shrubbery or trees near chain-link fences can add some aesthetic appeal and a little privacy.

VINYL: Among the more expensive fencing options, vinyl can make up for that initial sticker shock thanks to its durability. In addition, vinyl fences require little maintenance, saving homeowners the expense of paying for upkeep such as repainting. Vinyl fencing comes in various styles, and homeowners can choose the style that best suits their priorities with regard to aesthetic appeal and privacy.

WOOD: Of course, no discussion of fencing would be complete without mentioning wood fencing. Many homeowners love wood fencing because of

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its versatility with regard to design and color. The options are endless when it comes to crafting wood fencing, which also can be stained in any color homeowners prefer. Wood fencing can be designed not only for homeowners who prioritize privacy, but it also can be crafted for homeowners for whom privacy is not a significant concern. Wood is a relatively inexpensive fencing material, but the maintenance required to keep wood fencing looking great can sometimes be costly and time-consuming. Options abound for homeowners looking to add fencing to their properties. Homeowners hesitant to choose a material and/or install their own fencing can consult local professionals to find the best fencing fit for their properties.

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Preparing Your Fireplace Or Stove For The Season

Fireplaces and wood-burning stoves not only can be beautiful focal points within a home, but they also provide an additional source of heat and can be used to keep rooms or entire homes comfortable without the need for additional and potentially costly heating sources. Just like more modern home heating systems, stoves and fireplaces need to be maintained, and that maintenance includes readying them before winter when they are used more heavily. Ensuring a fireplace or stove is in good working order helps to guarantee efficiency of use and safety during the winter months. Open-flame heating sources carry with them certain risks. The National Fire Protection Association states that, between 2009-2013, American fire departments responded to 56,000 home structure fires that involved heating equipment. The NFPA notes that the lead-

ing factor contributing to home-heating fires is a failure to keep things clean, principally from solid-fueled heating equipment. The following are a handful of ways to stay safe as you get ready for another cozy season around the fire.

- Start with the chimney. Begin by having your chimney thoroughly cleaned and inspected. Creosote can build up inside of the chimney. Creosote is highly flammable and becomes more difficult and expensive to clean the longer it builds up inside your flue lining. In addition, animals may have created nest inside of the chimney since the last time the fireplace was used. A professional chimney sweep should be hired in this situation. He or she will be able to effectively clean the chimney in a manner that is the least messy and disruptive to residents.
- Install or check smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.

Operational alarms are essential to preventing injury or death resulting from smoke or carbon monoxide inhalation. Such detectors are inexpensive safeguards that should be installed on every floor of the house. Batteries should be replaced every six months, and the alarms themselves should be changed every five to 10 years.

- Inspect the chimney from outdoors as well. Inspect the mortar around any bricks in the chimney and surrounding areas for cracks. If left unaddressed, these can cause dangerous fires. If there are serious cracks, a professional may need to make repairs or the chimney may need to be replaced. You also can have the chimney capped with a screen to keep animals and debris from entering.
- Inspect the damper. A damper is a valve or plate that stops or regulates the flow of air inside a chimney. It should be checked prior to the first use of a stove or fireplace so homeowners can be certain it opens and closes smoothly.
- Clear out flammable items. Move flammable items away from the front of a fireplace or stove. Be sure curtains or other home furnishings are far enough away that they will not catch fire from any errant sparks or flames.
- Order wood now. Be sure there is plenty of wood for the season. Ask a wood supplier to estimate just how much will be needed, and double-check that the wood will arrive in time for the start of the season.

By preparing for fireplace and wood stove use now, homeowners can ensure their winters are comfortable and safe. Prepare fireplaces, chimneys and heating stoves for another season of regular use.



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Remodel For Maximum ROI With These Top Projects

(MS) - by Scott McGillivray
As a contractor and real estate expert, I am often asked by homeowners for advice on the best projects for their remodeling dollars. While it's important to first consider the purpose of the remodel (is it for yourself, for resale, or as part of an income-generating suite?), there are some remodels that have proven to be reliable investments over time. Some of these include: Kitchens and bathrooms. Remodels here top the list. High-end finishes, like marble and quartz countertops and stainless steel or commercial grade appliances, are greatly coveted. Clever storage is desirable, along with home automation - a new and growing trend. Bathrooms. This one is simple. The hottest bathrooms right now aim to replicate a spa-like experience. From color and accessories to scents and lighting, transforming this room into a relaxation haven will maximize its appeal. Basements. Basement remodels are among the best ways to gain space without going the route of a costly addition, but the key is doing it right. Address moisture issues first, and hire professionals for plumbing, electrical and mechanical work. Insulate with a water-repellant insulation made from inorganic materials to improve energy efficiency, and then focus on the finishes. Insulation. Installing, topping up or replacing insulation is one of the most cost-effective ways to increase energy efficiency and save money over the life of your home. For exterior walls, basements headers, cathedral ceilings, and attics, I recommend a product called Roxul Comfortbatt stone wool insulation for exceptional thermal performance. For interior walls and between floors, I'm a big fan of Roxul Safe 'n' Sound for its excellent sound dampening qualities. Both products are fire resistant up to 2,150°F, resistant to mold and mildew, and Greenguard-certified to the highest level for air quality.

Smaller fixes. Know that you don't have to spend a lot of money to realize a good return. Can't afford a full-out kitchen or bathroom remodel? Consider painting walls and cabinets, replacing outdated hardware or fixtures and installing new lighting for an impactful refresh. When it comes to living spaces, it's amazing what a splash of color, some new flooring, carefully selected accessories and strategic lighting can do for the look and feel of a room. Save a little extra by doing it yourself. With a positive attitude and some elbow grease, you can make a big difference with projects that require low to moderate know-how.

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The Popularity Of The Color White

White is a versatile color in home decorating and renovation. White helps any space look effortlessly chic, blends well with just about any color and can be incorporated into various design styles - from modern to traditional.

While the color white is always trendy, the paint manufacturers Benjamin Moore chose white (Simply White OC-117) as their "it" color for 2016. White can be used nearly anywhere inside and outside the home. Improving interior and exterior spaces with white elements is easier than you might think, and it instantly can make anything look as good as new.

KITCHEN: While rich cherry-wood cabinets and deeply hued granite countertops have long been popular in kitchens, creamy white cabinets paired with blonde wood countertops can work together to make kitchens seem open and airy. If all white is not your thing, brighten up kitchen spaces with white canisters, cookie jars and a fresh bouquet of white flowers to add instant appeal.

LIVING ROOM: Use white as a base color for living room spaces so you can build on it with other hues on pillows and draperies, mixing and matching however you see fit.

Homeowners who have children and/or pets should look for furniture with removable slipcovers. This way they're easily removed and laundered.

BATHROOM: White bathrooms look fresh and are easy to clean and maintain. White tiles provide a classic look. Include colored bath mats, towels and shower curtains to break up the white as you see fit. A neutral white base makes it easy to switch out color schemes whenever you feel like it.

BEDROOM: Feminine and fresh, white bedrooms may not be the first choice for novice designers. If the prospect of white on white seems too ster-

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ile, offset deeper hues on bed linens and walls with white furniture. This provides some pop against the darker contrast. Keep in mind that doing a bed up in all white means it will always be easy to find matching sheets and pillowcases, making it possible to ensure everything looks cohesive and crisp.

OUTDOORS: Use white paint on trim, shutters, mailboxes, and more to provide that pop of contrast against the rest of the home. White complements just about every color, making it a versatile choice on a home's accents regardless of the main exterior color of that home.

White and other light shades will reflect the sun as well, contributing to cooler temperatures on walkways, decks and other structures, which can be advantageous to homeowners who live in warm climates.

Is it any wonder that white continues to be a classic and popular color to use around the home? Whether you do so with

monochromatic roomscape or accent pieces, you can incorporate white into design plans throughout your home. White is a versatile color to use around the home. It's consistently a favorite among designers for its crisp appeal.



What To Look For During Roof Inspections

Cold weather can be tough on a home, and perhaps no part of a home is more vulnerable to harsh winter weather than its roof.

Fallen snow can equate to several pounds of pressure placed on a residential roof. Roofs do not often collapse under heavy snowfall. But adverse winter weather conditions can compromise roofs in other ways. Water leakage and damage to the roof's interior are just two of the potentially problematic issues that can arise when roofs are battered by cold, blustery weather. That's why many home improvement specialists advise homeowners to conduct roof inspections prior to the start of winter.

Many homeowners can conduct their own cursory roof inspections, but they may not know exactly what to look for. The National Roofing Contractors Association says that there are certain key areas to inspect that may reveal some telltale signs of roof damage.

• Curled, cracked or missing shingles may prove troublesome. Inclement weather can test the strength of even the most durable roofs. Even though many roofs are

designed to last up to 30 years, some may need to be replaced early, particularly when they have been exposed to harsh weather over a period of years. Individual shingles can be replaced as spot treatments, but if the damage is widespread, a new roof may be necessary.

• Attic leaks or water elsewhere might signal issues with the roof. Figure out if water inside the home is coming from the roof. Water stains do not always indicate problems with the roofing, but it's better to be safe than sorry.

• Look for protective granules wearing off. If gutters are filled with the sandy granular material that coats roofing shingles, that may be a sign of an aging or damaged roof.

• Inspect flashing. Professional roofers can recognize properly installed flashing, the material that connects the roof to other parts of the house that adjoin the roof, like skylights or a chimneys. Poorly installed flashing can cause leaks. Stains that appear below chimneys or near attic windows may indicate new flashing, and not new shingles, is needed.

• Gutters and downspouts

should be in good condition. A roof is the sum of its parts, and that includes downspouts and gutters. If the gutters are clogged or damaged, they cannot direct water away from the house properly. Snow, leaves and other debris needs to be cleared from gutters to help them function at optimal capacity.

• Animals and insects can cause damage, too. It's not just poor weather that homeowners need to consider with regard to roof damage. Boring insects and animals may cause problems with roofs as well. A roof inspection may shed light on potential pest problems. Holes or nesting materials may indicate that an animal or animals are using the attic as a shelter from the elements.

Get to the root of issues with your home's roof before they become bigger problems once winter arrives. A thorough inspection can reveal problems that may prove costly if ignored. Inspect a roof each fall to get an idea of the potential damage and any necessary repairs that may be needed before nasty weather sets in.

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Protect Pipes From Freezing This Winter

Freezing pipes are a concern for homeowners who live in cold climates. When temperatures dip below freezing, the risk that pipes will freeze rises. Should a pipe burst, the damage that results can be extensive and costly. Any pipe can freeze, but those that are directly exposed to the cold are the most vulnerable. These include pipes that feed outdoor hoses, swimming pool supply lines, pipes in unheated indoor rooms (i.e., basements or garages), and any pipes that run close to the outdoors through uninsulated walls. Water expands as it freezes, and that expansion can place pressure on whatever is trying to contain it- including pipes. To avoid serious damage,

homeowners need to prepare for the arrival of colder weather and be smart about how they protect pipes.
• Drain water from swimming pools and water sprinkler supply lines prior to the onset of cold weather. Drain water before freezing temperatures arrive, and don't forget to drain outdoor garden hoses and store them inside after watering season has come and gone.
• Close indoor water valves that feed outdoor spigots/bibs. Open the spigot outside to allow water to drain out. Keep the outside valve open so that any water that has accumulated will continue to drain and expand outward without damaging the pipe. An insulated bib dome also can help prevent

frozen pipes.
• Open cabinet doors to allow heat to reach pipes inside of cabinets. Keep the doors open to spaces that may not be heated or insulated as well as other areas of the home so that heat can find its way inside. Consider wrapping these pipes with an insulating material as well, such as heat tape or pipe sleeves.
• Maintain a consistent thermostat temperature. Ensure the temperature inside your home does not drop below 55 F; otherwise, problems can arise. Use a programmable thermostat to keep the house comfortable even when you are not home. Individuals who are traveling should set the thermostat so that it will keep the home at

the recommended temperature to avoid frozen pipes.
• Open one faucet. When it is very cold outside, particularly at night, let water slowly drip from one faucet to prevent freezing. Choose the sink that is furthest from where water enters the house so water is flowing through all of the pipes to reach that faucet.
• Increase insulation around where pipes enter the house. Use insulating foam to seal any drafts where pipes enter the house from the outdoors. Frozen pipes cannot always be avoided. Therefore, it is important that everyone in the household knows how to shut off the main water valve in the event a pipe bursts. This can prevent expensive damage to a home.



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Simplify Fall Leaf Cleanup

Apple pie, pumpkins and blooming chrysanthemums are symbols of autumn. But nothing signals the arrival of fall more than the millions of leaves that begin to cascade from the trees as the temperatures dip.

Many people feel nothing is more beautiful than the yellow, red, purple, and orange leaves that coat neighborhoods and countrysides each fall. But in spite of their beauty, leaves might be a nuisance to homeowners tasked with removing the growing piles of them from their lawns. Those with large oak and maple trees in front of their homes understand the seemingly endless work of leaf removal. As the days begin to grow shorter and colder, these changes trigger a hormone release in trees, prompting them to drop their leaves. This chemical message causes the formation of abscission cells where the leaf stem meets the branch, say botanists at the Missouri Botanical Garden. So rather than merely dropping off of trees when the wind blows, the leaves actually fall off deliberately.

Left untouched, fallen leaves can contribute to lawn problems such as poor aeration, mold growth and moisture issues. Leaves also can cause staining on driveways and walkways. Prompt removal can help prevent any problems. To make faster and easier work of leaf removal, keep these tips in mind.

- Mow over thin leaf coverage. If only a few leaves have fallen, use a mulching mower to shred the leaves until they are small enough that they won't suffocate the lawn. The small pieces will decompose in the lawn, reintroducing nutrients as a result.

- Use an ergonomic leaf rake. Ergonomic rakes can prevent back and arm pain, much in the way that ergonomic shovels do when shoveling snow.

- Invest in a quality leaf blower. Using a rake is good exercise, but homeowners with large properties might want to use a leaf blower. These machines can dislodge leaves from bushes and hard-to-reach crevices, and they work faster than rakes.

- Use a tarp. Rake or blow leaves onto a tarp and then drag the tarp to the curbside or to the back of a truck for proper disposal. Special leaf scoopers enable you to grab more leaves if they need to be picked up and

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transported. Otherwise, you can use the covers from two garbage pails to achieve a similar effect.

- Work with the wind. Rake in the direction the wind is blowing and downhill if your property slopes. This way it will be easier on you.
- Spread out the job. Do not attempt to remove all fallen leaves in a single day. Schedule a few cleaning days during the season to make lighter work of the job than if you tried to do it all at once. Keep in mind that leaves will continue to fall throughout the season and you may need to spend a few days removing leaves from your yard. Removing leaves is a large part of fall home maintenance. Employ these tips to make this task less strenuous.



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Children excited to see the great outdoors may climb up to peer out windows, and open windows are falling hazards. Screens do not offer an adequate barrier against falls. Consider locking windows or use safety bars to guard against falls. Test to see how easily screens can be pushed out, replacing any that do not provide adequate resistance to curious youngsters' hands.

- Check smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. Replace the batteries in smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors at least twice per year, and test them to make sure they're in good working order at least once per month. The National Fire Protection Association recommends replacing hard-wired smoke alarms every 10 years. Battery-operated alarms may need to be replaced even sooner. Many carbon monoxide detectors work for five to seven years. Check the back of alarms for a date stamp that indicates how old the product is and when it expires. Safety checklists are an important part of home maintenance. A proactive approach can prevent both injuries and damage to the home. Check faulty wiring and replace any outlets that are not working.

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A new kitchen or a bathroom remodeling job might be dream projects for many homeowners, but the right home improvement project at a given moment is not necessarily the most glamorous project. Sometimes safety upgrades around the house must take precedence over more popular projects.

Accidents or injuries can occur in any part of the home, but homeowners who take certain preventative measures can greatly reduce their injury risk. The security resource A Secure Life points out that more than 18,000 Americans die every year from injuries that take place in the home. Unintentional injuries account for millions of medical visits each year. Home injuries also are prevalent elsewhere in the world. In the United Kingdom, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents reports that there are approximately 6,000 deaths every year that result from accidents at home. Periodic inspections for potential hazards can keep everyone safe. The following are a handful of ways for homeowners to ensure their homes are as safe as possible.

- Check for sturdy handrails and prevent tripping hazards. Falls are one of the leading causes of home injuries. Falls can be a particular threat for youngsters and the elderly. To help prevent falls, make sure that staircases feature sturdy railings and that there is ample lighting in walkways. Remove obstructions from frequently used paths



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Though they are often easy to overlook, driveways are durable parts of a home that can greatly impact a home's curb appeal. Driveways endure quite a bit of wear and tear over their lifespans, and homeowners who have not given their driveways much thought may want to start looking for potential trouble signs that indicate a need for some driveway maintenance. Damaged driveways do not necessarily need to be replaced, as some may just need minor repairs. But homeowners who see any of the following trouble signs in their dri-

3 Potential Trouble Signs For Driveways

veeways may want to consult a professional contractor to determine what their next steps should be.

1. POTHOLES

Potholes might be most often associated with heavily trafficked roadways, but even driveways are susceptible to potholes. As the ground beneath the driveway expands and contracts, the pavement above that ground weakens and becomes more susceptible to damage. That damage may ultimately lead to large chunks of the driveway breaking down, creating holes as a result. Homeowners who live in areas that experience heavy snowfall may see their driveways develop potholes after they are shoveled or plowed. Potholes that are not fixed may damage vehicles that drive on the pavement, and potholes may even expand over time.

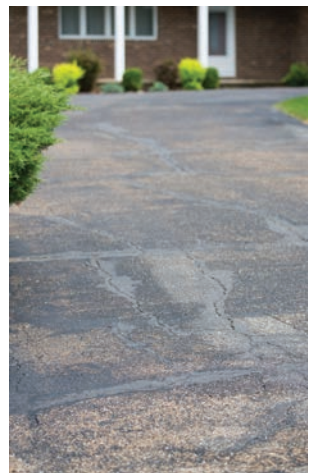
2. ACCUMULATION OF WATER

Puddles that form during a rainstorm may not be indicative of anything other than a rainy day. But water that pools or runs down the middle of the driveway may indicate drainage problems. Such problems may be the result of structural problems with the slope of the driveway, which can cause bigger issues down the road. When water is not absorbed into the ground or directed away from your home, it can then flow into

the house, potentially making your garage or home susceptible to water damage.

3. CRACKS

Cracking is one of the more noticeable issues that can plague driveways. Many driveways experience cracking as materials inevitably succumb to the elements. Driveway cracks may develop for various reasons, including poor initial installation. Tree roots that grow beneath the driveway surface may also contribute to cracking as the driveways ultimately succumb to the pressure created by the growing roots. Some cracks may prove less problematic than others, but homeowners should still speak with a contractor if they notice their driveway is starting to succumb to cracks. Driveways may not draw the attention of homeowners too



often, but damaged driveways that go ignored may ultimately lead to very costly problems. Surface cracks in a driveway may indicate a problem that requires immediate attention.



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Painting is an inexpensive way to transform just about any space. Many people paint the interiors of their homes, but home exteriors also can undergo dramatic makeovers with fresh coats of paint. Timing the job right and heeding some tips from professionals and do-it-yourselfers who have tread the painting path before you can make the job go smoothly. CONSIDER THE TIME OF YEAR: Consider local weather patterns and forecasts when planning an exterior painting project. Choose a time of year when there is little rain and low humidity, such as autumn. Keep in mind that the paint will require a couple of days to dry completely and cure, and that can be difficult in damp weather. Don't hamper the final outcome with poor timing. PREPARE THE PAINTING SURFACES: Resist the temptation to start painting straight away. Paint may not adhere to unprepared surfaces, and dirt and other debris may show through and mar the finished product. Repainting a home's exterior will likely involve removing peeling or chipping paint prior to making your first strokes. Wear protective gear when scraping, sanding or brushing old paint, as such tasks can generate dust that can be dangerous to inhale, particularly if the old paint contains lead. Employ a chlorine bleach solution to kill any mildew and to scrub any dirt from the house. In addition, repair any cracks or imperfections. For example, if you're painting stucco, you may have to fill in any pitting or holes. Use this opportunity to inspect caulking around windows and doors. Recaulk as needed to seal up drafty areas or those that may cause water infiltration prior to painting. PRIME AND COVER STAINS: It may be a little extra work, but apply a quality primer as the first coat to hide any imperfec-

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tions, such as wood knots or discoloration from weathering. Primer provides a smooth, even surface upon which to put your paint color. Once you have applied the primer, test your paint color in a small, inconspicuous spot to see how the color looks in the daylight. You do not want to paint the entire home only to find out you dislike the color. TRY THESE PAINTING TECHNIQUES: Rent a paint sprayer for large surface areas. The sprayer will produce a more uniform application and is less time-consuming than painting everything with a brush or roller. Make sure you've chosen a high-quality paint, as the added expense is worth it if the paint lasts longer and coats more evenly. Also, if you have purchased multiple cans of paint, mix them all in one large bucket to ensure the same color; otherwise, the colors may not match perfectly. The experts at HGTV recommend working your way from top to bottom in a smooth, controlled manner, overlapping each stroke by eight inches. Trim and hard-to-reach areas should be left for brush work so you can maintain control over your tools.

If you are painting areas like steps or staircases, consider adding a little fine-grain sand to the paint to improve traction, as paint can be slippery when wet. If painting your home's exterior is beyond your capabilities, hire a professional. He or she will get the work done in a timely manner, and you can rest assured that the job will be done correctly.

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Make Garage Organization Go Smoothly

Garages tend to fall victim to disorganization, when homeowners want to hurry inside. As a result, many homeowners resolve to clean their garages come at a later time. Best to do it before the winter comes.

Cleaning a disorganized garage overcome with clutter can be an all-day job, so homeowners would be wise to reserve a springtime Saturday or Sunday to get their garages back in order. Upon designating ample time to clean their garages, homeowners can then utilize a few additional tips to make the project go as smoothly as possible.

• Empty the garage. The first step when organizing a garage is to empty it completely. Old machinery and rusted lawn and garden tools have a way of disappearing in garages, and those items may remain there for years if the garage is never emptied. Once you have emptied the garage, you might be surprised to learn just how much or even how little space you have to work with.

• Clean the garage top to bottom. After you have emptied the garage, give it a thorough cleaning. Cleaning the garage serves multiple purposes. A clean garage is less likely to be overcome with dirt and/or critters, both of which can contribute to the deterioration of tools and machinery stored in the garage. In addition, you may be less likely to let a clean garage fall back into disorganization, saving you the trouble of reorganizing the garage next spring.

• Look up. Many homeowners fail to make adequate use of the

vertical space in their garages. Keeping items off the floor can make it easier to clean the garage and will provide more room for your car or other machinery you don't want to leave in the driveway or a backyard shed. Install shelves so you can more safely store automotive fluids and cleaners, and hang some hooks or hammer a few nails into the garage walls so you can hang tools like rakes and garden shears.

• Group tools by season. Grouping tools by season can make for a more organized garage and one less likely to be overcome with clutter. Designate one corner of the garage for lawn and gardening tools and another for winter tools like snow shovels or snowblowers.... maybe even Christmas decorations. This makes it easier to find tools when you need them. When grouping tools, you can also group items by who uses them. For example, parents can designate one area of the garage for their tools, while kids can get their own area for their toys and bicycles.

• Resolve to park in the garage. One of the best ways to keep a garage organized is to park your vehicle or vehicles inside the garage each night. Parking in a garage protects your vehicle(s) from the elements, and you also won't be tempted to leave items lying around on the garage floor if you know you will eventually be pulling your vehicle in.

A few simple strategies can make garage organization more effective and efficient.

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Address Air Leaks To Save Energy And Money

Rising energy costs coupled with the continued adoption of eco-friendly lifestyles are two

factors driving homeowners to seek ways to reduce energy consumption in their homes. Reducing energy consumption is reason enough for many homeowners to make changes around the house, but saving energy sometimes means saving substantial amounts of money as well. Energy-efficient appliances and eco-friendly building materials can help homeowners reduce energy consumption. But homeowners looking for additional ways to cut cooling and heating costs can address air leaks around the house to make their homes more energy efficient.

- Identify air leaks around windows and doorways. Autumn is a great time of year to identify air leaks. Fall, and particularly late fall, tends to be characterized by cold air that makes it easy to detect air leaks. Feel for

leaks around windows and doorways, ideally conducting such tests on cold, windy days when you can quickly detect if air is flowing in from the outside. Leaks around windows and doors waste energy because the interior of the home is either colder (in the winter) or warmer (in the summer) than it needs to be, prompting homeowners to turn up their thermostats or rely more heavily on air conditioning units.

- Look for leaks elsewhere around the house. While windows and doorways are where many leaks are found, leaks also may be found around plumbing, electrical fixtures and dryer vents. Inspect such areas by feeling for drafts or looking for signs that insects and critters might be entering.

- Look up and down. Evidence of air leaks may be noticeable on both the floor and the ceiling. Dirty spots on carpeting and the ceiling may be indicative of air leaks at interior wall/ceiling joints and wall/floor joists. Fixing such leaks may be as simple as applying some caulk.
- Go with gaskets. The United States Department of Energy recommends installing foam gaskets behind outlet and switch plates on walls. Outlets and switch boxes on exterior walls provide another place for air to leak into a home and drive up energy costs. Properly

installed gaskets can cut back on air infiltration, providing an inexpensive way to save energy and money.

- Cover the kitchen exhaust fans when you are not cooking. Kitchen exhaust fans can help prevent fires and unfavorable indoor air conditions when preparing meals at home. But such fans provide opportunities for air to enter a home, so make sure they are tightly closed or covered when no one is cooking in the kitchen.

Air leaks around a house can waste energy and contribute to high energy bills, particularly during the winter and summer when temperatures outside tend to be at their most extreme. Homeowners looking to reduce their energy consumption and save money can inspect various areas of their homes for air leaks and immediately address any they discover. Air leaks around doorways can waste energy and cost homeowners substantial amounts of money.

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Winter Plants Brighten Spaces

Spring and summer have the colorful blooms and rich greenery that make the great outdoors so lush and inviting. Autumn is awash in vibrant colors that beckon people outdoors to explore. But winter has a poor reputation with regard to natural beauty. While it's true that many plants and wildlife retreat into hibernation come the colder temperatures, some choose the wintertime to bloom. Other plants and shrubs continue to hold on to their leaves and color despite the cold. Hardy winter plants do more than just survive the snow and ice. Many thrive and have the potential to add that unexpected touch of color to an otherwise dreary landscape. In addition to berry bushes that can feature bright red, yellow and orange berries perfect for holiday decorating, plenty of other plants are visually appealing through colder temperatures.

- Mahonia: Some varieties of mahonias bloom in the winter

and can be hardy up to USDA Zone 9. The close relative Oregon grape holly will flower in very early spring.

- Camellia: Camellias grow flowers similar in shape and size to roses. They range in shade from light pink to bright red. Camellias can bloom all year long in moderate temperature zones. Even in colder zones, some cold climate hybrids can continue to add welcome color to the garden.
- Daphne: The fragrant flowers of many daphnes appear in mid-winter. The variety Jacqueline Postill is evergreen.
- Evergreen holly: Perhaps the quintessential winter plant. Green shiny leaves and bold red berries can be a bright spot in a winter garden. A holly hedge also can serve as a wind and privacy barrier.
- Japanese pieris: Flower buds on this shrub, sometimes called the "Mountain Fire," thrive from fall through winter. This shrub needs moist, well-drained soil and should be placed in a shaded

location in warmer climates.

- Hellebore: Also called the "Christmas Rose," hellebores can be delightful in areas of the country where winter flowers tend to be rare. The plant bears pure white flowers that often age to pink.
- Snowdrop: These delicate white blooms often pop out of a layer of snow even before the first crocuses of spring. Snowdrops can wait out harsh weather and even extended snow events before eventually sprouting.
- Crape myrtle: There are around 50 species of these trees and shrubs that are native to parts of Asia and India. The trees bloom beautifully and continue to hold on to their bright colored flowers in warmer climates.
- Winter jasmine: If you want to create a mid-winter color splash, consider the climbing winter jasmine, which is hardy in zones 5 to 10 and blooms in January.
- Jelena witch hazel: These curly, odd-shaped blooms have

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a rich, copper color and can bloom as early as January. This plant also is an orange-red color in autumn.

- Kaffir lily: Also known as the "Red River lily," these perennials appear in the fall but can still

bloom on mild days in the winter. These plants prefer wet conditions.

- Winter vegetables: Planting cabbage, spinach or swiss chard can give you something fresh to eat through late autumn and even into winter if you have a

greenhouse or cold frame in the yard. Winter may be characterized by dreary landscapes, but plenty of plant life thrives in spite of the chill.

Creative Uses For Fallen Leaves

Millions of leaves fall from tree boughs each fall. Homeowners and landscaping professionals will spend countless hours removing leaves from lawns and driveways so they can be collected and ultimately added to compost piles or removed by local governments. But leaves do not necessarily have to meet with the same fate each year. In fact, there are many creative ways to use leaves gathered from lawns and gardens.

- Scarecrow: Gather a decent pile of leaves and the makings of a scarecrow, which include hay, old clothing, string, and canvas. Use the leaves to help stuff the body of the

scarecrow and make him a bit more plump.

- Vases: Fill an empty flower vase with different leaves that you have gathered. This makes for an engaging centerpiece when entertaining.
- Pressings: Press leaves between two pieces of paper to make a leaf silhouette. Some of the pigment will transfer to the paper, and these natural pieces of artwork can be displayed or shared.
- Laminate: Laminate leaves so they can be used as place cards when hosting guests for holiday feasts. Put these ideas to the test to make fallen leaves part of your unique home decor.

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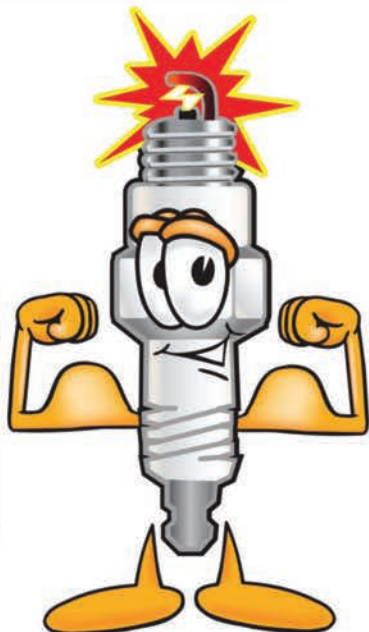


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Prep The Yard For Winter Weather

As quickly as autumn weather arrives it seems to move aside for the blustery, cold days of winter. Winter can catch a person off guard and the seasons are now less predictable than ever before.

It's never too early to begin preparing your yard and outdoor living spaces for winter. Homeowners may be sad to bid farewell to the furniture and accessories of the fair-weather season, but time is of the essence when prepping for impending ice and snow.

* Clean patio furniture. Give cushions and structures a thorough cleaning and allow to dry completely. Cleaning items before storing them for the winter saves time and energy next year when it's time once again to set up the yard for recreation. If anything is damaged beyond repair, discard it and look for replacements during end-of-season sales when savings can be had.

* Move things indoors. The more items you can store in a safe and secure location the better. Load the garage, basement or storage shed with outdoor gear. Leaving items exposes them to the elements, and such exposure can cause rust, wear and damage. Flower pots and lawn ornaments also can blow around in winter wind or collapse under the weight of the snow, so collect these items and store them for the winter. Take out patio umbrellas and put them in the shed. If something is too large to move indoors, such as a barbecue or a pool filter, cover it with a durable tarp and secure it with rope.

* Cover delicate trees. Depending on where you live, certain fruit trees, including fig trees, may need to be covered for the winter. Covering protects them from subfreezing temperatures and helps ensure they will rebound in the spring. Tropical plants should be moved indoors where they can thrive in a heated home. Do not



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HOURS: Mon. thru Fri. 8:30 a.m.-6 p.m.; Sat. 9 a.m.-2 p.m.

rip out chrysanthemum plants. Contrary to popular belief, these are not annuals. They will rebloom year after year if allowed to do so.

* Remove water collectors. Bring in or cover anything that may accumulate water, such as bird baths or kids' toys. Water expands when frozen, and that means water trapped in any ceramic, glass or even plastic vessel can expand and cause the container to crack.

* Clean up leaves and debris., or mulch them. Piles of leaves not only can suffocate a lawn and cause discoloration, but also can be attractive homes for rodents and insects looking for a warm place to spend their winters. Keep your yard neat and clean to discourage wildlife from taking up residence near your home.

* Cover vegetable and flower beds. Invest in some burlap to lay down over planting beds. This helps to keep the ground from freezing over and minimize weeds for next season.

* Care for outdoor ponds. If you

have a pond on your property, remove any weeds around it and fish out any leaves from the water. Leaves will decay in the water and build up ammonia levels that can harm fish. If the pond is small, cover it for the winter. Also, start cutting back on feeding outdoor fish. These aquatic animals' bodies begin to prepare for winter by slowing down metabolism. Continuing to feed them can harm the fish when the temperature drops.

* Wrap up pool season. It's wise to close the pool and cover it

before leaves start to drop. Otherwise you will have a hard time of keeping the water clean. * Plant spring bulbs now. Now is a good time to plan where you want to put spring bulbs. Once you have mapped things out, get the bulbs in the ground. Bulbs are relatively inexpensive and will provide that first punch of color when winter finally skips town. Autumn is a busy time for preparing your home and yard for the arrival of winter weather.



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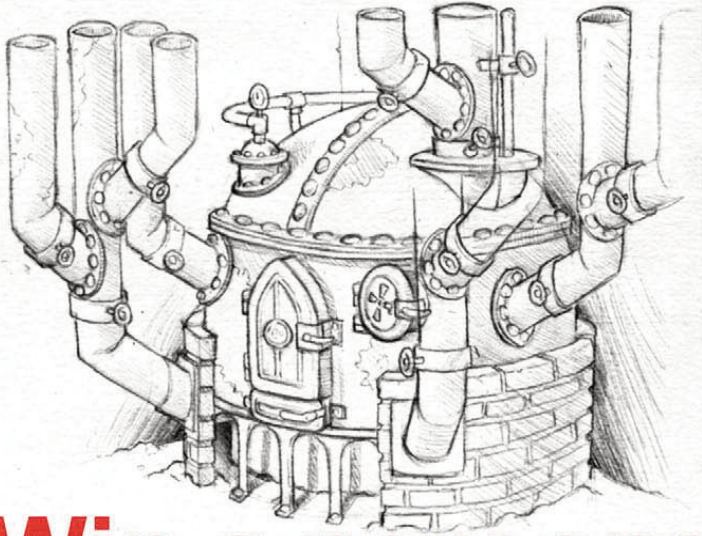
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Home Safety Checks To Complete Today!

Accidents or injuries can occur in any part of the home, but homeowners who take certain preventative measures can greatly reduce their injury risk. The security resource A Secure Life points out that more than 18,000 Americans die every year from injuries that take place in the home. Unintentional injuries account for millions of medical visits each year. Home injuries also are prevalent elsewhere in the world. Periodic inspections for potential hazards can keep everyone safe. The following are a handful of ways for homeowners to ensure their homes are as safe as possible.

- Check for sturdy handrails and prevent tripping hazards. Falls are one of the leading causes of home injuries. Falls can be a particular

threat for youngsters and the elderly. To help prevent falls, make sure that staircases feature sturdy railings and that there is ample lighting in walkways. Remove obstructions from frequently used paths inside and outside the home. In addition, insert nonslip padding beneath runners or throw rugs.

- Check for frayed wires or faulty outlets. Address any electrical problems around the house, including frayed wiring and faulty outlets. Sparks can lead to fires, and poor wiring may cause unforeseen problems behind walls. Repair or replace any loose or frayed wires on all electrical devices. Be sure that cords do not run under doorways or rugs. Replace outlets that are in disrepair and install ones with ground-

fault current interruptors as an added precaution. If small children live in the home, use plastic safety covers over unused outlets.

- Practice window safety. Young children are curious and do not always recognize the inherent dangers around them. Children excited to see the great outdoors may climb up to peer out windows, and open windows are falling hazards. Screens do not offer an adequate barrier against falls. Consider locking windows or use safety bars to guard against falls. Test to see how easily screens can be pushed out, replacing any that do not provide adequate resistance to curious youngsters' hands.
- Check smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. Replace the batteries in smoke alarms and

carbon monoxide detectors at least twice per year, and test them to make sure they're in good working order at least once per month. The National Fire Protection Association recommends replacing hard-wired

smoke alarms every 10 years. Battery-operated alarms may need to be replaced even sooner. Many carbon monoxide detectors work for five to seven years. Check the back of alarms for a date stamp that indicates how old

the product is and when it expires. Safety checklists are an important part of home maintenance. A proactive approach can prevent both injuries and damage to the home.

How To Prevent Simple Plumbing Problems

No homeowner wants to be confronted with plumbing problems, which many associate with costly repairs and water damage. But many plumbing problems are preventable if homeowners take the time to learn about them and make the effort to nip them in the

bud before they become something major.

- Clogged kitchen sink: Kitchen sinks get used quite a bit in the average home, and what makes its way down the sinks can contribute to plumbing problems. Avoid pouring gravy, grease,

cooking oil, or fat down the kitchen sink, as these substances can cling to the pipes and lead to a backed up sink and a potentially messy situation. Discard thick liquids and sauces in the trash can instead of the sink. Periodically turn the faucet on as hot as it can go and run it for a few minutes to dislodge anything that might have stuck to the pipes.

- Clogged shower drain: The pipes in the shower/bath tub can easily become clogged as well. Hair is the main culprit when shower drains get clogged, so install hair traps that catch any hair you and others might shed while they are bathing. Instruct each person to remove their hair from the drain upon getting out of the shower. If you suspect the drain might already be on its way to clogging, use a wet/dry vac to remove any hair that might have started piling up in the pipes.
- Washing machines: Few homeowners may think to periodically inspect their washing machines, but normal wear and tear on washing machine hoses can gradually build up, potentially leading to flooding if left unchecked. Periodically inspect hoses for cracks and other damage, replacing them if they look especially vulnerable.
- Water heater: Water heaters also can produce plumbing problems if homeowners don't keep an eye on them. Rusty tank fittings on water heaters are a warning sign that the heater might need some repairs. When left unchecked, water heaters can cause flooding that produces significant water damage, and water heaters may even need to be replaced, which can be very expensive. If you detect any problems with your heater, call in a plumber to confirm if anything is awry and address the problem.

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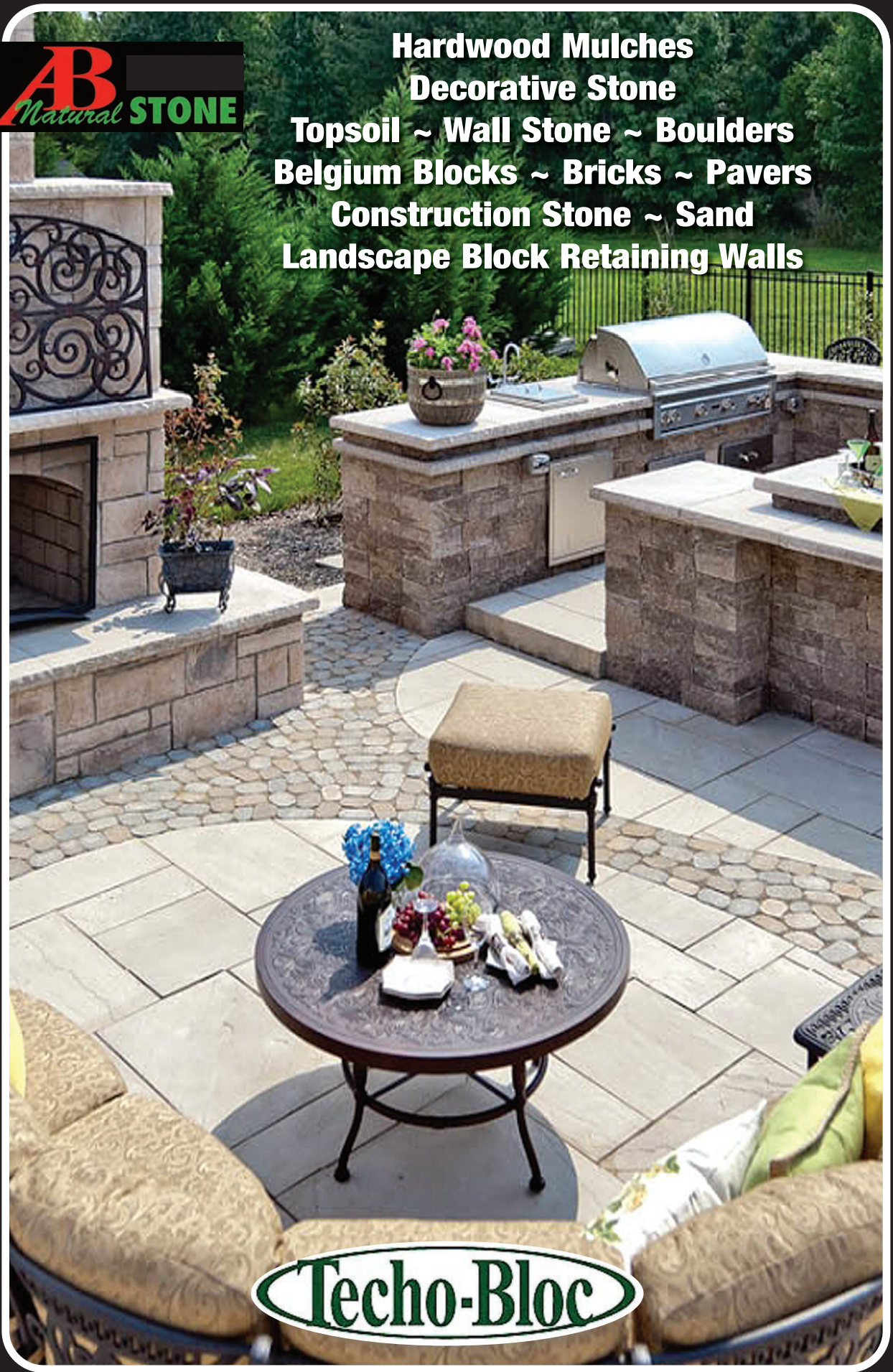
These Professionals Can Help Maintain Your Home

Home repairs are inevitable. For the homeowner who also happens to be handy with a hammer, the occasional home repair is nothing to fear and something that many even enjoy. But there many homeowners who aren't so adept at home repairs, and such men and women typically rely on trained professionals when something goes awry around the house. For those homeowners who either don't have the time or the ability to fix issues that arise around the house, the following is a breakdown of three of the more commonly called on home service providers.

* **ELECTRICIAN:** An electrician specializes in addressing a building's or home's electrical wiring issues, stationary machines and the equipment related to those machines. Electricians can fix existing issues, but many also can design and install new electrical components and systems. The Page 19

dangers of working with electrical systems are many, so electricians typically must be certified and licensed before they can practice their trade. Such danger is one reason why even those who are adept at fixing problems around the house might want to hire an electrician should an electrical issue arise. * **PLUMBER:** A plumber is a professional whose area of expertise is in installing and maintaining systems for drinking water, drainage and sewage. Though not all jurisdictions require a plumber be licensed before he or she can practice, many do, and it can take years of training and experience to master the skill of plumbing. Many people call a plumber when a toilet or sink backs up, but plumbers must have far more extensive skills as well. Plumbers must be skilled in a number of areas, including having an ability to read and understand a home's blueprints, detect faults in a

plumbing system if the homeowner cannot install and repair fixtures and systems, and be aware of any legal requirements to ensure a home is safe. * **LANDSCAPER:** Homeowners have increasingly looked to professional landscapers to maintain their home's exterior and subsequently ensure their property value remains high. A typical landscaper offers his client an array of services, from cutting the grass to raking leaves to more complicated tasks that gravitate toward landscape architecture. A home's curb appeal has been shown to vastly improve a prospective buyer's impression of the house, and as a result many homeowners rely on a landscaper to take care of their property. Many landscapers an extensive knowledge of the science involved in tending to a lawn and how to help it weather the seasons without losing its appeal.



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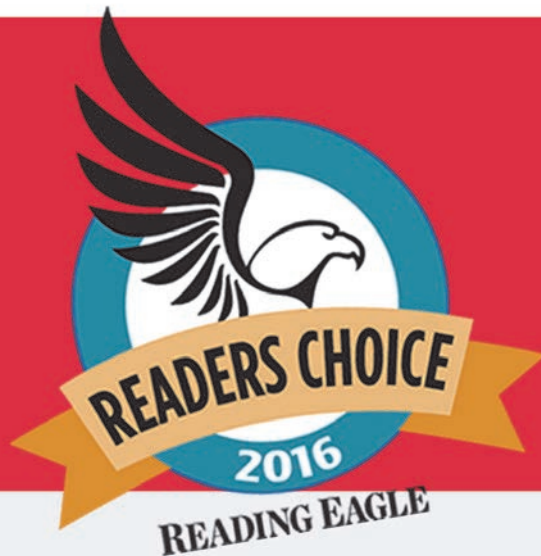
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