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Bold Colors Add Vitality To Homes

Whether it's Independence Day, St. Patrick's Day or the holiday season, the bold hues that are synonymous with these events add a splash of color to rooms that can use a little design lift. While some colors may be synonymous with certain times of year, homeowners can employ bold colors in their homes all year long. By embracing bold painting and decorating styles, homeowners can use fresh color palettes to make rooms more fun. *Green and pink* Colors on opposite ends of the color wheel will always complement each other. Green paired with pink (a lighter shade of green's opposite, red) calls to mind the great outdoors. These hues can add a touch of floral spring sunshine even when that season has long since passed. Opt for a deep green and a carnation pink for maximum impact. And don't forget a vase full of fresh blooms as the finishing factor. *Lavender and deep blue* Analogous colors are three colors that sit side-by-side on the color wheel and share a common denominator in terms of shade. Lavender, blue and an orchid pink are examples of such hues. This cool, regal combination can add femininity to a bedroom or even drama to another space in the house.



If painting the walls dark blue or lavender seems scary, opt for a neutral shade on walls and then dress up the space with inky and violet accents. *Turquoise and brick red* Enhance the "wow" factor with these bold colors. Although they are striking, when they work together, they also can impart a soothing feel, particularly since they are often inspired by Asian influences. Feature a light turquoise sofa with red throw pillows. Or dress up meals with a red tablecloth on the dining table and turquoise, white and red, patterned place mats. *Gray and yellow* Yellow is a pick-me-up color any time of the year, but, when combined with a gray, it's toned down to be soothing instead of startling. This color combination is popular in kitchens, nurseries and entryways. Have fun in the kitchen with mottled gray stone countertops, pale yellow walls and canary café curtains. Color can affect mood and transform spaces with just a small investment of time and money. Homeowners can experiment with color palettes so rooms remain vibrant all year long. FH178198

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The arrival of cooler weather marks a prime time to plant bulbs that will bloom come spring and summer. Bulbs should be planted as soon as the ground is cool, ideally when temperatures average between 40 and 50 F. Just be sure to plant bulbs at least six weeks before the ground freezes for optimal success. Always follow the bulb distributor's guidelines for planting, including suggestions regarding spacing and soil depth. Remove any weeds and loosen the soil to get started. In addition, think about mixing in compost or other organic matter to enrich the soil if it lacks nutrients. FH168268

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Potential Indicators of Roof Trouble

With regard to home repairs, homeowners may be able to delay some projects until the weather permits or they find room in their budgets. But other areas, including the roof, may demand immediate action. Few homeowners give the roofs of their homes much thought until a problem arises. But learning to recognize potential indicators of roof trouble can help homeowners prevent potentially drastic situations down the road.



• Light: Homeowners with attics in their homes can inspect the ceilings inside the attic for signs of holes or leaks. Light peering through the top of the house indicates a hole or leak, as does stains or streaks on the ceiling.
• Worn shingles: Shingles should lie flat against the roof, so any that appear to be buckling or turning up are damaged and in need of repair. A single damaged shingle does not require a full roof replacement, but inspect all the shingles nonetheless. Another indicator of shingle problems can be found when cleaning downspouts or gutters. If the gutters and downspouts contain lots of shingle granules, the roof may soon need to be replaced.

• Moss: Moss on a rooftop may give a home character, but that added character is costly. Shady areas of a roof can be susceptible to the growth of moss and fungi because moisture

can be trapped in such areas. If possible, remove moss or fungi from a roof with a stiff brush or hire a professional to do the job instead. Moss may come back even after brushing it off, so homeowners should keep an eye on areas of their roofs that get little sunlight. In addition, trapped moisture can be very harmful to a roof, so it may be wise to exercise caution and have roofs with mold or fungi growths inspected.

• Age: Another indicator of roof trouble may be the age of the roof. Even if there are no visible signs of damage, homeowners whose roofs have some years under their belt may want to consider replacing them. Asphalt shingle roofs typically have life expectancies of 20 to 25 years, while roofs installed over existing layers of shingles may need to be replaced after 20 years.

Recognizing minor roof damage before it escalates into a larger problem can save homeowners substantial amounts of money. FH178233



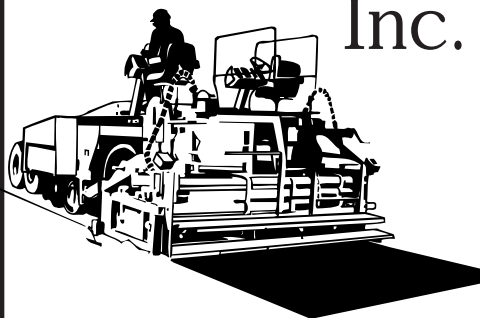
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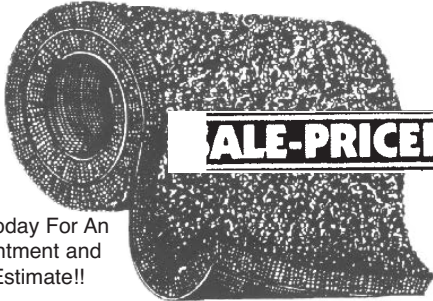
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Address Air Leaks To Save Energy and Money

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.

- 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. FH168304

• 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.



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According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, there are no safe levels of lead. Lead is particularly harmful to children's health. Exposure to lead can stunt children's growth while also contributing to behavioral and learning problems. Anemia, reduced growth of fetuses in pregnant women, cardiovascular effects, and reproductive problems also are side effects of lead exposure. Many people once came into contact with lead via lead-based paints, which have been banned in the United States for consumer use since 1978. But lead also can be lurking in water supplies. The EPA says that between 10 and 20 percent of instances of lead exposure can be traced to contaminated water. Homes built before 1986 are the biggest risk factors for lead plumbing. As of January 2014, all newly installed water fixtures, pipes and fittings must meet new lead-free requirements. But within the United States, public water suppliers and existing homes do not need to retrofit. The National Drinking Water Advisory Council found around 7.3 million lead service lines currently deliver water to customers. Homeowners can request testing through their local water supplier or conduct certified home tests. FH178226



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What Is A Smart Home?

Refrigerators that inform their owners when it's time to buy more eggs and thermostats that learn homeowners' heating and cooling preferences may once have seemed like futuristic ideas straight out of a sci-fi movie. However, such products are no longer a dream but a reality. The term "smart home" refers to a residence that has appliances, HVAC, lighting, entertainment systems, security, and many more devices that communicate with one another. Such devices can be controlled remotely, according to SmartHomeUSA, an automation product retailer. Proponents of smart home technology say features can help people save money on utilities and conserve natural resources, all the while providing peace of mind to homeowners.



features and are open to standardization may have the best chances of survival.

Those interested in dabbling in some smart home technology and testing the waters may want to start with the following household items.

- **Smart bulbs:** Manufacturers offer various types of smart light bulbs. Some are color-changing, others react to doorbells or alarms, and others can simulate typical lighting patterns when homeowners are away. Integrated apps enable remote access to scheduling so people can arrive home to a well-lit house.
- **Home security:** Wi-Fi enabled doorbells with video capabilities allow residents to see who is at the door without having to open it. Cameras can even be accessed remotely, simulating that someone is at home at all times. Never wonder if you've locked the door again with smart locks that can be engaged via a smartphone. Make sure that homes are secured or that pets are behaving while out with smart cameras.
- **Flood sensor:** Get peace of mind against damaging floods with Wi-Fi flood sensors.
- **Appliances:** A new breed of smart appliances can make it possible for users to turn on the washing machine while out of the house, close refrigerator doors from afar or even start their vacuum cleaners remotely.

Smart technology is taking over and is likely to continue changing the way people live and work. FH178224

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Transform Spaces Into Cozy Retreats



tures can instantly transform the feel of a room. Create more warmth and a cozy feel by switching out bulbs from cooler shades to warmer ones — those that give off yellow and pink hues rather than cool blues. Accent lighting helps establish a comfortable space for curling up and reading a good book. Spot lighting, such as fixtures that are trained on artwork or inside of a curio or china cabinet, also can set a more welcoming mood.

- Install a bookshelf and start a book collection. Piles and stacked books can add warmth to any space. Books evoke the hallowed halls of schools and quiet nooks in the library. Fill shelves with books interspersed with additional design accents, and you will instantly make a room feel more inviting.
- Choose dark paint. Do not feel nervous about incorporating deeper shades in rooms. Dark colors give rooms a more enclosed feel than lighter colors, and that can create a warm

Cool weather often drives people to spend more hours indoors than they do during the warmer months. Autumn is a time to winterize gardens, put away lawn furniture and prepare for the holiday season. Autumn also provides the perfect opportunity to begin home interior projects.

Many people decide to redecorate their homes to reflect each season. When temperatures change, it's time to transition from the light colors and breezy fabrics symbolic of summer to thicker, darker materials that evoke coziness.

With some inspiration and a little know-how, any homeowner or apartment dweller can cozy up a space in time for fall and winter.

- Invest in area rugs. While wood floors can look beautiful and work well with many different design styles, wood can feel chilly underfoot. Thick area rugs add warmth to a room and can help it look more lived-in. Area rugs also help a room appear more cohesive, coordinating with other colors in a space and providing a visual border.
- Practice layering in rooms. An affordable and relatively easy way to make a room seem more cozy is to layer fabrics and other accents. Layers can include throws and blankets. Remove place mats from the dining room table and use them on accent tables or an ottoman in the living room. Table runners also can add a splash of color to the top of bedroom dressers.
- Play with texture. Look for fabrics that boast texture and can add a tactile feel to spaces. When used on throw pillows or small accents, faux fur can create that cozy cabin feel. Draperies made from nubby fabrics or those with grooves and ridges can add dimension to a room as well. Even a lampshade made of an unusual fabric, such as a waffle-patterned

material, can add a little depth and warmth to a space.

- Reevaluate your lighting. Lighting a space is more than just flipping on a switch. Finding the right balance of lighting fix-

and cozy feeling. This works particularly well in larger spaces that feel vast and empty. If you're scared to paint all of your walls, try a darker shade below a chair rail or just paint one accent wall.

- Add architectural elements. Think about adding rich moldings to crown the ceilings or to frame doorways. If you have the space for a nook, create a window seat beneath a picture window or add a bench and cushions in a corner for a nice escape spot.

Use the colder weather as an opportunity to reinvent some of the rooms in your home. With paint, texture, fabric, lighting, and more, rooms can be quickly transformed into cozy respites from the cold. FH168308

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Antimicrobial Tiles Help Create Sanitary Spaces

Tile can be a worthy addition to rooms with potential moisture issues or areas in a home that may routinely necessitate quick cleanup. Because they are not damaged by constant contact with water, tiled floors and walls are often found in bathrooms, kitchens, laundry rooms, and entryways. Although tile is resilient, it is not impervious to the microorganisms that tend to proliferate in areas where moisture and humidity are commonplace. Microbes can grow rapidly in warm areas, especially if food is present. Mold or mildew issues also can become problematic seemingly overnight. But certain modifications can help homeowners alleviate the proliferation of microorganisms. Various manufacturers have developed their own innovative tile that

contributes to cleaner, and sometimes more eco-friendly, home environments. The application of certain treatments can make ceramic tiles even more impervious to water and moisture. Some tile may help reduce the spread of certain strains of bacteria, such as E. coli and staph, without requiring the application of potentially harsh chemical detergents. Others treatments may protect against yeast, molds and fungi that can cause stains and odors and result in the degradation of tile. Antimicrobial products inhibit the growth of microorganisms and suppress their reproduction. For example, tiles with Microban® protection employ an antimicrobial agent built into the product during the manufacturing process. When microbes touch the product surface, the

agent penetrates the cell wall of the microorganism. Other tiles are treated with micrometric particles of titanium dioxide (TiO2), which is activated by sunlight or artificial light. This causes a photocatalysis process, which is responsible for the product's antipollution and bactericidal properties. Examples of TiO2-treated tiles include Active Clean Air & Antibacterial Ceramic™. Antimicrobial ceramic tile can be advantageous in rooms where sanitation and hygiene are an utmost priority. This includes not only public places, but private residences. Worktops and floors where microbes can be transferred are

particularly beneficial areas to install antimicrobial tile. A potential side effect of antimicrobial tile is a reduction in reliance on harsh cleaning products. Although regular washing is recommended, residents may not need to use odoriferous or strong chemical cleaners to sanitize their homes. This helps improve indoor air quality and reduce the potential contamination of the environment from chemical runoff. Homeowners thinking of installing antimicrobial tile in their homes should discuss their options with a tile retailer or contractor during the planning stages. FH178194

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Corral Entryway Clutter

The entryway to a home is the first thing guests experience when coming inside. It also can be the first place residents drop their belongings after long days at school or work. As a result, entryways can quickly be consumed by clutter. Taming such messes takes a mixture of ingenuity and planning.

Homeowners hoping to clear their entryways of clutter must first decide what they want to get out of the space. Will it simply be a decorative spot with photos and other home decor on display? Or is functionality the primary goal?

Once that decision has been made, take inventory of which items, such as shoes, keys, umbrellas or coats, need to be in the area, which don't (i.e., old mail). To make things more organized, rearrange the former while removing the latter.

Next it is time to assess storage needs and what's already available. User-friendly storage items may need to be purchased to make the room as functional as possible. The following ideas also can help bring order to the space.

• Create a command center. Create a central location where items

are neat, orderly and within reach. Use a bulletin board, dry-erase calendar or something that can house schedules and important notices. Hooks can hold keys, chargers and more.

• Keep it covered. Covered bins can serve as a seating area and also a place to store shoes, hats and scarves.

• Create cabinet space. Store items in cabinets so they are organized but out of sight. This way belongings are not just left on an entryway table.

• Create another drop zone. If the entryway is too small to serve its purpose, outfit another room or area that also can do the job. This can be a laundry room or mudroom area. Install shelves, a bench, cabinets and hooks. Just be sure this space is close enough to the entryway to make it useful.

• Go vertical. An easy way to keep things neater is to remove items from the floor and embrace vertical storage. Shoe racks, hooks for purses and a cabinet for coats may do the trick.

Clutter can accumulate in entryways. But some simple adjustments can quickly revamp the space to make it neater and much more functional. FH178196

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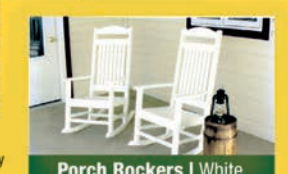


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Types Of Firepites For Your Backyard Oasis



Outdoor entertaining areas are popular among homeowners, and firepits are one of the most sought-after additions to such spaces. In fact, a 2016 survey from the American Society of Landscape Architects found that fireplaces and firepits were the most popular outdoor design element in 2016. Various styles are available to homeowners who want to add firepits to their backyards, and choosing the right type may come down to budget, the amount of yard space available or even personal preference.

• Wood firepit: As their name suggests, wood firepits burn wood, which may appeal to homeowners who already have wood-burning fireplaces inside their homes. Because they don't require homeowners to tap into gas lines, wood firepits are generally easy to set up and install, and many homeowners prefer the aesthetic appeal of crackling wood and flames that's synonymous with wood firepits.

• Gas firepit: Gas firepits are touted for their convenience, as they don't require homeowners to carry wood and build fires.

Upon being connected to a gas source, gas firepits provide fire at the click of a switch. Gas firepits are also appreciated for their safety, as there is little or no risk that flames from gas firepits will grow too large and become difficult to control.

• Gas fire tables: Gas fire tables might be ideal for those homeowners whose sense of decor favors more modern looks. Gas fire tables come in a variety of shapes and sizes and, like gas firepits, there's no need to struggle with lighting a fire or carrying firewood.

• Tabletop firepits: Homeowners, condominium or apartment dwellers with limited backyard space may want to consider the convenience of tabletop firepits. Restaurants may use tabletop firepits in their outdoor seating areas because they provide warmth and ambiance without taking up much space. Tabletop firepits fueled by gas will not need to be connected to a gas source, which may appeal to consumers who want something that's simple as well as small.

• Fire urns: While they might not technically qualify as firepits, fire urns provide a similar effect as firepits. Fire urns are typically gas-powered and may be an ideal choice for homeowners who are looking for a unique, awe-inspiring feature for their outdoor entertaining areas. FH178266

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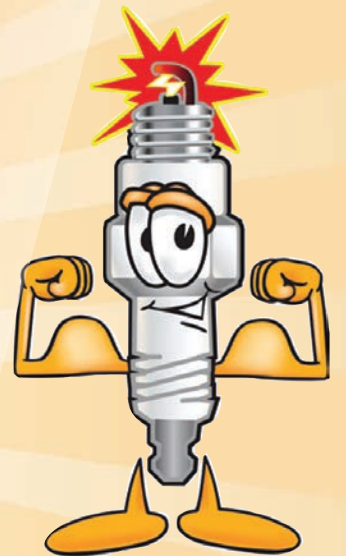


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Quality cleaners can be easy to find. NADCA's Find a Professional Directory lets consumers locate NADCA members nearby just by typing in a zip code. The directory can also help you verify that an air duct cleaning company that claims to be a NADCA member actually is a member.

Learn More: For further facts on having healthy air in a healthy home, go to www.nadca.com.



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Gardening Tool Care

(NAPSI)—Before diving into yard care, make sure your lawn and gardening tools are up to the task with proper maintenance. The tips below could save you money and time by extending the life of your tools.

Hand Tool Maintenance:
To protect your investment in quality hand and gardening tools, clean them after each use, removing any dirt and debris. Then, wash and dry them, and lightly rub rusted areas with fine sandpaper.

Pruning shears should be placed in a bucket with water and scrubbed with a wire brush until the metal is clean after each use. Coat the blades and moving parts with a water displacement lubricant with a controllable spray pattern, such as the non-aerosol WD-40® Multi-Use Product Trigger Pro®. Its narrow spray pattern will give you more control, eliminating overspray for less mess, while preventing rust from building up and helping shears open and close smoothly.

Sharpening Tools:
Sharp tools make yard chores easier for you and help plants heal faster after a trim. Pruning shears, hedge shears and grass clippers function in a similar scissor-like manner. To sharpen them, tighten the pivot nut and file the edge of the pruning blade following the factory-cut bevel in single strokes until fresh steel is exposed.

Power Equipment Maintenance:
Check your power tools carefully for worn parts that may need replacement, and for loose screws, nuts or bolts. To stay in good condition, lawn mowers need yearly tune-ups. Protect the blades by coating them with WD-40 Multi-Use Product Trigger Pro's wide spray pattern to help prevent rust, and dirt and debris, from sticking to the blade.

Make sure your gardening tools are up for all tasks. For more information about how non-aerosol WD-40 Trigger Pro can help make your gardening tool maintenance easier, visit wd40.com.



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Fall Lawn Care Tips

Spring and summer may be the seasons most often associated with landscaping and lawn care, but tending to lawns and gardens is a year-round job. If lawn and garden responsibilities dip considerably in winter, then fall is the last significant chance before the new year that homeowners will have to address the landscaping around their homes.

Fall lawn care differs from spring and summer lawn care, even if the warm temperatures of summer linger into autumn. Homeowners who want their lawns to thrive year-round can take advantage of the welcoming weather of fall to address any existing or potential issues.

- Keep mowing, but adjust how you mow. It's important that homeowners continue to mow their lawns so long as grass is growing. But as fall transitions into winter, lower the blades so the grass is cut shorter while remaining mindful that no blade of grass should ever be trimmed by more than one-third. Lowering the blades will allow more sunlight to reach the grass in the months ahead.
- Remove leaves as they fall. Much like apple-picking and foliage, raking leaves is synonymous with fall. Some homeowners may wait to pick up a rake until all of the trees on their properties are bare. However, allowing fallen leaves to sit on the ground for extended periods of time can have an adverse effect on grass. Leaves left to sit on the lawn may ultimately suffocate the grass by forming an impenetrable wall that deprives the lawn of sunlight and oxygen. The result is dead grass and possibly even fungal disease. Leaves may not need to be raked

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Maximize Your Basement's Potential

by Scott McGillivray (NAPSI) - With house prices on the rise, finishing a basement is the latest trend toward building even more equity in the home.

A finished basement can offer a little extra room to give a growing family space to breathe, and with so many uses, a renovated basement may be the exact solution to what your home is missing. It can provide additional storage space, a soundproofed media room, craft room, guest room or income suite. The possibilities are practically endless. Here are some tips on how to give your basement a 180-degree makeover:

Waterproof it. Check the interior foundation and floors to make sure there are no existing moisture issues, water damage or mold problems. Address any primary moisture issues before finishing the space. Examine grading to ensure water runs away from your foundation. **Soundproof it.** Installing acoustic insulation can provide an excellent excuse for cranking up the subwoofer, hosting a get-together or letting the kids run wild. Soundproofing can be the ultimate solution to maximize your basement's peace, quiet and privacy. Industry experts suggest using Roxul Safe 'n' Sound, which effectively absorbs sound and is easy to work with.

Add or replace flooring. Installing a new floor can improve the overall comfort level and look of your basement. Vinyl, laminate, ceramic tile and engineered hardwood are great options. Say no to

carpet, which can harbor mold and allergens, particularly in the basement, and don't forget to lay a subfloor.

Add color. Transform the dull and boring space into an inviting oasis or a colorful playroom with a simple coat of paint. If your basement has low ceilings or limited natural light, choose lighter, warmer tones to brighten the space. To add some drama, consider adding depth and visual interest to your space with a different-colored accent wall.

Accessorize it. Throw pillows, rugs, lighting and artwork are simple additions that can immediately enhance or change your basement's look and feel. Recessed lights can modernize, while artwork and throw pillows can add a splash of color. Accessories are really an opportunity to make it your own and let your personality shine through. They also provide an inexpensive way to keep your space looking fresh from year to year.

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Your Guide To Proper Tree Pruning

Trees may require pruning for a variety of reasons. Storms may have damaged branches, necessitating a pruning. In other instances, trees may have outgrown their yards, overpowering the landscape. Autumn and winter, when trees largely go dormant and fallen leaves make it easier to see the branches beneath, may be prime times to prune. Pruning during the dormant period also minimizes sap loss and stress to the tree,

and can help cut down on the growth of fungi. In addition, insects are less likely to be problematic during the colder months of the year.

Trimming and pruning can be handled by do-it-yourselfers if the branches are smaller and more manageable. Practice on thinner branches before moving on to thicker ones, which may require extra help. Branches may be heavy, and it takes a guided hand to ensure the branches fall in a safe manner so they do not cause damage or injury.

Branches also need to be trimmed properly to facilitate good healing. Trees will form a callus bark covering over cuts to keep out disease and decay, much as a scab forms over a person's wound. Damaging the bark on a tree while pruning may interfere with that process, so do-it-yourselfers need to take the time to prune correctly.

According to Danny Lipford, home improvement expert and host of the radio program "Today's Homeowner," larger limbs may require three cuts instead of one. The first cut is a small notch in the bottom of the limb, around two to three feet from the trunk and about one-quarter of the way through. This helps prevent the bark from splitting. A relief cut is then made a few inches away from the notch cut, and goes all the way through. This removes the weight of the branch so that the final cut can be made without the branch splitting and falling. The final cut is made right where the limb extrudes from the branch collar, or the swollen bump that then forms into the tree limb. Follow the slant of the branch collar when making the cut. Smaller or thinner branches may not require the same three steps, but every effort should be made to reduce injury to the tree.

When deciding how much to prune, less is usually more. All pruning can put some level of stress on the tree and increase its vulnerability to disease and insect infestation. A good rule of thumb is to never prune more than 25 percent of the crown. According to experts at TreeHelp.com, living branches should comprise at least two-thirds the height of the tree. In some instances, the rules may need to be

adjusted if trees are interfering with utility lines or to meet community laws. However, always prune minimally to avoid damaging the tree.

The right tools also make the job safer and easier. Use a pole pruner and lopper, rope saws, folding pruner, and a bucksaw. A chainsaw can be used in some instances, especially when pruning larger limbs. Always disinfect pruning tools after you're done to prevent the spread of disease to other trees.

Consider hiring a professional tree service if pruning proves beyond your capabilities. Doing so is safe and often well worth the investment. FH168295

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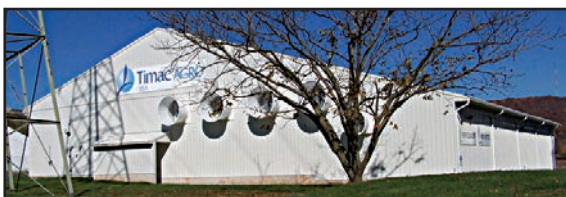
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Tips For Staining Wood

Staining wood can transform the look of everything from fencing to decking. While wood can be beautiful in its natural state, staining can protect the wood and complement landscaping and other home design elements. Staining can seem like a simple project, and that is often true. However, certain woods, such as pine, cherry, maple, and birch, can be difficult to stain. Boards with attractive grain patterns also can absorb stain differently, resulting in blotching and uneven tone. Before beginning a staining project, it is important for homeowners to test the stain chosen on a sample piece of wood to see how the color and absorption turn out. This gives homeowners the chance to understand what they're dealing with and time to make any necessary accommodations to achieve a more even look.

Begin by gathering the necessary supplies. A pair of latex or vinyl gloves will protect your hands. Drop cloths will catch any drips or spills. Safety goggles and a dust mask provide protection if sanding is required prior to staining. If sanding is necessary, homeowners will need an orbital sander, hand sander and sandpaper. Start with the coarsest grit sandpaper and move to a higher grit for a smooth finish. Wood that is covered in paint may need to be stripped prior to sanding. Follow the directions carefully when using chemical strippers. Natural bristle paint brushes are handy for oil-based stain applications. Synthetic paint brushes can apply water-based finishes. Many do-it-yourselfers find that foam brushes or paint pads are the most handy because they provide a smooth finish and there's no need

to clean up the brushes afterward. Many professionals recommend using wood conditioners or pre-treaters so that the stain will not leave blotches on the wood. This is especially important for homeowners who determined their wood is prone to uneven color absorption. Allow the conditioner to dry according to product directions. Stain should be applied so that it is evenly coated. Wipe off the excess to get the preferred color. Apply more stain as necessary to get the desired color. Many stains only offer color, so you'll need to apply a finishing coat to protect the wood. Otherwise, look for a product that combines stain color and a finish to save time. Remember to remove knobs, hinges, and handles from a piece before staining, as the stain may affect the color of any metal hardware and damage it. FH178275



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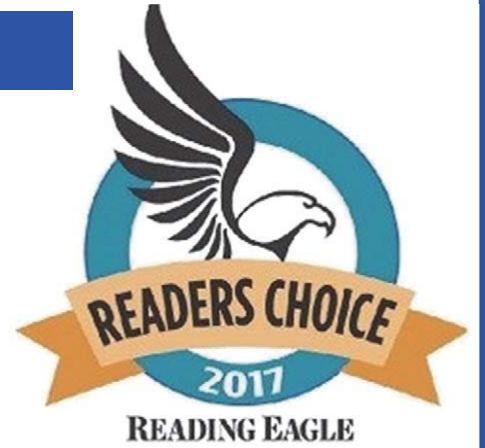
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While we are setting our new shelves, we will be remerchandising all of our product. We will still offer the same product mix- high quality, competitively priced, and brands you know and trust.

Products might be in a different location in the store. All the items that are meant to be together will still be next to each other in their same department. These changes will make the layout of the store more open and our more popular products easier to shop and find.

We apologize for the noise and dust during our remodel but ultimately this will improve your shopping experience and allow us to further our mission of **Being Helpful To Everyone.**

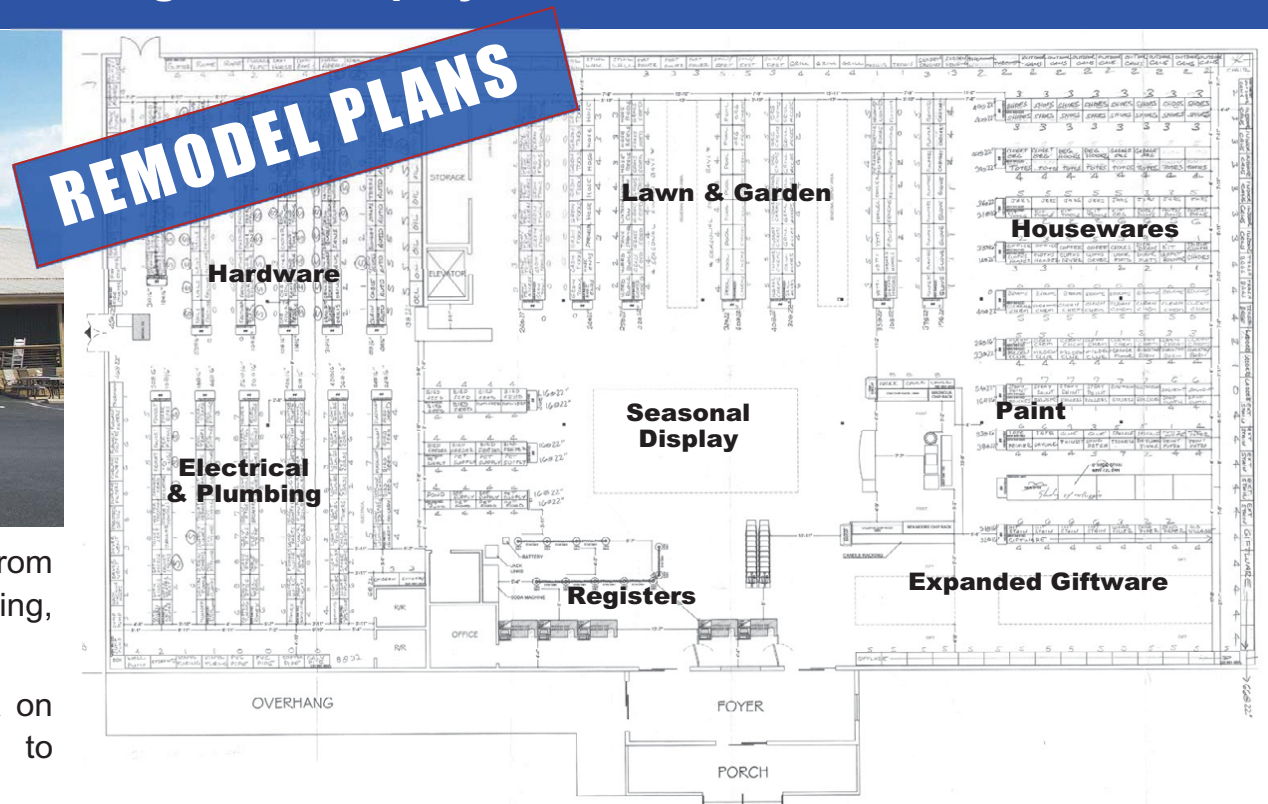
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