

Spring Home & Garden



The News Reporter

2020

Welcome Home.

The News Reporter is pleased to bring you Spring Home and Garden 2020. Whether you are looking to spruce up your yard, add value to your home with remodeling or replacing windows, or need maintenance tips, there is something here for everyone.



- Page 3** Taking a Top Down Approach to Home Exterior Updates
- Page 4** Decorating With Table Lamps: The Five Best Tips for 2020
- Page 5** Affordable DIY Projects to Transform Your Home
- Page 6** Proper Pruning is All About the Right Tools

- Page 7** Home Interior Updates You Can Make to Create a Wow Factor
- Page 9** How You Can Help Protect Wild Birds in Your Yard
- Page 10** How to Turn Your Home into the Staycation Destination
- Page 11** How to Extend Your Living Area to Outdoor Spaces

- Page 12** Safe Fuel Containers - Your Link to Seasonal Chores
- Page 13** Building a Home? What to Ask Your Builder About Lighting
- Page 14** Tips for Hosting Houseguests
- Page 15** How to Turn a Simple Shed into a Livable Oasis

Taking a Top Down Approach to Home Exterior Updates

Whether you want to boost the beauty of your home for your own enjoyment or you're looking to sell in the near future, experts recommend taking a top-down approach to evaluate the outside of your home. "When making updates to your home exterior, it's helpful to think of how all the parts of the whole work together to create a unified look," says Kate Smith, chief color maven with Sensational Color.

With that in mind, here are a few remodeling ideas to get you started:

The Roof

A new roof not only adds aesthetic appeal, it can add value too. Indeed, Remodeling's Cost vs. Value 2020 report shows that a roof replacement can have a return-on-investment of over 60 percent.

Composite roofing is particularly durable, long-lasting and low-maintenance, and an all-around smart investment. Not only does a high-quality roof help home-sellers get foot traffic, but the low-maintenance aspect really resonates with house-hunters. An attractive, more affordable alternative to the real thing, the composite slate and shake roofing



options available from some manufacturers reduce pesky maintenance concerns, offering impact-, fire- and wind-resistance, as well as the peace of mind that comes with a strong warranty. This is also a good choice for both those with a clear color palette in mind, and those who might need some direction, as some free resources include a Color Visualizer offering users the ability to see how different colors may look on their home exteriors, as well as a variety of free e-books with project inspiration and advice. "Using these free color tools can be both fun and empowering," says Smith. "They take the guesswork out of crafting a pleasing exterior color palette for the home and help create increased curb appeal."

Siding

If your home sports traditional siding, you may have noticed that the tiles contract and expand in

fluctuating weather conditions and temperatures. What's more, the color of these often-times thin and flimsy materials can fade quickly. Rather than replacing siding with more of the same, consider composite siding built to resist impact, fire, mold, algae, insects, salt air and high winds. The hand-split shake siding is made of virgin resins, UV and thermal stabilizers, plus a highly-specialized fire retardant. Whether you add accent panels with composite siding or go for the whole house, this can add a hassle-free aesthetic benefit to your home and boost its value.

Walkways

Cracked or uneven walkways and steps are not only an eyesore, they can present a tripping hazard to you and guests. Evaluate whether it's time to give yours an overhaul. Be sure to select low-maintenance materials that complement the look of the other elements of your exterior. This is a good time to consider lighting that adds drama to the walkway at night and makes for safer walking. Sprucing up? Go for high-impact projects that boost curb appeal and add value to the home.

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Decorating with Table Lamps: The Five Best Tips for 2020

Many people underestimate the power of lighting to set the mood and introduce different design elements into their home's interiors. As a result, they often make the mistake of relying solely on overhead fixtures to light their homes.

To get that cozy, homey feel, be sure to incorporate table lamps into your design scheme using these tips and trends from Eyely.com:

- **Use color:** Table lamps can be a good way to add bold pops of color or complement the existing palette. Think about whether you want each lamp to act as focal point or to quietly blend in.
- **Consider size:** Make sure that what you're buying is actually meant to sit atop a table. Table lamps should be between 24 and 31-inches high and at eye level when you're sitting next to them. This comes in handy if you're using the lamp as a reading light. Those on the shorter end of the range are ideal for bedrooms, whereas taller lamps work best in living rooms and other spaces. You'll also need to note the size of the base -- if it's too wide, it may not leave room on the table for books, coasters and decorative pieces.
- **Think purpose:** There are many different types of lampshades and each offers its own benefits. An opaque or dark shade is good for minimizing glare if you're watching TV. A less opaque shade will provide more light and give off a warm glow.
- **Pair up:** Table lamps usually look best in pairs. If you have a long table, you can place a lamp on either end and then, place additional decorations in the center of the table, or,

use matching end tables on either side of a sofa to accommodate your twin lamps.

- **Define Your Space:** Do you decorate around a theme such as farmhouse or mid-century design? Lighting can help you define the look. For example, if you're a bohemian type who prefers a minimalist style, shop for fixtures with an eclectic design and clean, simple lines. For mid-century modern rooms, look for clean lines and vintage-inspired finishes. Mixing rustic and modern finishes can add a modern edge to a traditional space. To get you started, consider these recommendations from Eyely.com:

To simultaneously harken the past and beckon the future, consider the Alani 34-inch Metal LED Table Lamp, which is evocative of 1960s futuristic space race-inspired design but plated in a modern brass, finish.

Flank a table, sofa, or adorn bedside tables with a set of two, such as these Max 27-inch Glass Triple-Sphere LED Table Lamps. Glass blown into a trio of orbs, the look is completed with a matching finial and linen drum shade.

Whether adding a conversation-worthy lighting feature to an otherwise serious room, or completing a menagerie of animal-inspired decor items, the blue and white owl-shaped Kai 16-inch Ceramic Mini LED Table Lamp will give your home a touch of chinoiserie and woodland whimsy.

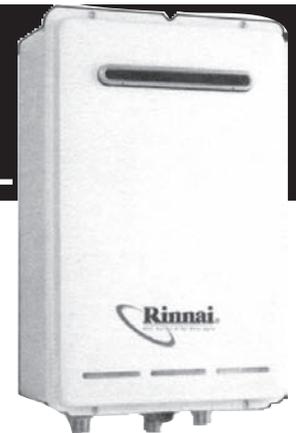
Redecorating? Be sure to include lighting that completes the look and feel of your interior spaces.



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Affordable DIY Projects to Transform Your Home

Transformative home renovations don't need to be complicated, nor do they need to cost an arm and a leg. There are plenty of affordable DIY projects you can do in a weekend to add beauty to your home's indoor and outdoor spaces. Here are a few to consider:

- **Instant Ambiance:** Most often associated with party decor, string lighting hung above back patios and decks can be used to create everyday ambiance. As for how to string the lights, the possibilities are endless. You may prefer taut, clean lines, slack zig-zags or concentric circles. Just be sure to use weatherproof lighting designed to withstand the elements.

- **Stone Patio:** A drab concrete patio, pool deck, garage floor or walkway can be an eyesore. Whether your concrete is older and looking stressed, shedding its latest coat of paint, slippery, stained -- or new, but just gray and lifeless, there's a very easy way to spruce things up that doesn't require replacing the materials or involving a contractor. With a pre-mixed, factory-tinted stone coating system, such as the patent-pending SpreadStone Decorative Concrete Resurfacing Kit, just about anyone can add authentic stone character to any concrete floor or wall. It not only boosts aesthetics, but also adds traction for safer walking surfaces. The real stone coating performs well in all climates, standing up to water, snow, salt, UV exposure and extreme cold and heat.

"The best part? Application is fast and simple and you don't need to be an artist to achieve great results," says renovation expert, James Carey, co-host of "On the House," a national home improvement show.



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- **Mount Shelving:** Installing floating shelves onto otherwise bare walls adds coziness to living spaces while creating smart storage. The lightweight, easy-to-install Ambrosia Maple Rustic Mantel Shelf from Ornamental Mouldings & Millwork is a good choice, as it can be used as either a stand-alone floating shelf or fireplace mantel, and can be left as-is or stained to complement other elements in the room.

- **Stone Countertops:** Have you always wanted real stone countertops but didn't want to spend thousands on a complete remodel? You can now roll a new stone surface over any existing countertop made of laminate, cultured marble, concrete, wood, tile and other solid surface with the high-performance SpreadStone Mineral Select Countertop Refinishing Kit.

Available in 10 colors, all of which feature mineral accents and highlights found in natural mined rock, the proprietary stone technology gives an elegant, environmentally-friendly facelift to surfaces in kitchens, bathrooms and other home interiors.

"If you can use a roller and paintbrush, you can create a new stone surface using this product," says Peter Daich, president of Daich Coatings. "It's an affordable, simple alternative to putting in a new stone slab and looks just as great."

Unfortunately, there are many homeowners who avoid desired renovations, assuming that in order to make a true impact, they'll need a huge budget and a lot of time. The truth is that there are transformative DIY updates you can execute affordably in just one weekend.



Proper Pruning is All About the Right Tools

If you are like most homeowners, you need to prune trees, shrubs, bushes and other plants in your yard from time to time. But do you know which tool is best suited for each particular job? Experts say that choosing tools wisely is key to maximizing beauty, and minimizing damage to plants.

There are a few things to keep in mind as you go about selecting tools for your pruning jobs, big and small. Here are a few insights to get you started:

- For most basic pruning around the yard, bypass or hand pruners, also known as garden or pruning shears, are go-to tools. Best for making clean cuts through living plants and tree branches, they work much like a set of heavy-duty scissors and are capable of getting into tight spots for close, precise cuts.

“Since pruning shears see so much use, it makes sense to buy the best ones you can afford. From my experience, inexpensive models simply don’t last very long,” he says. “A well-cared for, high-quality set of bypass pruners however can be a lifetime investment for the average homeowner.”

- For larger branches, anvil-style shears can be a good choice, which feature one sharp blade closing against a flat, wide blade and work much like a knife cutting against a cutting board. However, he warns that they should be used selectively, as they crush plant stems more than bypass-style pruners.

- When it comes to branches of more than 1/2-inch (12.7 millimeters) in diameter, loppers are the best choice. Like hand pruning tools, there are bypass loppers, which operate much like a large, long-handled set of bypass shears, while anvil-style loppers use just one cutting blade.

Bypass loppers generally cut with more precision, while anvil-style loppers are typically capable of generating more cutting force.

Still have questions? New online resources can help. A manufacturer of commercial mowers and equipment has a new video series for DIY homeowners called “Done in a Weekend.” Among the videos is “Cut It Out,” which explains the differences between different pruning tools, as well as provides tips for pruning more effectively with less



effort.

Regular pruning is necessary to keep your yard looking beautiful and well-maintained as well as to improve the health of plants. Be sure you’re equipped with the proper tools and knowledge to do so effectively.

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Home Interior Updates You Can Make to Create a Wow Factor

Whether you want to customize and enhance your living spaces for your own enjoyment or you need to prepare to stand out in a buyer's market, creating that wow factor is easy to achieve, if you know where to focus your attention. You're likely already familiar with the importance of exterior curb appeal. According to experienced realtors, it's just as important to continue that concept after walking through the front door.

"As the saying goes, 'you only have one opportunity to make a first impression,'" says realtor Vincent A. Stanson, a REALTOR associate. "When that front door opens, homeowners have the chance to impress their guests with a stunning stairway system, stand-out mouldings and decorative interior accents." To get you started, here are easy ideas to give your spaces that wow factor you see and admire in ads and architectural magazines:



Ceiling-to-Floor Transformation

Totally transform a room top to bottom with decorative mouldings and millwork, starting with the ceiling. Add warmth with wood beams in a horizontal or criss-cross pattern, or simply accent the ceiling with stand-out crown mouldings.

Working your way down, frame windows with straight trim and rosettes in the corners. Throughout the room, add chair mouldings, mantels and floating shelves.

Remember, mouldings don't need to be plain, especially if you want to make an impact. So, replace any humdrum casing, crown, chair and base mouldings with elements that pop, such as those that feature leaves, grapes, vines or criss-cross ribbon patterns. Consider the decorative millwork accents available from Ornamental Moulding & Millwork, which are easy to install. Their newest offerings dovetail nicely with the latest trends, and their commitment to craftsmanship mean high-quality products that last. The inspiration galleries available on its site can be a good tool for those seeking ideas for creatively enhancing their own rooms. To learn more, visit Ornamental.com.

Step Up Stairways

Often a focal point of a home interior, a stairway system is a crucial area where homeowners can step up their game, and doing so doesn't have to be overwhelming.

"There's a definite trend underway of people mixing metals and woods on stair systems and throughout the home," says Kelly Miller, director of market development. "Rather than completely take down an existing wood stair system, many people are turning to the easy IronPro DIY project of replacing wood balusters with iron balusters. Then they're leaving the wood hand rails and newel posts for a stylish, upgraded look."

Defined by unique designs and durability, L.J. Smith products -- including wooden and ornamental iron balusters, stainless steel cable and tube infills, metal panels, newel posts, hand rails and accessories, can help you transform your stairs. Check out a "Stair Designer" tool to determine the best look for your home, as well as installation details and additional tips.

When taking your home interiors from ordinary to extraordinary, it's all in the details.

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How You Can Help Protect Wild Birds in Your Yard

You may not think about it often, but wild birds use your lawn as a rest stop and place to call home. As you spruce up your lawn and garden for the season, there are simple steps you can take to protect them and help them thrive.

According to Spencer Schock, founder of WindowAlert, makers of bird-friendly products for homes, the following changes are easy to implement in order to create a safe harbor for wild birds:

- **Plant native species:** Planting native species on your property is one of the most impactful ways you can improve your local environment, as well as make your lawn and garden a healthy habitat for wild birds and other fauna. Native plant species provide birds with food and places to rest and nest. Birds in turn, spread pollen and seeds, while acting as a natural pesticide. Speaking of which, gardening organically will also go a long way to protecting the health and safety of feeding birds.



- **Make windows visible:** Up to 1 billion birds die annually from striking windows in US, according to the American Bird Conservancy. The good news is that it's relatively easy

and affordable to prevent your home from being part of the problem. Special window decals that reflect ultraviolet sunlight, a wavelength of light noticeable to birds, have been proven to substantially reduce the likelihood of bird strikes. Giving the appearance of slightly frosted translucent glass but glowing like a stoplight for birds, those from WindowAlert feature a range of decorative patterns. To boost protection for birds, you can also apply a high-tech liquid called WindowAlert UV Liquid in between decals. More information, as well as useful application tips, can be found by visiting windowalert.com.

- **Monitor cats:** Monitor your cat's time outdoors to ensure they are not terrorizing or hunting birds. An enclosed play area for your cat is the most effective way to keep birds in your yard safe from your furry companion's natural instincts.

Good deeds start at home. This season, do your part to help migrating bird populations reach their destinations safely.

An advertisement for Butler's Heating & Air Service, LLC. The background is a photograph of a grey outdoor air conditioning unit on a lawn next to a brick wall. A black power cord is plugged into the unit. In the foreground, there is a green poppy plant with several buds and one open pink flower. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

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How to Turn Your Home into the Staycation Destination

While vacations sound like the best chance to unwind, planning a trip out of town -- and getting there -- can sometimes be more hassle than it's worth. Here's how to turn your home into a staycation "destination" that can be enjoyed any time you feel like it:

- **Upgrade Bedding:** Give your bedroom a five-star hotel-grade makeover so you can enjoy that quality of rest found only on vacation. Shop for percale linens and high-quality pillows and invest in window treatments that block out sound and light, so you can awaken when you choose to, not when the sun or neighbors intervene.

- **Create a Spa-Like Bathroom:** Find your bliss by creating a spa-like retreat in your bathroom. Start by clearing unsightly clutter and using coordinating dispensers for bath products. Paint the walls in a hue that promotes relaxation -- think earthy tones, blues and greens, then add plants or fresh flowers for a pop of vibrant color.

Dimmer switches, waterproof speakers and a waterfall showerhead with different spray settings are just a few updates offering you flexibility to create different moods, all which can connect to a smart home device that remembers your preferences. For that warm, cozy feeling right out of the bath or shower, add in-floor heating and a towel warming drawer.

- **Add Backyard Touches:** Show your backyard some love with a little landscaping and a few touches that replicate that vacation feel. An outdoor bar and kitchen can give you a dedicated place to wine and dine without having to constantly go in and out of the house. Install a hammock for long afternoons spent with a book.

- **Explore Financing Options:** When it comes to transforming your home into the ultimate destination, you won't want to cut corners on what matters most to you, whether that's opting for the superior flat screen TV or getting just the right coffee table to complete the look of your living room.

To that end, check out easy and convenient financing options that offer buying empowerment and flexibility. Using a credit card, you can shop for home goods at more than a million home-related retail locations nationwide or more



everywhere the card is accepted. In some cases, you can take advantage of even longer-term promotional financing offers. Being able to pay off home purchases with convenient monthly payments can make life easier, helping you manage cash flow and compartmentalize spending on all things home.

Make "getting away from it all" as simple as taking a bath or enjoying a blockbuster from the comfort of home. With smart renovation strategies, you can be sure you're getting exactly what you want and need to truly relax.

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How to Extend Your Living Area to Outdoor Spaces

When warmer weather arrives, it's all about spending time in your home's outdoor spaces. Here are a few new ideas for transforming your porch, deck or yard into an oasis of relaxation.

Spruce Up

Before getting down to brass tacks, it's time to give your outdoor spaces a once-over and note what basic maintenance and cleaning are needed; be sure to sweep up porches and decks of debris, dust off and move outdoor furniture out of storage and prune trees and plants that need it. This may be a good time to refinish or re-stain an older deck in need of some tender loving care. Want to add a splash of color to the space? Give some time-worn wooden furniture a new paint job in a bold hue.

Power Up

To match the true comfort of indoor life to your home's outdoor spaces, you'll need a safe, code-compliant and unobtrusive way to power fans, lighting, entertainment, electric appliances and more.

To add an outlet to raised outdoor floors, porches and decks, consider installing a Deck Outlet Cover from Hubbell TayMac. Accommodating two power cords, it lets you put the power where you want it -- in a safe place where people are less likely to trip over cords.

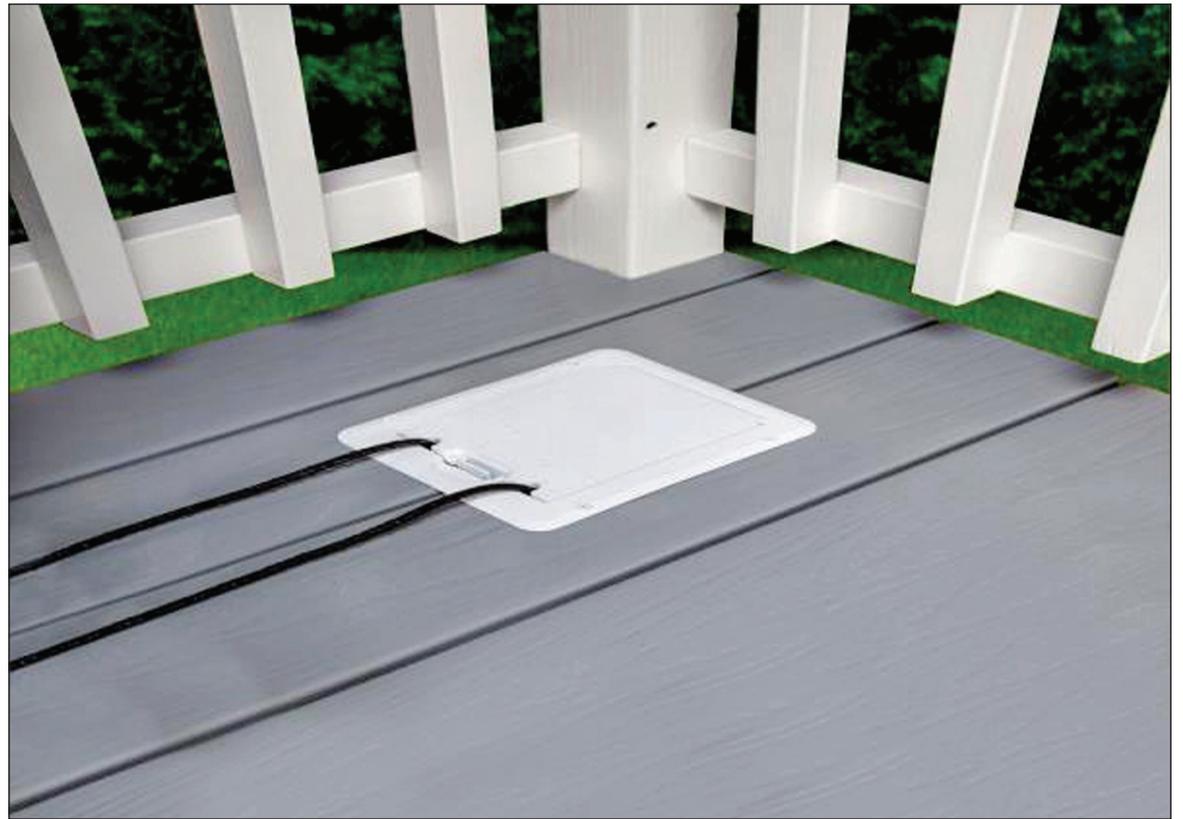
Weatherproof, UV resistant and durable even in harsh environments, it also features a low-profile design that meets ADA standards, and an attractive slip-resistant texture available in gray, white and bronze.

Furnish

Given the broad scope of weatherproof furnishings, cushions, pillows and even rugs available on the market today, there is absolutely no reason that your outdoor spaces can't offer the same level of comfort and beauty as any den or living room, especially now that you've supplied your outdoor space with electrical power and the flexibility to install such amenities as an entertainment center, ceiling fans and even chandeliers.

Just be sure everything you install is weatherproofed and protected against the elements, and that you select only outdoor-grade products. However, you can extend the life of certain items by taking extra precautions during extreme weather and the off-season.

By giving your home's outdoor spaces the same attention to detail as the indoors, you can extend your living spaces and even create new "rooms" in which to dine, relax and entertain.



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Safe Fuel Containers - Your Link to Seasonal Chores

People are heading outdoors to prep lawns and gardens for the season and get their families ready for warmer weather. What's the key common denominator for most of these activities?

"Whether it's using a tiller to start a garden or power washing the driveway, homeowners rely on fuel to jumpstart warm weather activities," says Daniel Marshall, vice president of marketing and business development. "Gasoline, kerosene and diesel fuel all link people to projects and activities outside the home."

No matter what fuel-powered chore you have to do around the home, a few simple considerations can help ensure you complete these tasks efficiently and safely.

Stay Safe - While unseen, fuel emits vapors that can be explosive. For that reason, keep burning cigarettes and other ignition sources away from fuel containers. Surprisingly, even cell phones can create a static charge that might ignite gasoline, so always keep them away from fueling efforts. If you're in the middle of a task and need more fuel, shut off the engine. And, importantly, let equipment cool before adding more fuel. Refueling powered equipment when hot can cause vapors to ignite or explode, resulting in potential injuries.

Store and Use Fuel Wisely - Proper fuel storage is critical for any shed or garage. Take the step of evaluating and ditching your old metal containers, which are prone to fuel and fume leakage. Consider new models constructed of durable, reliable and safe high-density polyethylene. You'll also want to be sure your fuel container has a Flame Mitigation Device (FMD) and childproof lock. Plus, the innovative spout design of SmartControl containers provides a clean, fast and hassle-free pour and helps save gas by eliminating messy spills. And, because the container stores with the spout on, hands stay clean. Available in one-, two- and five-gallon sizes, containers are for gasoline, diesel and kerosene. To get the most out of your fuel containers, check out the instructional video "Fuel Container Safety."

Be Prepared - Be sure you have fuel for an entire season of chores and recreation -- as well as for the unexpected. "Filling your fuel containers at the start of the season means you won't be caught empty-handed when it's time to mow the lawn," says Marshall. Just be sure not to rely on last season's batch. Fuel sitting unused for many months should be safely discarded, as gas components can deteriorate over time. Changing gasoline out with the seasons keeps it fresh. You'll also want to be sure you're prepared ahead of time for extreme weather events. Having gasoline on hand during a power outage after a storm can help fuel generators, much-needed chain saws and other gas-powered equipment. More fuel tips and information can be found at www.scepter.com. "Don't wait until a storm is forecast to prepare," says Marshall. "We've all seen the footage of stores running out of supplies. Get a step ahead of the game, particularly when it comes to essentials like gasoline." As you go about your seasonal activities, remember that proper fuel handling and storage is essential for a safe and productive season.



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Building a Home? What to Ask Your Builder About Lighting

While lighting is an essential piece of new home design; it's often selected and installed at the end of the building process. What's more, statement-making decorative lighting is often not part of the initial design at all.

"Many builders today are opting for only recessed lighting in new home builds. Not only does this provide inadequate light, it creates a sterile look," says Jennifer Kis, director of marketing communications. "It's important to consider decorative lighting in the initial budget to highlight all the other accents and purposeful design in your home."

The good news is that today, there are luxury lighting options that suit any budget and lifestyle trend. For example, Progress Lighting offers the Point Dume Collection created by influential interior designer, Jeffrey Alan Marks. Inspired by the California coastline, fixtures in this fashion-forward collection highlight artistic influence and rich finishes. Progress also offers the Design Series, which offers sophistication at accessible prices, along with hundreds of other decorative interior and exterior fixtures.

"For the style impact it gives the home, decorative lighting is definitely worth the investment," says Piper Stromatt, interior designer in Chattanooga, Tenn. "We've tested recessed-only lighting schemes and our clients immediately sense something lacking in the home's ambiance. We always recommend including decorative lighting, as it increases the perceived value of the home as well as offers a finishing touch."

Be sure to discuss the lighting plan during your design phase. Once the build has started, it may be more expensive to make changes. When talking lighting with her clients, Stromatt emphasizes these key points:

- Layer a combination of task lighting with decorative lighting. A properly layered lighting scheme creates comfort, functionality and beauty.

- Decorative lighting should be installed closer to eye level than functional recessed lighting and reinforce the home's unique design. As the single focal point for each living area, decorative fixtures define a space, which is especially crucial in open floor plans.

- Avoid installing recessed lighting in rooms where flattering and comfortable light is necessary, such as overhead in the master bathroom or in a nursery where high-wattage lights can be uncomfortable for baby's eyes.

When planning the lighting for your new home, Stromatt recommends asking these questions:

- Is the lighting package pre-determined? Often, builders offer a choice of one or more standard packages. Before confirming your selection, ask what upgrades are available, what the costs are, and if there are any design limitations.

- What's the wiring plan? Pre-installed junction boxes, or pancake boxes, offer less flexibility, as light fixtures must be installed wherever junction boxes are. If your plan doesn't include decorative lighting, ask for the home to be snake-wired, which gives the flexibility to add lighting wherever and whenever you want.



- Are LED light bulbs an option? Often a builder has already selected bulbs, and they're not always LED. Even if it adds to the cost, the investment to substitute LED bulbs is worth it, providing energy savings, brighter light and longer life. The bottom line: don't settle for recessed lighting alone. By asking the right questions, you can easily combine form and function.

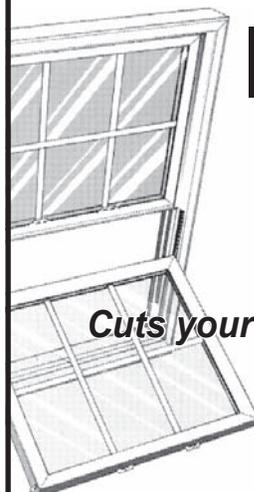
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Tips for Hosting Houseguests

Hosting houseguests? For happier guests and hosts alike, you'll want to be sure you're equipped to accommodate all your overnighters. Here are a few pointers:

Special Considerations

You'll likely know of any special considerations you will need to make for individual guests, but if you aren't sure, ask in advance. For older guests, be sure the floor is free of tripping hazards and that walkways are well-lit. For families, offer a room away from noise so small children can sleep undisturbed at their regular bedtimes. Anticipating and accommodating allergies, dietary restrictions and mobility issues can help keep guests healthy, happy and safe during their stay with you.

Better Bedding

Whether you are hosting one guest or many, it's important to ensure that everyone under your roof has a comfortable place to sleep. Thanks to the latest updates in air mattress technology, that's easier than ever these days. Before the holidays, get equipped with compact, high-quality air mattresses -- which are a must-have for travelers who need to pack a car compactly, as well as hosts who want to store guest bedding between uses. One such option is the Intex PremAire ThermoLux airbed with Fiber-Tech interior construction, which inflates in 4-5 minutes. Made from a Microcell contour top designed to insulate in cold weather and absorb moisture on warm nights, it even contains a USB port for charging and built-in storage for cords and small personal items. Other models from Intex -- which come in various sizes and supports -- offer such luxuries as headboards, raised bed heights and plush air pillowtop systems.



A Stocked Bathroom

Not only will a well-stocked bathroom help avoid last-minute trips to the store, it will make guests feel comfortable and welcome upon arrival. You'll always want to provide a set of linens for each guest, as well as shampoo, conditioner and soap. Having a few additional items on hand -- disposable razors, cotton swabs, combs, toothbrushes and toothpaste -- is a nice touch. For many reasons, guests often arrive without certain essentials. Maybe they forgot an item at home. Maybe TSA made them toss something in the trash. Whatever the reason, you'll want to prepare for this common occurrence.

A full house does not need to be overwhelming. With a few considerations, you can create a joyful experience for you and your houseguests.



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How to Turn a Simple Shed into a Livable Oasis

Once the domain of lawnmowers and gardening tools, today's backyard sheds are being repurposed into unique, functional spaces (think: she-shed, bunkhouse or even a bar pub) complete with plumbing and electricity.

Here are tips from the experts on how to turn a simple shed into a backyard oasis.

"Quite often, we are seeing that homeowners are adding electricity to backyard sheds and using decorative interior lighting to make a statement, just as lighting would be used in the interiors of a home," says Jennifer Kis, director of marketing communications for Progress Lighting.

Backyard sheds are widely available at garden centers, hardware and home stores in a variety of architectural styles, from traditional to modern. Sheds range in size, from small (under 80 square feet), medium (approximately 90 to 120 square feet) and large (ranging from 144 to 288 square feet.) Choose a size appropriate for the use -- for example, a gardener's getaway or she-shed may be on the smaller size. A bunkhouse or bar shed will need to be larger.

Decide whether this will be a DIY project from the ground up, or whether a prefabricated shed best meets your needs. Check with your local planning department to comply with codes and guidelines. Decide if the shed will mirror the architectural features of your home. Keep in mind that because sheds are not tall, the roof will be visible and should be considered as part of the design.

When turning a backyard shed into a dream bunkhouse at her lakeside home, designer, artist and owner of Meme Hill Studio, Amie Freling Brown put this to the test.

"I'm obsessed with the tiny living concept and the she-shed movement," says Freling Brown.

"When we decided we needed more sleeping space for our 750 square foot lake house, we knew it was time to create our own tiny house."

Choosing a 10 by 12-foot classic backyard shed with a gambrel roof, gable vents, transom windows and 7-foot walls to give top campers in the bunk beds more headroom, Freling Brown transformed a simple shed into a bright, nautical farmhouse-inspired bunkhouse, complete with electricity for an overhead light, two wall lanterns and electrical outlets.

The hand-painted wood grain texture of its overhead pendant inspired Freling Brown's choice of reclaimed wood paneling for the ceiling, creating an unexpected décor detail. She added vinyl plank flooring that would stand up to sandy, wet feet from the lake. Beadboard paneled walls painted in a semi-gloss white make the most of the reflected light, adding to the small space's open, airy feeling. As a contrast to the light palette of the bunkhouse interior, she used color in coordinating bedding, nautical decor and navy furniture, as well as accessories make it warm and inviting.

By transforming a shed into a livable oasis, extending your home's living space is both trendy and easy.

Five Essentials to Build a Home office

Want to maximize your productivity when working in your home office? Here are five essentials to build out the space:

- **A Solid Chair:** Don't shortchange yourself with the wrong chair. It's the basis of your comfort, which is critical for putting in the hours needed for success. Look for an ergonomic desk chair offering low-back support and the ability to adjust height, seatback and arms so you can customize it for your needs. Space-permitting, you may even add a small couch or armchair to use for inspiration breaks or as an auxiliary workstation for when using a laptop.



- **A Convertible Desk:** Standing desks are all the rage these days and with good reason.

Studies show that it's healthy to stand more and sit less. For a modest price, an add-on can be applied to your current desk that allows you to transition to standing as needed.

- **Organizational Tools:** Use tools and supplies needed to have all your ducks in a row when it comes time visit your accountant. Small business owners and freelancers can especially benefit from a printing calculator such as the Casio HR-100TMPlus, which is made to rest on a desk. This particular model has a big easy-to-read display and two-color printing. You'll also want to have a stapler and filing cabinet handy so that after printing records, you can collate and file documents away in an organized fashion, keeping your surfaces and workspaces clutter-free.

- **The Right Lighting:** Nothing beats natural light, so if it all possible, situate your desk near a window that offers ample sun. Harsh lighting can be de-motivating but task lighting is essential. Look for options that offer various brightness settings so you can adjust throughout the day.

- **Data Protection:** While a paper shredder and locking filing cabinet will protect potentially sensitive physical records, you'll also want to invest in some electronic data protection. Many services offer lower rates to small businesses that include comprehensive protection services. While this can seem like a dubious expense, it is well worth the cost. Just be sure to research your options and stick with a reputable company for your cybersecurity needs.

Whether you're starting a business from scratch or simply want to update your existing home office, selecting the tools and furniture will improve your workflow and help you stay better organized.



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