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Sustainable home upgrades are becoming more and more popular as people look to renovate their homes and protect the planet. These eco-friendly improvements can make your home more comfortable and help you save money over time.

And while you might have to invest some initial money and effort in these upgrades now, it’s well worth it. They not only benefit the planet — they’ll save you money in the long run and increase the value of your home.

Here are five sustainable upgrades to add to your project list that will offer the best return on your investment.

**Energy-efficient windows**

Energy-saving windows are an important consideration for new and old homes alike. Designed to prevent your warm or cooled air from escaping your home, they provide increased insulation to lower your energy use and costs. If you’re installing new windows, look for the Energy Star rating and review the energy performance label to find the most efficient windows for your home.

**Solar roof**

Solar technology is an essential feature for a truly sustainable home, and now it’s more accessible than ever before. GAF Energy launched Timberline Solar, a first-of-its-kind solar roof that features nailable, ultra-thin solar energy shingles. These shingles are durable, weatherproof, and easy to install, with a sleek design compared to traditional solar panels. A solar roof requires an initial investment, but in the long term, you could produce enough electricity to power everything in your home — saving you hundreds of dollars per year while potentially increasing your home’s value, too! For more information, visit gafenergy.com.

**Tankless water heater**

Tankless water heaters are an energy-efficient way to provide hot water in your home — and a big trend in real estate this year. These water heaters can be powered by gas or electric and can save you up to 70 percent on your heating bills. And because they’re so compact, you can install it anywhere without sacrificing storage space. Plus, they can last up to 20 years, which is much longer than traditional water heaters.

**Smart home appliances**

When it’s time to shop for new appliances, remember to look for the Energy Star label, just like with energy-efficient windows. Energy Star certified appliances are marked with a special sticker that details their efficiency statistics and estimated yearly operating costs and energy consumption. It’s also important to be mindful about choosing the right sized appliances for your needs. Bigger appliances can often mean more energy use and higher bills.

**Skylights**

Artificial lighting is one of the biggest energy-users in your home. For rooms that get limited natural light, consider installing a skylight. This will draw in sunlight so you can use less electricity. When choosing your skylight, make sure to look for the Energy Star certification.

Consider these eco-friendly upgrades to boost your energy savings in a big way and help the planet at the same time.
Water heater basics

A traditional tank water heater will last about 8 to 12 years. Understanding how a hot water heater works and performing regular maintenance can maximize its life span.

Here are some tips to keep get the most out of your water heater.

How it works

Hot water tanks have an anode rod, usually made from magnesium, aluminum, or an aluminum/zinc alloy. Through electrolysis, the rod attracts corrosive particles in the water to itself, which corrodes the rod. Eventually the rod is no longer effective and corrosive particles destroy the lining of the tank, which causes it to need replacement. Replacing the rod before it fails — usually in about five years — can double the life of your water heater, according to FamilyHandyman.com. To find out the condition of your anode rod and decide if it needs to be replaced, check the rod every one to two years.

When buying a new anode rod, keep the following tips from FamilyHandyman.com in mind.

- A magnesium rod protects your tank better but doesn’t last as long as an aluminum/zinc rod.
- Aluminum/zinc rods are cheaper and are recommended if your water has an odor, but you should consult a water treatment specialist before switching to an aluminum rod.

Routine maintenance

The following routine maintenance tasks will help keep your water heater in working order. Check your heater’s user manual for the steps to perform these maintenance tasks and how often they should be done.

- Check the pressure valve to be sure it’s still functional.
- Flush the water tank to get rid of sediment buildup. (A water heater’s warranty usually requires that you do this annually to maintain coverage.)

When to replace

BobVila.com offers the following list of ways to know when your water heater needs to be replaced.

- A banging or rumbling noise, which can be caused by hardened calcium buildup from hard water.
- A red or yellow tint to hot water, which can signal rust.
- An odd smell in hot water, which can be caused by bacteria or metal contaminating the water.
- A drop in water temperature or heating capacity can be caused by sediment buildup, which can require replacement if it goes unchecked for too long.
- Water pooling around the base of a water heater tank. If it’s not a simple fitting or valve problem, the inside of the tank could be cracked or corroded.
As many establish their goals for 2022, including traveling to bucket list destinations or living healthier lives through exercise or dieting, we’re faced with yet another year of staying at home rather than traveling the world or socializing in large groups. For those tired of spending all their time in a dull home, put transforming your home interior as a top priority to refresh your space and your new year. For those with little to no experience of interior decorating who just don’t know where to start, read on for some small but essential tips that could otherwise be easily overlooked.

Let appliances set mood
Take a moment to examine your living space; notice any large home appliances or devices? Our TVs are getting bigger and our refrigerators now come in sizes from expansive four-door models capable of storing everything you need for months, to mini-fridges perfect for a quick bedroom snack. We can’t imagine life without them, and even more appliances are crossing the line from luxury to essential, like the air purifiers, steam wardrobes and professional-standard coffee machines we use daily. With so many appliances taking up precious living space, our home appliances are quickly becoming a part of furniture and thus are playing a more important role in the décor. To blend seamlessly with every furnishing and interior style, the best large appliances come in a minimalist design that takes nothing away from the design of the space.

LG SIGNATURE Rollable OLED R, the world’s first and only rollable TV, provides the most complete TV experience with its 3 viewing modes—Full view, Line view, and Zero view. With the rollable TV, you’re able to adjust the height of the screen at the push of a button to match your mood, completely redefining the value and meaning.
of space. And its exclusive Zero view mode — when the entire screen is rolled into its elegant stand — introduces a whole new kind of beauty to the space by bringing a completely open view that’s impossible to be recreated with any conventional TV. The groundbreaking rollable TV’s unprecedented user experience and sleek design have been made possible by LG’s latest technologies, creating a viewing solution that leads the challenge against bulky black rectangular boxes incapable of fully harmonizing with the room.

With many people getting re-acquainted with their kitchen as they spend more time at home, the cooking and sharing of stories with family and friends across the kitchen island of old is returning. That’s why the place we cook all our family meals must never be overlooked when trying to achieve the high-end interior of dreams. The Textured Steel™ Finish of LG SIG-NATURE Refrigerator and Wine Cellar introduces the epitome of minimalist design to the kitchen. Such premium materials not only provide an eye-catching exterior, they also bring outstanding durability and performance to the appliances that store all the food and beverage items you’ll need. From now on, try thinking of your appliances in the same way as furniture that take style to the next level by also offering cutting-edge technologies that make life better.

**Play with textures, colors**

Most would agree that how we feel about almost everything we touch and see largely depends on texture and color — from the fashion items we wear to the electronic devices we use daily. Likewise, it’s easy to create high-end interior design by simply using new decorative items with unique textures and colors if large-scale renovation doesn’t fit your budget or schedule.

Every season has a perfect match when it comes to textures and colors, which makes taking care of your home fabrics — sofa slipcovers, cushion covers, bedspreads, rugs and lampshades — the difference between a worn-out interior and one full of elegance. In winter, silk, velvet, fur and wool add warmth and coziness and maximize the luxuriousness of any interior. During a cool summertime, linen is the perfect choice since bedding made of linen provides the most comfortably cool feeling ever. Think of linen as the fine jewelry of bedding with harvesting and production a more arduous task than most other materials. Another good choice during summer is rattan, as its flexibility lets it be shaped into intricately designed furniture and interior items despite it being strong and durable wood. From rattan armchairs to rattan lampshades, such elegant, carefully crafted items add elements of style that otherwise wouldn’t exist with dull woods.

What’s more, color can equally transform a normal home into a high-end paradise. To discover your colors for 2022, check out the Pantone Color of the Year and explore earthy colors which have dominated luxurious homes the last few years. If you don’t have time to take on a home painting project, there are other easier ways to transform your home, like covering shelf or drawer surfaces with tile/wall stickers or replacing small home accessories such as handles or baskets with high-quality substitutes sporting more up-to-date colors.

**Use fresh, diverse plants**

Plants not only lift everyone’s mood, they help lift the whole atmosphere of the room. Flowers and greenery brighten up a home, add life to the space, and can be beautifully linked with the seasonal changes throughout the year. But be careful, because leaving withered plants around the home can be detrimental to achieving that higher-end interior you deserve. And although shopping for plants is an idyllic and indulgent experience, it’s not always an option for people strapped for time or not close by a florist or a home gardener.

These days, there are a lot of businesses offering flower or potted greenery subscription services that deliver beautiful arrangements perfectly matching your home and preferences right to your door. But keep in mind that each one has a different style and different plants of every imaginable color and shape, so choose one that best fits your personality or the moment. Once you have your supplier, select a variety of plants arrangements, and make sure they’re delivered from a sustainable plant farm where maximum freshness for your exclusive home interior is guaranteed.
It’s as crystal clear as the air and water can be in your home: living in a healthier space is a top priority. From small projects to large remodels, homeowners are focused on how these upgrades might impact their health, while having a positive impact on the environment.

A healthier home starts with evaluating what needs routine maintenance and what products can be replaced with eco-friendly alternatives. Here are some healthy home improvement tips that you can begin with today.

**Clean, fresh and safe air**

According to the EPA, the air inside your home can be two to five times more polluted than the air outside. Air filters in your heating and cooling system work by drawing out pollutants like dust and pet dander. When they get dirty it makes it harder for this system to work efficiently. Routinely check your air filters for accumulated dirt and dust. Depending on what type of filter you need, HEPA filters can be replaced for as little as $25.

A simple project you can do at no cost is checking that all smoke and carbon monoxide detectors in your home work properly. Heating your home during winter increases the risk of fire and carbon monoxide poisoning. Checking the detectors around your home should be done routinely, especially during cold weather months.

**Pure water**

Water filters are a popular health-conscious home upgrade that can fit a range of budgets. The most popular types of water filtration are filtered pitchers that can start at $20. There are also under-the-sink, on-the-counter, and faucet-mounted filtration system alternatives depending on how large of an upgrade you want.

Water leak detection devices are another popular home improvement. These systems can notify you when a leak is detected and can shut off the water system if a major problem is found. Mercury Insurance offers a water leak detection discount to qualifying homes that are equipped with these systems.

**Home supplies**

Over the years many consumers have been concerned about the ingredients found in conventional cleaning products, paints, flooring and building materials. Many have decided to replace them with products that are environmentally friendly. Look for products that are biodegradable and sourced from renewable resources instead of petroleum.

**Painting:** Whether you are doing a light touch up around your home or a large project, toxic paint could negatively impact the air quality of your living space. Look for options that are free of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) or are Green Seal or GreenGuard certified.

**Replacing appliances:** Always look for appliances that are LEED certified or STAR rated. These products are more sustainable and reduce energy usage. You may also qualify for a green homeowners discount through your insurance for having these appliances in your home.

**Flooring:** Look for eco-friendly options such as unfinished hardwood, stone or concrete, and carpets made of natural fibers. Make sure to use toxic-free adhesives to reduce the amount of chemicals in your home.

**Building materials:** If you are going to be replacing drywall or insulation, look for GreenGuard certified materials to avoid toxic chemicals such as formaldehyde or acetaldehyde that are commonly found in these materials.

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**Make your home healthier for under $100**

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locks, fire safety, and storing dangerous items properly — these are things that likely come to mind when you think of home safety for your family. However, there’s one thing in your home that everyone uses daily that poses a huge threat: stairs.

Every second of every day, an adult age 65 or older suffers a fall in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. This makes falls the leading cause of injury and injury death in this age group.

Slipping and falling on stairs can dramatically alter someone’s quality of life because injury can be painful and recovery complex. To help protect your family, consider these stairs safety tips:

**Visually assess for updates**

Start by looking at all indoor and outdoor stairs for repair needs. Nails and screws should be flush with the surface. Boards should be strong without cracks or breaks, evenly spaced and level. Concrete and other materials should be free of divots and debris. Make repairs if necessary to prevent trips and falls. Additionally, remove all clutter from stairs, even if decorative.

**Add non-slip treads**

Outdoor stairs can be dangerous for your family as well as visitors, especially during winter when rain, sleet, ice and snow can make stairs slippery. A smart solution is Stop the Slip non-slip stair treads and non-slip nosings. Available in different colors, the patented aluminum feature raised traction buttons that are self-cleaning in any weather, making them superior to grit tape and grit paint. Plus, they’re simple for any DIYer to install on wood, concrete and brick within minutes.

**Use secure handrails**

When it comes to stair safety, the ability to use your hands is as important as your feet. Sturdy handrails are a necessity so people can easily grip on to them to assist in balance while navigating stairs. If possible, having railings on both sides can be even safer than just one.

**Light stairway spaces well**

Even during the daytime, stairs can be dim spaces depending on their location. Make sure to illuminate stairs properly to help prevent trips and falls. Outside, porches and entryways should be well-lit. Indoors, light switches should be easily accessible at the top and bottom of stairs. Motion lights can be a smart option indoors and outside, so lights go on automatically whenever movement is detected.
Home is more than just where the heart is. Whether creating an office, a socially distant gathering space or making room for a loved one to move in, people are using their homes in ways they may never have before. Experts predict homeowners will focus on upgrades and home improvements that fit this evolving lifestyle in 2022 and beyond. In fact, the Leading Indicator for Remodeling Activity from Harvard University’s Joint Center for Housing Studies predicts a steady and significant rise in remodeling projects that is projected to reach $401 billion of annual spending by the third quarter of 2022.

If you’re looking to make some moves with home renovation projects this year, here are five trending upgrades for 2022 that will have lasting impact.

Refresh the staircase
You probably don’t spend much time using staircases compared to the rest of the house, so staircase design isn’t likely top of mind. However, if you have dated carpet on your stairs, you have a prime opportunity to revamp a central component of your home for a small investment. It could be as simple as installing new treads, selecting new paint for the walls and maybe a new stain on the trim. To go the extra mile, local ironworkers are happy to custom fabricate a handrail. If you have kids in the house or older family members moving in, keep safety in mind on stairs to help them navigate your home with ease.

Modernize the bathroom
It’s amazing how the right paint and new hardware can revitalize a row of sad old cabinets. With no major construction involved, you can transform your bathroom vanity over the course of a weekend. Select new hardware that looks bold and stately (think chrome bars, not little plastic knobs) to match the tones in your countertop, and remove the cabinets and give them a fresh, neutral shade. If you’re over the white-on-white bathroom look, try a dramatic dark finish that will make your new hardware and fixtures really pop.

Install new flooring
Flooring is quite literally the foundation of design, so it must strike a blend of fashion and function. Research flooring with a good combination of durability and timeless aesthetics, like the Duravana hybrid resilient flooring, a waterproof and eco-friendly product exclusive to LL Flooring. Duravana’s range of styles are designed to replicate the natural color, grain and texture of real hardwood, with more unique plank patterns than traditional vinyl plank or laminate. Plus, its easy-click installation makes it DIY friendly. Learn more at LLFlooring.com.

Organize the mudroom
A little bit of organization in an entryway can make a huge difference in the functionality and flow of the home. Start with simple shoe and boot storage, like a DIY bench or wall rack, so those items don’t spill out to hallways and bedrooms. Wall hooks are helpful for when guests arrive. And if you don’t have a true mudroom, a bit of wall-mounted storage can make even the slimmest entryway feel intentional and inviting.

Define outdoor spaces
Once the snow melts, adding a dedicated lounge to your back or side yard can feel like adding a whole room’s worth of square footage to your house. It could be as easy as a new patio set and a fire pit with some gravel or simple flagstone landscaping. Gabion baskets, framed with good-looking lumber, can be made into a simple divider or group seating. Pergolas with climbing plants continue to be popular. This outdoor space can become a year-round retreat.
The garage is a great place to store household items when they’re not in use. Basic — but sturdy — shelving units can do the job.

If you’re short on space in your garage, however, consider some creative storage options to maximize your storage space.

**Suspended storage**
Using the vertical space in your garage helps free up floor space. Anything you don’t access on a regular basis can be hoisted up. Look for bicycle storage systems that use rope and a pulley with hooks attached at the end to allow you to safely store your bikes overhead. A similar pulley system can be used to elevate a metal shelf where you can store items in plastic bins overhead. If you have access to a ladder, a fixed overhead storage shelf is also an option.

**Wall storage**
If you’re short on floor space, look for creative options for storing items such as bikes, and sports and lawn equipment on the wall. A modular wall-mounted slat storage system allows you to customize your storage for your particular items. Add hooks, wire baskets or shelves to the slats to store items of a variety of shapes and sizes — from a rake to a garden hose to a bicycle.

Even the inside of your garage door can be made into useful storage space. Attach metal brackets to hold light sports equipment such as fishing rods horizontally.

**Function over form**
Of course you could go all-out with a brand new customized garage storage system, but you don’t have to spend a lot to make your space functional. If you’re on a budget, consider hitting the classified ads, yard sales or a resale shop for garage storage options. If you don’t mind less than perfect aesthetics, look for quality items that might have some cosmetic defects. The key is to focus on being sure the storage units you choose are sturdy enough to hold your items.

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Your home is a reflection of who you are and is where you should feel your best. When designing spaces, it's important to select pieces that evoke your personality and add interest to your surroundings. One of the biggest opportunities to define a room is through lighting that adds touches of fashion and function.

Lighting helps pull a room aesthetic together, much like how a special accessory such as a necklace or tie elevates an outfit. Selecting lighting should be done thoughtfully, with each option complementing — not competing — with the surroundings. Lighting is meant to enhance the other elements of the room and add a distinguished finishing touch.

If you’re considering updating your lighting, it’s important to take time to determine what you like and how that can be integrated into spaces. Every room tells a story, and the goal is for the lighting to be an extension of that tale.

Questions to get started
- Do you like the warmth of traditional design?
- Do you lean toward clean lines of contemporary, modern forms?
- Do you prefer a transitional, more eclectic approach to design?
- Is there a period of time with design that is particularly appealing to you?
- Is there a destination or place in the world that inspires your style preferences?

Eye-catching lighting that complements the space is a top design trend, especially as people are spending more time at home. Kohler Lighting is continuously evolving offerings to meet the myriad design preferences homeowners have. Three new collections demonstrate how different designs can meet these varying styles.

Lush, vintage design
Do you adore designs kissed with opulence and grandeur, similar to styles in the Golden Age of Hollywood throughout the 1920s to the 1940s? This decor reflected the lavish style of the film industry, embracing opulence and grandeur in designs that made a lasting impression.

The Tresdoux lighting collection captures the magic of this classic era and transforms it into a modern collection. The signature look features a mixture of materials and textures, pairing delicate matte ribbed-glass shades with scalloped metal details. From sconces and bath bars to chandeliers, the fixtures feel sumptuous and rich — while never overpowering the space. It’s the ideal marriage of boldness and refinement.

Modern style, clean lines
Look for lighting options with distinct forms for striking elegance. For example, the Kraga collection offers a variety of lighting options that are a creative take on mid-century modern designs with a sophisticated twist. Each eye-catching fixture is artistically crafted utilizing curved, linear metal pieces that fit in modern and traditional spaces.

This collection of lighting is sculptural, with an elegance that is bold, yet understated. Devoid of unnecessary decorative elements, these lights rely instead on the purity of pared down form and hand-selected materials. Crafted from smooth, cast metal frames fitted with glowing, cast-glass, creamy white globes, each Kraga lighting design is an expressive work of art, with its own unique personality and individual flair.

Traditional, equestrian design
If refined elegance that takes cues from nature appeals to you, look for lighting that offers a creative approach to traditional English country decor. You may be interested in the Terret Collection that is inspired by British equestrian design, updated through a palette of organic materials to individualize each piece.

Designs draw from early English country decor, where owners would bring the beauty of their pastoral surroundings into their interiors, blending leathers and textiles, their varied textures and tailored forms, with the rustic beauty of wrought iron, weathered wood and glassworks. The Terret lighting collection reflects those ideals, evoking a gentle pastoral era, bringing the equestrian style to a contemporary audience.

Your home is your sanctuary. It’s where you work, play, relax and can feel like yourself. Lighting enhances the personality of your home and makes it as individual as you are.
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