

DECLUTTERING TIPS | TANKLESS WATER HEATERS

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HOME **garden & auto**

2020



The secret meanings of **HOUSEPLANTS**

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Let TIPS TO HELP YOU DECLUTTER **it** go



By Melissa Erickson

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Many Americans stuck at home because of the COVID-19 pandemic looked inward and decided it's a great time to declutter.

"If you aren't using those appliances that you were saving for 'someday,' now is the time to give them the heave-ho. Someday is now," said certified professional organizer Darla DeMorrow, founder of HeartWork Organizing based in Wayne, Pennsylvania. "If you haven't learned to use that pressure cooker/stand mixer/electric skillet/panini grill, you probably never will."

Use the "80-20 rule" to cull your belongings.

"About 20% of the things we own are what we love and use every day. The 80% of our possessions that we hardly touch aren't adding much to our lives except guilt and stress. Learn to identify with the 'vital few' and feel good about letting go of the 'trivial many,' as Vilfredo Pareto, the Italian economist who first coined the term, put it," said DeMorrow, author of the SORT and Succeed book series and "The Upbeat, Organized Home Office."

Here are some of DeMorrow's tips to reclaiming valuable space in the kitchen:

- **Ditch broken appliances that just take up space.** "If you can't find the missing part, have already bought a replacement or never liked it to start with, let it go."
- **Chuck things you don't use.** "Do you really need 200 cookie cutters if you haven't made cookies in years?"
- **Toss bulky,** low quality party gear including flimsy foil platters, plastic crudité pans and mismatched plastic cups.
- **Pass along fancy items like gold-rimmed plates or glasses that you never use because they are hard to care for and out of sync with your lifestyle.**
- **Pitchers take up a lot of room.** Keep the nicer ones and let go of the others. "There's no reason you can't use a pretty crystal pitcher every day." Same goes for lunch bags. Keep the one you use and donate the rest.
- **"Cheese boards and knives multiply when you aren't looking, and they can be hard to store. Keep your favorite."**
- **Clean out under the sink.** Toss sponges and scrubbers past their prime. Keep a fresh pack ready to go or, better yet, purchase washable, reusable scrubbers.
- **Keep a few shopping bags handy,** but limit yourself to one reusable bag holder or a small bin of paper bags. Keep them corralled and out of the way. When your container is full, recycle the rest.
- **Sports bottles aren't meant to last forever.** Recycle extras if your location allows.

"The kitchen is prime real estate. Things that aren't related to the kitchen should be moved to another, more appropriate spot in the house," DeMorrow said. "Light bulbs, old paint, papers and childhood keepsakes, some pet supplies, art supplies and tools are probably best stored elsewhere."

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Publisher/Executive Editor Steven Pappas
General Sales Manager Tim Duguay
Creative Services Manager Keri Franzoni
Customer Service Manager Melody Hudson

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77 Grove Street, Suite 102, Rutland, VT
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How to create a **PERSONAL** **LIBRARY**

By **Melissa Erickson**

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From a messy stack of books beside the bed to a perfectly curated special room, a personal library reflects its owner's character, personality and interests.

"A book collection begins with a single book. That's all it takes to get started," said Alison Huff, editor in chief of Women's Health Interactive. "Whether you build your collection based on the themes of books you enjoy reading most or if you choose to collect books across a variety of topics, your collection should ultimately reflect you."

"The concept of a personal library is incredibly broad and can be different to every individual contemplating such a project," said James Gannon, director of rare books at Heritage Auctions.

"As an avid book lover, I think that every home should and can have a personal library," said Deanna Michaels, who blogs about homemaking on a budget at [From this Kitchen Table](#) ([fromthiskitchentable.com](#)).

■ SET THE TONE

First, determine what is the purpose of the library and the collector's reason for assembling it, said Gannon, who suggests starting with collecting what you love. It can be subject-driven, such as natural history or literature; focused on book arts, such as pop-up books or fine bindings; or a specific series or by publisher, he said.

If you're practical, start with books needed for school or work, said Helene Segura, a productivity and organization consultant in San Antonio, Texas. If budget is a factor, set aside enough money to purchase one book each quarter.

A theme can be helpful, but for some it's more fun to collect with no rhyme or reason, Segura said.

"Purchase books that are favorites to read, those that might improve your life, those that are mindless, those that are deeply spiritual, or those that will help you be successful with dream projects," she said.

"As far as space and organization go, even if you live in a small apartment you can start a collection with one small shelf, even if that shelf is found at a garage sale. It doesn't have to be expensive," Huff said.

"Make a collection that is the right size for you, this might be a single shelf, a single range of shelves or an entire library: Each will suit the needs and goals of different

collectors," Gannon said. "Sometimes what you choose to collect and the amount of time you commit will determine the size of the collection."

"The setting and presentation of the books in a library will say a lot about the collector and the collection, and in some ways will be determined by the types of books collected. For instance, you will not want windows with bright sunlight in a library that houses antiquarian, delicate or expensive books as the light will damage and fade the bindings. The manner of shelving books is also determined by the needs and wishes of the collector and the particular collection," Gannon said.

■ STARTING A CHILD'S LIBRARY

As many people opt for digital books, a personal library shows off a homeowner's preference for the printed word, which can be shared with children.

"My own opinion is that parents should encourage children to start their collection as early as possible," said Jen Stark, founder of the Happy DIY Home blog ([happydiyhome.com](#)). "This will instill the importance of books at a young age and will keep the tradition of home libraries alive."

For children, try this organizing trick from parenting expert Dhanya Gopalakrishnan, who blogs at [Parentingpassage.com](#): Catalogue books with the covers facing out so little ones can easily see the whole book for easy choosing.



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A TANKLESS JOB?

**DETERMINING WHETHER
A TANKLESS WATER HEATER
IS RIGHT FOR YOU**

By Melissa Erickson

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Jumping into a hot shower can be done more quickly when you've got a tankless water heater, which provides hot water on demand. Whether it's a good investment depends on your water usage.

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If you're building a new home or need to install a new water heater, the first step is wading through all the marketing and misconceptions about tankless models, said home improvement expert Danny Lipford, host of the "Today's Homeowner" TV and radio shows.

While tankless water heaters will save on energy costs, they are more expensive than traditional water heaters.

"It's a fairly viable option for many people, although the upfront cost is a lot more," Lipford said.

The initial investment runs about \$3,000, which is a disadvantage when a tank water heater can be purchased for between \$600 and \$800, Lipford said. Installation and retrofit costs can also be high.

Tankless water heaters are compact and wall-mounted, and take up only

a fraction of the space that a conventional water heater does, Lipford said.

Once installed a tankless water heater can lower your energy bill by up to 30%, but "it takes a long time to get that money back," Lipford said.

For homes that use 41 gallons or less of hot water daily, tankless water heaters can be 24% to 34% more energy efficient than conventional storage tank water heaters, according to energy.gov. For homes that use over 85 gallons a day, they can be 8% to 14% more energy efficient.

So why buy one? Lipford is often asked. The answer depends on space, energy usage and water supply.

"It's a balance for every family," Lipford said.

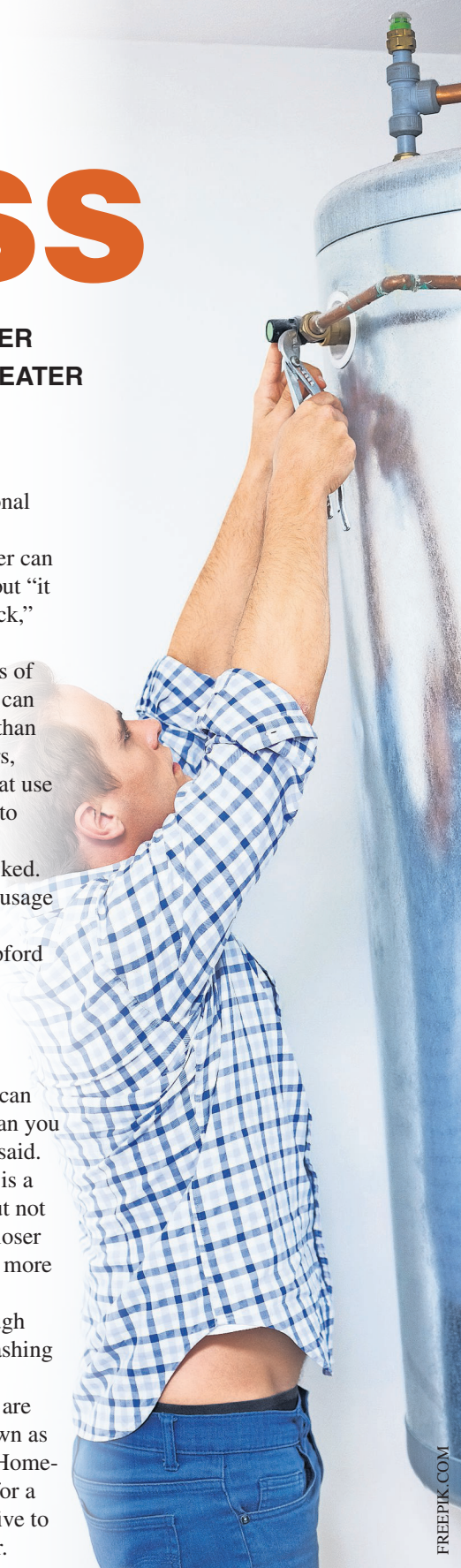
For many families the biggest advantage is saving room in the house.

"You gain a 2-by-2-foot space. You can add a pantry, a coat or utility closet. Can you put a dollar amount on that?" Lipford said.

For large families a tankless system is a benefit because it provides "endless but not instant hot water," Lipford said. The closer the faucet is to the heating system, the more instant the hot water will be.

A tankless system also ensures enough hot water to run appliances like the washing machine or dishwasher.

While these energy efficient heaters are more expensive, prices are coming down as more models come out, Lipford said. Homeowners can expect a 20-year lifespan for a tankless water heater, which is about five to 10 more than a traditional water heater.



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The secret meanings of **HOUSEPLANTS**

By Melissa Erickson

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Indoor gardening is more popular than ever, with GrowIt reporting that houseplants made up 30% of all the plants uploaded to the app in 2019.

The site predicts this to continue in 2020.

When choosing what plants to own or give as gifts, why not opt for a plant that conveys a hidden message?

“Houseplants, too, have personalities, emotions and special meanings,” said plant blogger Boris Dadvisard, an urban naturalist who blogs about plant care tips at Invin-cibleHouseplants.com.

“When offering a bouquet to someone, one immediately thinks about the symbolism behind the flowers. Roses mean romance; camellias passion; chrysanthemum fidelity and joy, etc.,” said Dadvisard, who was unaware of the different meanings of houseplants until he discovered “The Language of Houseplants” by Cheralyn Darcey.

“Plants are known to convey positive and calming energy around them. I couldn’t agree more with British author Jenny Uglow when she said ‘We may think we are nurturing our garden, but of course it’s

our garden that is really nurturing us.’ Therefore, remember to think about plant symbolism when offering a houseplant as a present to someone you love, a friend, a relative or yourself. It can make a thoughtful gift,” Dadvisard said.

For example, Ceropegia woodii, commonly known as Chain of Hearts, conveys a positive message and has multiple meanings, including devotion, love, wishes, luck, fertility, home blessing and family blessing.

“It’s perfect for a new home, birth or to attract positive waves to someone that’s close to you,” Dadvisard said.

Place near the front of the home to bring happy, loving blessings to all those who reside within.

“It will remind everyone to care for each other,” Dadvisard said.

The next time you think of bringing flowers, consider a house-plant instead.

“As wonderful as a flower bouquet is to receive, it’s gone after a few days. A houseplant, on the other hand, is long-lasting company. If cared for properly it can be kept for years,” Dadvisard said.

Here are some other houseplants with special meanings, according to ProFlowers.com.



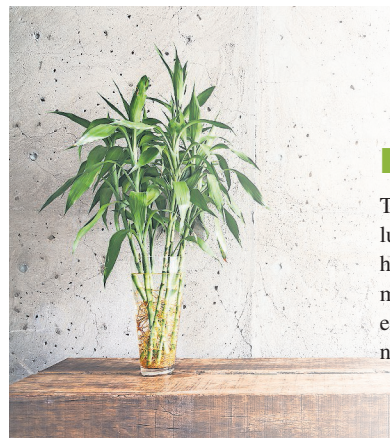
AIR PLANT

Representing freedom and creativity, air plants make great gifts for people who crave change. Be sure to keep away from direct sunlight and hot or cold drafts. Soak in water for about 10 to 15 minutes every one to two weeks.



BONSAI

The East Asian art form of bonsai cultivates small trees such as Japanese maple, juniper and ficus that mimic the shape and size of full-size trees. Bonsai convey harmony, wisdom and calm. Growing and caring for bonsai can be stress relieving so are perfect for people seeking more peacefulness in their lives. Bonsai crave direct sunlight and light misting.



BAMBOO

Those looking to attract good luck can add bamboo to their home. This plant, which also means longevity, prefers moderate to indirect sunlight. Roots need to be covered by water.



CACTUS

Prickly cactus have a tough outer layer and mean protection and endurance, so they can bring a sense of determination to those going through tough times. Most like direct sunlight and watering once a week. Be sure to follow specific plant directions because needs vary.



MONSTERA

Super trendy monstera brings honor, respect and longevity and is ideal for someone who values family. Water when the first couple inches of soil are dry and place in indirect sunlight.



MONEY TREE

Also en vogue, the money tree means wealth and good fortune, which we all could use more of. It thrives in some indirect and direct sunlight with moist soil.



“

Plants are known to convey positive and calming energy around them. I couldn't agree more with British author Jenny Uglow when she said 'We may think we are nurturing our garden, but of course it's our garden that is really nurturing us.'

BORIS DADVISARD

”



How to **GROW PRODUCE** FROM **SCRAPS**

By **Melissa Erickson**

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One person's trash is another's treasure, even in the kitchen.

Not only is it possible to grow food from kitchen scraps, the practice was common about 100 years ago, said Shelby DeVore, an animal expert and founder of the blog *Farminence*, which educates people interested in becoming more self-sufficient.

"We've gotten so used to food being easily accessible that it's commonplace to toss out scraps," DeVore said. "Plants in nature are constantly regrowing parts that are eaten by animals and insects, so it's not that unusual that plants can regrow parts fairly easily."

It's also surprisingly easy if you pick the right foods.

"Not all plants will regrow from scraps, but many will. The ones that will regrow from scraps are simple to start. Most just need water, a small container and a sunny location. Once your plants are started, you may need a little soil to keep them going," DeVore said.

■ GETTING YOUR GREENS

The easiest plants to grow from scraps are plants from leafy green vegetables that make a head.

"Think head lettuce, bok choy or celery," she said. "Green onions are also easy to start. To start these plants, leave on the root and about 1 inch of the base of the head or onion. Place them in a shallow pan of water in a sunny spot." New leaves will appear soon.

■ GARLIC AND POTATOES

"You only need one garlic clove to start a new plant," DeVore said. "Make sure that it's a fresh garlic clove that comes from a non-refrigerated head of garlic. Plant it pointy side up in a few inches of soil and keep the soil moist. The clove will sprout and you'll be able to turn one clove into a whole new head of garlic."

Potatoes past their prime can also be planted.

"When potatoes sprout from eyes, you can plant them and grow a new plant. In fact, one potato that has multiple sprouting eyes can be cut into sections and planted to create multiple potato plants," DeVore said.

■ TAKING CARE

Keep leafy greens in a shallow water dish for a short time, DeVore said. To harvest from them more than once, put them in quality potting soil and pot them or plant in a garden.

Kitchen scrap plants need to be kept moist with plenty of sunshine.

"It's also a good idea to refresh the water every few days to prevent the water from becoming stagnant or slimy. Simply pour off the old water and immediately replace it with cool, fresh water," DeVore said.

Ginger, citrus plants and avocados are a few higher level plants that you can sprout from scraps, she said.

■ GO NATURAL

"You'll have the best luck with produce that hasn't been treated with chemicals. Some produce is treated specifically so that seeds won't develop, which forces you to purchase their produce again," DeVore said. Choose produce that is organic, since it hasn't been treated with chemicals.

"With that being said, many non-organic produce scraps will regrow just fine, so it's worth a shot if you're going to toss the scraps anyway," DeVore said.

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SHOES

on or

OFF?



The etiquette of taking shoes off inside the home may be more prevalent in other countries, but many Americans follow this guideline with good reason. It shows that you care about cleanliness. Plus, it's polite.

"I have always taken my shoes off at the door," said Ryan Cook, a digital marketing specialist in Alpine, Utah. "I have a few reasons I do this. I'm a bit of a germaphobe and the idea of dirt and grime ... or whatever else it is that a person happens to step on in a day being tracked through my house or smearing on my furniture or rugs really grosses me out. Carpets, rugs and furniture already suffer so much wear and tear, why accelerate the issue?"

Germes are real



A University of Arizona study revealed just how germ-y shoes are.

Within two weeks a new pair of shoes can collect 421,000 units of bacteria on the bottom and 2,887 on the inside. The bacteria include *E. coli* and others that can cause urinary tract and other infections, meningitis and pneumonia.

The study showed that shoes commonly (96%) come in contact with fecal matter, which most likely originates from floors in public restrooms or contact with animal fecal material outdoors, said Dr. Charles Gerba, often called "Dr. Germ," a microbiologist and professor at the University of Arizona.

Additionally, bacteria clinging to shoes can be tracked over long distances into homes and other personal spaces after shoes are contaminated, Gerba said.

Simply washing the shoes with detergent was found to eliminate the fecal bacteria and reduce all bacteria by 90% or more, the study found.

How to ask



There's a reason people say "kick off your shoes" to mean relax and chill out.

"There's something just personal, relaxing and intimate about having them off," Cook said. "Without shoes on you feel like you sit on

that couch a little deeper and relax. It sends the message to your host that you're not planning on dashing out the door at any moment. It might sound silly, but I really think that these points hit on some pretty deep human psychology."

Around the world, in Asian, Scandinavian and European countries, taking shoes off indoors is standard practice.

Ambika Devi of Jensen Beach, Florida, began this respectful custom when visiting a teacher's home when she studied traditional Chinese medicine. Now, she keeps flip-flops by the doors to use, as well as a supply of disposable booties for visiting workers.

Getting guests to remove their shoes doesn't have to be awkward. It's best to be straightforward and polite. Simply ask, "Do you mind leaving your shoes by the door?"

Hanging a cute sign does the job, too, said Devi, who has one outside her front door that reads "Kindly remove your shoes," she said.

"A subtle way to indicate that shoes should be removed in the home is to lay out multiple pairs of shoes immediately upon entering the front door," said Caleb Liu, owner of House Simply Sold, which flips homes in Southern California. "This is a good visual cue for the guest. It helps if there is a sitting bench nearby."

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WHAT maintenance schedule DOES MY CAR NEED?

Metro Creative Graphics

Vehicle maintenance schedules vary depending on manufacturer recommendations.

In addition, the way a car is driven and the environment it's driven in can dictate if routine maintenance like oil changes needs to occur more frequently or if belts and hoses need to be replaced sooner than manufacturers recommend. Many people drive in ways that align with routine maintenance schedules. However, drivers who put excessive wear and tear on their vehicles may have to follow a "severe" maintenance schedule. According to the automotive information site Car Gurus, many manufacturers adhere to a 30-60-90 schedule, meaning certain items need to be inspected, changed or replaced at 30,000, 60,000 and 90,000 miles. Certain vehicle parts wear out at predictable intervals, while others, such as rubber gaskets, windshield washer blades and tires, will degrade at irregular intervals. It is generally recommended to speak with a mechanic and discuss driving habits to ensure vehicles operate efficiently and at peak capacity. The following are some conditions that may necessitate frequent maintenance.

■ URBAN DRIVING

Stop-and-go traffic in an urban setting can wear cars out more quickly than highway driving. Experts say lubricants found in motor oil break down rapidly under these and other conditions, including especially hot temperatures.

■ SHORT TRIPS

Frequent, short trips can take a toll on a vehicle. Again, this may be a problem for those who reside in cities or bustling suburbs. Short trips of no more than five miles can contribute to an accumulation of water vapor that dilutes motor oil and adversely affects its efficacy.

■ HEAVY LOADS

Advanced Auto Parts says transporting or towing heavy loads can put more wear and tear on a vehicle. Loads can include cargo or passengers.

■ DUSTY OR SALTY ENVIRONMENTS

Dust can accumulate in air filters and clog internal engine components. Similarly, living close to the coast and salt water also can cause car parts to rust or degrade quickly.

■ EXTREME TEMPERATURE CONDITIONS

People who reside in extremely cold or extremely hot climates may find that their vehicles have to work that much harder to operate, reducing the life span of automotive fluids, parts (especially car batteries) and the overall vehicle unless action is taken.

For those who frequently encounter these severe conditions, switching to a severe maintenance schedule with the guidance of an automotive service shop can help. The added cost of more frequent fluid changes and other maintenance can be recuperated by fewer breakdowns and the reduced need for potentially costly repairs.



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