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CONSTRUCTION GUIDE 2020



*Budgeting for Home Maintenance • Greenhouse Cleaning • Sprinkler Maintenance • Attract Wildlife
Prepare Soil for Garden • Smart Remodeling • Do Pools Add Value • Spring Cleaning for Allergies*

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KEEP YOUR GARAGE DOOR OPERATING PROPERLY

Green SHOOT MEDIA

Winter weather can quickly degrade important components on your garage door, causing them to rust or seize. Since it's such an important part of your home that provides convenience and security, it must operate efficiently.

While general maintenance is straightforward, you can hire an expert overhead door technician if the job is too intimidating. During an inspection, they will highlight signs of deterioration and show you what to look for in the future. If you decide to tackle the chore on your own, consider these tips from the International Door Association.

Lubricate

Overhead doors require many moving

parts to perform smooth and efficiently. A way to maintain their integrity is by lubricating each component. This should include the rollers, hinges, bearings, springs and chains. The IDA suggests using a drop of engine oil on each roller, which will then distribute the lube to a door's bearings.

By lightly greasing the hinges and springs, you lessen the risks of the door becoming jammed and unusable. While engine oil is usually a suitable lubricant, check with the overhead unit's manufacturer to find out if there is a different fluid they recommend. Some may insist on a silicone lubricant or one made specifically for garage door components.

Test for balance

You will likely notice obvious signs when an overhead door is unbalanced. Problems like jamming, strange noises and

delayed or disrupted operation are common. Even if you don't notice any warning signs, use these easy steps to test for balance as a part of regular maintenance:

- Close the garage door like normal.

- Find and engage the release handle to access manual operation.

- Lift the door three to four feet above the ground. If it doesn't remain open, there is an imbalance that must be addressed.

While testing can be completed by any homeowner, the process of rebalancing should be handled by a professional. It requires adjusting and coordinating the system of springs and can be dangerous if done improperly.

Clean the tracks

Ensuring your overhead door has a clean track to roll on is imperative to its optimal performance. You can keep them in peak condition by wiping the system with a rag or vacuuming out loose debris.



Budget for home maintenance

Green SHOOT MEDIA

Your mortgage payment is only the beginning of the true costs of owning a home.

One expense you should factor into your budget is routine maintenance.

According to U.S. News and World Report, homeowners can expect to spend 1-4 percent of their home's value annually on maintenance and repairs. The repairs fall into a few notable categories.

Furnace and HVAC

The government-run Energy Star program recommends having a contractor perform a checkup on your home's heating and cooling system once a year. According to Angie's List, a tune-up should cost about \$70 to \$100. In addition, air filters should be changed once a month, as a dirty filter can cause the system to function inefficiently and cause damage.

Since the cost of having your HVAC vents cleaned can get into the hundreds of dollars, weigh this decision carefully.

The Environmental Protection Agency recommends having your ducts cleaned only if there is visible mold growth or a vermin problem, or if the ducts are clogged with excessive dust and debris.

Pest control

Pests in the home can hit your nerves and your wallet. ImproveNet.com lists the price of a pest control service at \$250.

The types of pests you may find

in your home vary greatly by region and your home's immediate surroundings, so contact a service provider for a quote tailored to your home.

Bathrooms/plumbing

Even minor plumbing problems can get expensive quickly. You may want to stay ahead of trouble by having a plumber give your home a once over annually.

Aside from checking fixtures and pipes for leaks or conditions that could lead to a leak, the plumber also will check all appliances that use water, such as the water heater and dishwasher. ImproveNet.com lists the average price of hiring a plumber at \$259.

Exterior

It's a good idea to have a professional check the condition of your roof each spring. A routine inspection and minor repairs (such as replacing a few missing shingles) should cost \$100 to \$150, according to Houselogic.com.

A lush, green lawn can be a beautiful thing, but it comes at a cost. The expense of fertilizing, winterizing, aerating and mowing can add up. ImproveNet.com lists average costs of \$61 for mowing, \$170 to \$333 for tree maintenance, \$12 to \$40 for weeding and \$404 for winterizing. Fertilization can cost an average of \$.26 per square foot, plus an average of \$32.71 per hour for a landscaper to apply the fertilizer.

Experts recommend having your home's gutters cleaned at

Don't forget the costs of routine home maintenance — including maintaining your plumbing and air conditioning systems and roof — when you're budgeting home expenses.

FOTOLIA VIA GREEN SHOOT MEDIA



least once a year (or more often if you have pine trees). Homeadvisor.com lists the average cost of window cleaning at \$207.

An annual chimney inspection runs about \$75, according

to Angie's List, while a cleaning costs about \$178. Sealcoating an asphalt driveway, which you may want to do annually or every few years, costs an average of \$385 but varies with size.

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Spring cleaning for the greenhouse

Green SHOOT MEDIA

As the warmer weather begins its arrival, your greenhouse should be prepped and cleaned for the harvesting season around the corner.

Whether you have a house constructed with plastic sheeting or a commercially installed building, ensuring its cleanliness provides big benefits for the plants inside.

The first step of any greenhouse cleaning project should be a visual inspection. Check the interior corners and rafters for signs of pest intrusion like hornet or wasp nests. Of course, you should eradicate these with care if you believe the hives are active.

Then, look at the integrity of cover materials that make up the walls. It's common for more inexpensive plastic to show wear and require replacement after a cold winter. It's crucial to repair the damage immediately, as the walls are important to preventing condensation by blocking sunlight and inhibiting moisture to drip onto your plants, which invites mildew.

Address issues from last season

Consider the pain points you experienced during a previous harvest and correct it for a more successful year. For instance, if you noticed a certain portion of your greenhouse that didn't receive the sunlight it needed, consider rearranging the footprint of

your planting structures before they are filled with seed.

If you had recurring issues with insects and pests, ask a local exterminator about a plant-friendly treatment that can limit their intrusion throughout the year. It will be easier for a professional to spread their protective remedy before your greenhouse is full and thriving.

Disinfect your space

Give your plants a fresh start by eliminating debris or depleted soil from last season. Use an eco-friendly garden cleaner to thoroughly clean out pots and planters before filling them with new stock. Keep a large container on hand and allow seriously contaminated holders to soak before cleaning as scrubbing too hard may lead to damage. Don't forget to completely rinse and dry these important companions in your greenhouse before attempting to replant.

Get organized

The upcoming planting season will require numerous tools if you want it to be successful. Analyze the condition of your existing equipment while planning for this year's harvest. If you notice cracks in shovels or dull pruning shears, you should consider replacing them with updated options.



ADOBE STOCK VIA GREEN SHOOT MEDIA



Sprinkler maintenance crucial before use

Green SHOOT MEDIA

Many Americans who appreciate a luscious, full lawn throughout the spring and summer turn to sprinkler or irrigation systems. To perform at peak performance, they will require attention before being open for the year.

If you don't have one but are considering adding it to your yard, professional installation is the most practical option. An expert will prepare trenches while ensuring utility lines aren't compro-

mised and correctly install needed components like piping, controllers and valves.

When the ice and frost are gone, here are some ways to prepare your sprinkler or irrigation system for its busy season.

Welcome spring

Before you can begin using your sprinkler system this spring, it's important to ensure the winter weather is gone and temperatures will remain steady.

According to the group Direct Energy, attempting to allow water to run while the ground is still frozen could result in busted pipes during the startup process, or hours later. You can test the condition of the ground below by digging at least a foot into the soil in an area away from the underground tubing. If you strike frozen dirt, plan to delay the de-winterizing project.

Analyze the control panel

The brains behind your irrigation system are typically installed outdoors. Make sure you follow the directions explained by the installer and confirm settings are accurate for time, date and zones. You should also check the integrity of backup batteries if your sprinklers rely on them. If you are concerned about their performance or age, visit a battery specialist in your area and have them tested to determine how much life they have left.

Clean sprinkler heads

Depending on the number of sprinkler heads you have, this may prove to be the most time-consuming portion of the entire process. Analyze each component for signs of damage and replace the parts before attempting to engage the system. Use an old toothbrush to effectively clean each nozzle to ensure they distribute water evenly to their designated zones. Make sure valves are closed after cleaning, except the nozzle farthest from the main water source, it should remain open to allow air to escape during startup.

Opening the main valve

With the pre-maintenance performed, slowly open the main valve until you can hear water begin to flow. Allow this to steadily fill into the main line before slightly opening the valve every few minutes. Doing this too quickly can lead to expensive errors like busted pipes or valves.



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ATTRACT WILDLIFE TO YOUR YARD

Green SHOOT MEDIA

An exciting aspect of spring is the return of wildlife to your backyard. Flocks of birds and hungry squirrels will likely find a new place to call home throughout the neighborhood.

Welcome their friendly chatter by rewarding them with a favorite meal or bird-bath to ensure they continue to make an appearance.

If your goal is to create a homestead that invites animals to feel safe and find a bite to eat, keep in mind that wildlife should be respected. Make sure to remind children that wild animals are not obedient like their favorite pets and may become dangerous if they feel threatened. Watching and learning about these animals from a distance is a wholesome way to spend spring with your family.

Building a safe and attractive haven for animals to flock may not happen overnight, but by following these tips, your backyard will become an entertaining place for beautiful wildlife.

Water sources

One of the most popular water sources we can offer animals is an attractive birdbath. Follow these tips from Cornell University to discover how to place it for the most impact:

- Birds prefer baths that

are low to the ground and located near shady areas.

- Use stones or branches to line edges of the water so birds have a place to stand while drinking.

- Water should be no deeper than one inch at the edges and two inches in the middle.

- For a more enticing atmosphere, include dripping water to attract more wildlife.

- Don't forget to regularly clean the birdbath as its occupants will likely leave behind seeds, droppings and feathers.

Feeders

When considering which types of feeders to install, think of the wildlife you are trying to attract. If a colorful variety of birds is your intention, try to use several boxes that offer them different ways to eat. Some animals prefer to dine while perching, so a hanging feeder with posts will be more attractive. Other less-picky eaters will be fine with eating from a platform or suet style option.

Try to incorporate different types of seeds throughout your yard to learn what your local species are most interested in. Don't be surprised to find animals like squirrels or deer visiting your yard to finish up the food that was knocked to the ground by hungry birds.



ADOBE STOCK VIA GREEN SHOOT MEDIA

Green SHOOT MEDIA

While growing fruits and vegetables is a rewarding experience, a blooming display in your backyard can give you a sense of pride each time you step outside. Achieving a beautiful garden requires proper preparation and sometimes a few seasons before it's fully established.

If you're unsure about which bulbs or seeds will thrive in your area, refer to the USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map to discover new and exciting options. You can also learn lessons by visiting your local nursery and speaking with their experts. It's likely their flowers and plants are re-

gion-specific to your area but check with them about special orders if you have another plant in mind.

Prepare soil for a new garden

Once you have chosen the size and location of your ornamental garden, you should prepare the soil to promote your plants with nutritious benefits. Here are some tips from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to get you started:

- Conduct a soil test to determine existing texture, nutrients and pH levels. Check your local area for an expert who can decipher the results and create a solution to the

problem.

- If you're tilling a new area of land, ensure the soil is dry as disrupting wet soil can destroy its structure.

- Include organic matter to improve soil drainage and texture.

- For best results, ensure the soil is rich before introducing plants or bulbs.

Wake up an existing garden

Early spring planning will provide your gardens with bountiful blossoms and a stunning display of color. Start by spring cleaning the entire area of dead leaves and other debris left behind by fall and winter. If you pick up clumps

of soil and it easily crumbles, it's a good sign that freezing and ice threats are gone, and you are safe to add compost to your dirt without affecting dormant bulbs.

Gently loosen the top layer of soil to remove rocks and inspect for intrusions from things like roots or pests. During this stage, you should consider working in nutrient-dense materials like manure, or pre-mixed options from your local nursery to the existing dirt.

You will also need to eradicate weeds as they will commonly become a nuisance once the weather warms. It's good practice to make sure your garden's edges are in good condition and effective at keeping grass from emerging into the your ornamental bed.

Smart remodeling

Green SHOOT MEDIA

If you're holding off on putting up the "for sale" sign until you finish all those repairs and updates, think carefully about how you use your remodeling dollars.

Of course, worn out carpet or dull, tired hardwood floors should be replaced. Making the wrong remodeling choices, however, might put off some buyers who aren't particularly fond of your style decisions.

Maximum impact

The experts say to put your remodeling money where you'll get the most bang for your buck — typically bathrooms and kitchens or bringing the home up to par with the amenities offered by other homes on the market in your area. For example, if many of the homes with which you're competing for buyers have granite in the kitchen, this might be a good

for sellers

upgrade to complete before you list. The same goes for stainless steel appliances. If you live in an area where buyers are likely to have the environment on their minds, perhaps some efficiency upgrades are in order.

Keep it simple

The key is to know your market and make sure you keep your projects as simple and neutral as possible to appeal to the largest number of buyers. Not every buyer is going to love the pink-tinted granite you chose for the countertops or the nautical navy-blue-and-white-striped paint in the master bath.

Many real estate agents and home stagers will suggest that homeowners remove as many of their own personal touches as possible from their homes before listing, in order to give potential new owners a blank

canvas on which to imagine themselves in the home. So instead of using your remodeling budget to complete specific projects you've dreamed of, let potential buyers imagine their own style choices taking shape.

A pleasing palette

When you're choosing palette and styles, think classic, simple and neutral. This will appeal to the largest number of buyers. According to Realtor.com, a Better Homes and Gardens survey of 400 homeowners found that while people love to see homes decorated with bold colors in magazines, they want their own space to be a little less splashy.

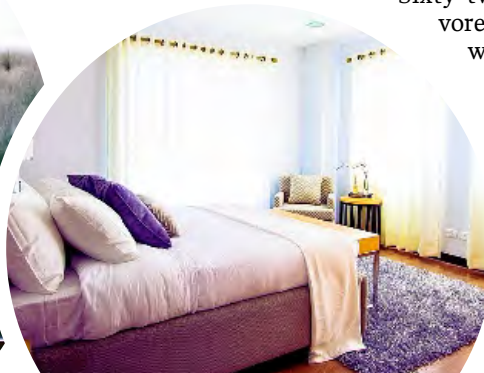
Sixty-two percent favored a blue palette, while green was another favorite. Fifty-seven percent of homeowners said they preferred neutral-toned paint for interior walls.

Think of your buyers

If you're delaying putting your home on the market, ask yourself if the projects you've planned are neutral and commonly sought-out upgrades with wide appeal. Otherwise, think again.

Remember, you won't be the one soaking in that garden tub with the flashy marble surround. It would be a shame for all that work — and the expense — to go to waste on buyers who make a lower offer since they plan to rip it out and start again.

Keep your home's future owners in the back of your mind when making design decisions. After all, you'll be calling a new place home. Focus your efforts on matching your new home's style to your tastes.





FOTOLIA VIA GREEN SHOOT MEDIA

Bold design choices can be great ... unless you're planning to put your home on the market. Too many personal touches can put off buyers who prefer a more neutral palette.

Does a pool help home value?

Green SHOOT MEDIA

Getting your home in tip-top shape and ready for market can run you ragged.

The last thing you need is to be heading in the wrong direction wasting, time, money and your patience.

Smart home preparations begin with setting forth a strict budget and then generating the tenacity to stick to it. We all want to improve our home value and get the most from a real estate sale, but some home improvements may eat away your sales profit, and in some cases, kill the deal altogether.

Pools are complicated

One of the great myths in home improvement is that you should add a swimming pool to increase your property value. This is false and has landed many a homeowner stuck with a hefty installation bill. Pools are complicated home additions and subject to the “beauty in the eye of the beholder” viewpoint.

Home buyers who want to have a pool often have a general idea in mind about the size, depth, yard location and other factors involved with their property buying decision. Simply dropping a pool in your backyard is not a done deal to woo a pool

person to your open house. It may be a step in the right direction, but don't get your hopes up too high that your home is going to sell for a figure that leaves you a tidy profit margin after the pool's installation.

Will you drop in a pebble pool or gunite? Rectangular or ovular? No one can predict the outcome, so it's a game of chance that you did the right thing if your goal is increasing property value.

Use of space

Some home buyers are adamant about not having a pool in the backyard for a variety of reasons. It is presumptive to think that everybody loves a swim, when precious lot space could be used for other recreation important to the new buyer.

Patio space for entertaining adds a lot of weight to a fantastic backyard living space. So, if you do decide to add a pool, be sure there is plenty of room to roam around it. In addition, home buyers with small children and pets may place a higher value on a property that does not have a pool. Safety and added space takes priority over a summer swim just a few months a year, and

some prospective buyers may turn away explicitly because of the pool.

Post pool sale

If your prospective buyer is open to the idea of a backyard pool, ask your real estate agent to make mention if your property has room for a pool. The new buyer may be able to add the pool construction onto their mortgage.

This option gives the new buyer the most freedom and flexibility to create the pool size and style to suit their budget and ensures that you have not sunk thousands of dollars into a feature that is a hit-and-miss renovation.

However, before your real estate agent speaks up to the client, be sure to check city ordinances to determine whether your backyard can support a pool.

Each city and county lays down the law with restrictions regarding the water's edge and the number of feet between the house and the property wall or fencing.

Real estate is one game where you may not misspeak when representing a property. Lawsuits are a way of life in this industry, so every fact must be double checked before making a claim to a client.



When considering upgrades to help get your home sold, adding a swimming pool is not a guaranteed home run. There are many considerations in the decision.

FOTOLIA VIA GREEN SHOOT MEDIA

Spring cleaning can help allergies

Green SHOOT MEDIA

As we welcome spring's warmer weather, many Americans prepare for the uncomfortable months associated with seasonal allergies. According to the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, more than 50 million citizens suffer each year.

Spring is often to blame as pollen is released by trees in its early stages, then grass as the season advances. While there is no straightforward cure for seasonal allergies, there are many ways you can prepare your home to limit its effect. Here are some ways to spring clean your living space and enjoy the comfortable temperatures without irritation.

Clean up the clutter

When you begin your spring-cleaning chores, you can lessen the dust intrusion by eliminating clutter around the home. Make sure to eradicate areas with things like old rags, stacks of magazines and clothes you don't wear.

Once your home is free and clear, give your carpet a quality cleaning. You can usually rent



a commercial shampooer from a local hardware store or hire a professional cleaning service to make your floor covering pristine. Many types of carpet can hold allergens and distribute them into the air once they're disrupted. After a deep cleaning, commit to vacuuming at least once a week.

Bedroom cleaning

Since we spend so much time in our bedrooms, it's important to ensure the area is clean and free of allergens. In addition to regular dusting, keep a few extra sets of bed sheets and

pillowcases on hand.

They are notorious for holding dust mites or pollen that we bring home on our clothes or hair.

Try to wash them in hot water at least once a week and rotate different coverings so you're not left without when life gets in the way of laundry.

Clean the air

Spring invites pollen and other allergens into the air and your home. However, there are measures you can take to keep your living space clean and fresh. Check with an expert to inspect your house's ventilation system and ductwork. If there are compromised components, intrusion like moisture and dust are commonly introduced.

You should also invest in high-quality air filters in your heating and cooling appliances. When your HVAC expert arrives for their regular maintenance, ask them about more high-efficiency options to increase your home's defense.

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