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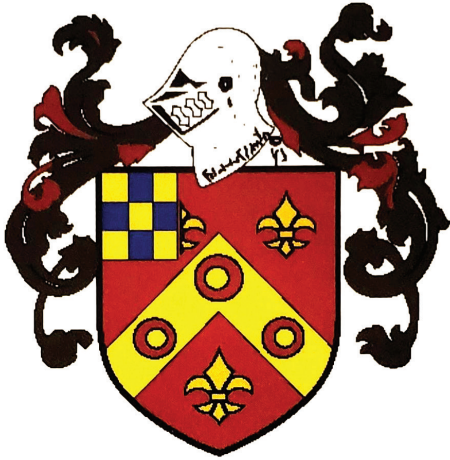
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# The pre-pandemic home office alternatives

The number of professionals working remotely skyrocketed in 2020, when businesses were forced to close their offices in an effort to slow the spread of the COVID-19 virus. As the world transitions from the pandemic phase to an endemic phase, many office workers also are transitioning back to their offices.

A recent survey from the Pew Research Center found that 59 percent of workers in the United States are now working from home all or most of the time, while 22 percent are rarely or never working from home. In 2020, 70 percent of workers were working from home all or most of the time, while 17 percent rarely or never worked from home. Those figures reflect that work life, albeit gradually, is returning to pre-pandemic norms.

As individuals find themselves going back to the office with increased frequency, they might be wondering what to do with their home offices. If space inside a home is at a premium, then repurposing a home office into a space that can be used more frequently is a great way to make better use of the existing square footage. The following are some ways homeowners can transform home offices created during the pandemic into more useful spaces.

- Go back in time. Perhaps the easiest thing to do with a home office that is no longer needed is to return the room to its pre-pandemic state. Because the shift to remote work was so sudden, many homeowners were forced to turn washrooms, breakfast nooks or areas of their basements into home offices. Returning those spaces to their initial functions can make a home feel less cluttered and add more room for residents to relax and get around.

- Create a new entertainment area. Many homeowners



PHOTO PROVIDED

converted a spare bedroom into a home office during the pandemic. In such instances, guest beds and other furniture might have been moved into storage or even sold or discarded. Either way, that means the office was cleared of bedroom furniture. Now that the room no longer needs to be an office and now that homeowners have made due without the extra bedroom, the room can be converted into an entertainment area. Swap out the desk for a foldout couch that can still accommodate overnight guests when necessary. Then mount a flatscreen television on the wall and utilize the room as a gaming room for kids or a film room/man cave for mom or dad.

- Create an in-law suite. The pandemic separated families, as people living in different households were advised to avoid gatherings to stop the spread of the virus. Individuals with aging parents may have felt particularly heartbroken by this forced separation, especially if their elderly parents were living in nursing homes that were stretched thin by staff shortages and other challenges. In the aftermath of the pandemic phase, families may want to invite aging relatives to live with them. Home offices can be repurposed into in-law suites so aging parents don't have to confront the isolation and loneliness many felt during the height of the pandemic.

As professionals return to their offices with greater frequency, they can transform their offices into spaces they're likely to use more often.

## FALL VERMONT HOME garden & auto 2022

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 COVER PHOTO: #3 in a series, "4 Seasons" by Kenneth Saxe of Montpelier.



# 3 EASY WAYS

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## TO ENJOY LIVING COLOR IN YOUR OUTDOOR SPACE THIS FALL

(BPT) - As temperatures drop and seasons turn, that doesn't mean you have to give up on the vivid blooms you love so much in your yard. Strategically adding seasonal plants that can withstand cooler weather is a great way to bring color and dimension to outdoor spaces, enhancing your curb appeal into the autumn months.

To educate and inspire, the plant and gardening experts at Ball Horticultural Company share simple tips, top trends and standout plants that are ideal for fall:

### Pollinator plants in traditional autumn hues

There's no easier way to add autumn atmosphere to your entryway, walkways and flower boxes than with the warm hues of rich yellows and sunny oranges. Blooms in these colors convey happiness and warmth, making them beautifully eye-catching. Some plants in these tones are especially attractive to bees and butterflies, helping create pollinator-friendly spaces.

For example, award-winning Echinacea Artisan Yellow Ombre is a native-type prairie plant that attracts songbirds, bees and butterflies throughout fall, and into winter. It's drought tolerant and low maintenance, making it a no-brainer for

colorful autumn gardens. Another great option as the weather cools is Achillea Milly Rock Yellow Terracotta. This perennial has a breathtaking golden-orange color that is perfect for fall because it is frost tolerant, plus it attracts pollinators while resisting hungry rabbits and deer.

### Moody blues are trending for fall

While yellow and orange are quintessential fall colors, you can add an on-trend element to your outdoor space with Spreading Pansy Cool Wave Blue. The stunning dark, moody blue hue plays nicely when combined with a jewel-toned autumn palette. It is also a standout choice by itself, reflecting the cooler weather, crisp air and clear night skies associated with the fall months.

The vibrant shade of solid blue is beautiful in planters and hanging baskets, as well as in landscaping and window boxes. This sun-loving variety is a spreading

pansy, meaning it can serve as great groundcover, as well. You can enjoy this pansy in fall, and with superior overwintering hardiness, it's the earliest pansy to return in the spring.

### Create dimension through floral shapes

Color is one important aspect of landscape design, but to really elevate your outdoor appeal, consider dimension as well. Creating variables in plants through shape and texture adds visual interest, bringing new depth to a space. To create this, mix florals with greenery and don't be afraid of nontraditional flower shapes.

The perfect example is Celosia, which features blooms in unique shapes such as plumes, spikes or wavy crests. You can create any outdoor aesthetic you desire with varieties available in yellow, orange, red and dark purple. Each adds texture and dimension, pairing well with mums and other popular autumn florals.

Whether it's containers, window boxes or several strategic places in your landscaping, you can update your home for the fall season and boost your curb appeal with fall flowers. A dash of color and texture will help your home be a standout on the block.



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*How design features can bring*  
**SIMPLICITY AND SERENITY TO THE BATH**

(BPT) - During stressful times, the home can become a sanctuary. From soothing color palettes that evoke a sense of calm to high-tech features that make daily tasks feel a bit less strenuous, design choices are crucial in curating serene spaces. This is especially true in the bathroom - the room where people escape to cleanse and recharge.

### Refined elegance

Elegant design does not require over-the-top stylistic features. Instead, focus on elements that are beautifully understated. Create a refined aesthetic that combines clean lines and curves with luxurious materials and finishes to achieve an unassuming, timeless space. To bring this style to the bathroom, a space that should feel and look fresh, make deliberate design choices by removing features that distract from the beauty of the space. There is power

in simplicity; an alluring force that can elevate any room.

### Serene sanctuary

The bathroom is a place of livable serenity within the home. Regardless of the size of the space, it is important to create the feeling of openness, which will truly transform it into “the spot” to come back to and to relax in after a long day. Curated style choices, such as a light color palette, soft-textured accent pieces like plush towels and wood features or other organic elements, create the feeling of airiness akin to the serene design found in spas.

Water plays a key role in the bathroom, and fixtures that are both purposeful and elegant should serve as the pathway to bring this natural element to life in the room.

Showcase water as a design element by selecting faucets and fixtures that bring the design and details of the

space together in a harmonious fashion. Create a sanctuary that perfectly captures the intrigue of minimalism. Incorporate the smooth contours and sleek aesthetic of the Allaria™ Bath Collection by Brizo®, offering effortless beauty and unparalleled craftsmanship. The collection transforms simple forms into functional works of art. By combining curved geometric shapes with striking split finishes, the fixtures achieve a look of soft modernism.

### Sophisticated customization

Style is highly personal, and the functional components found in the bathroom are no different. Further tailor a space by selecting specific, exclusive finishes. The Allaria™ Bath Collection debuts three irresistible split finishes, including Brilliance® Black Onyx/Matte Black, Polished Chrome/Clear and Brilliance® Luxe

Gold®/Clear, to bring further distinction to design and unique personalization. The collection provides an added layer of customization through the pairing of finishes with the new clear handles, ultimately creating a smooth look.

Another way to achieve a personalized bathroom experience is by selecting versatile technologies that will effortlessly enhance the bathroom and allow for a heightened sense of luxury. From steam showers to warming towel racks, convenient innovation takes the place of extraneous features, fashioning a truly unique environment. H2Okinetic® Technology is available on a variety of shower components within the Allaria™ collection, to create an indulgent shower experience. Powered by groundbreaking design that harnesses the natural energy of water, the technology directs water through specially engineered chambers in the shower head to create a luxurious spray.



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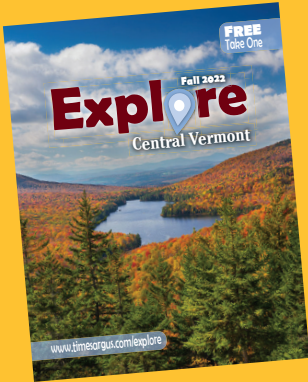
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# A beginner's guide to FALL PLANTING AND MAINTENANCE

Spring and summer are perhaps the busiest times of year for gardeners. However, fall also is a prime time to tend to gardens.

The tree and bare root retailer Bower & Branch advises that soil temperatures in many regions of the country may still be warm enough to encourage root growth well into the start of winter. Furthermore, fall is often the ideal time to plant, fertilize and keep a garden going or to get a head start on next year's bounty.

Here are some tips to make the most of the fall gardening season.

- Think about fall annuals and bulb planting. Near the end of September, start planting cool-weather-loving pansies and violas for pops of color as summer flowers fade. Also, it's a good idea to stock up on bulbs that will bloom in the months to come before they sell out in stores. Wait until the temperatures really cool down before planting them in desired spots for spring sprouts.

- Sow salad seeds. Lettuce, spinach, radishes, and arugula tolerate

cooler temperatures. Try new and interesting lettuce varieties and enjoy salads well into the fall season.

- Take inventory of the sun. Positioning a garden carefully means maximizing hours of sunlight, which begin to dwindle in the fall. Experts say gardens grow best in sunny locations that receive six hours of direct sunlight each day. This is where container gardens can be helpful, as they allow gardeners to move plants into spots that will get ample sunlight.

- Fill in landscaping gaps. Some fall plants can add color around the landscape and brighten up homes to add curb appeal. In addition to pansies and violas, asters, kale and chrysanthemums are fall blooms. Keep in mind that mums can come back year after year. So take them out of those flower pots and get them into the ground. They can be enjoyed next year as well, sprouting in early spring and developing leaves and buds through late summer.

- Clean up unwanted growth. Fall is

an ideal time to cut back spent vegetable plants and get rid of errant weeds. Rather than bagging leaves, mow them with a grass catcher and then add the mix to a vegetable garden as an excellent soil insulator. The nitrogen and carbon will fertilize the soil, enhancing growing possibilities and limiting weed growth.

- Propagate plants in the fall. As temperatures gradually begin to cool, start taking cuttings from perennials, gathering seed pods from azaleas and rhododendrons and dividing hardwood cuttings, says the resource Gardening Know How. Consult with a garden center or horticulturist on the proper ways to propagate stems using rooting hormone and other techniques.

- Continue to water plants. Water is essential in the fall and winter as roots can still be growing. Gradually reduce watering duration as plants go dormant.

Fall planting and maintenance can extend gardening season and improve the chances of growing a healthy spring garden.



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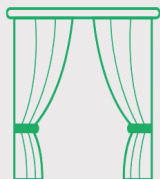
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## Revitalize your landscape on a budget

Many homeowners think they have to spend tons of green to get green in their landscape, but that isn't necessarily so. Homeowners can improve their landscapes without digging themselves into financial holes. These strategies can help anyone save some cash and still end up with attractive gardens and more.

- Use stones or gravel for a walkway. If commercially installed pavers or cement walkways are not within your budget, there are some affordable alternatives. Flagstone or individually purchased and spaced pavers and pea gravel can be used to create pathways. Some construction sites even offer free stones when asked. Soften the look with moss or other plants on the perimeter.

- Remove some lawn. Lawns can require hours of upkeep that may involve the application of expensive fertilizers and weed-killing products that are not always so eco-friendly. Reduce the size of a lawn by putting in a mixed planting bed of perennials or ornamental grasses, or use landscape fabric and mulch.

- Look for free mulch. Municipal recycling centers may offer residents access to free mulch made from grinding up leaves, branches and other plant debris collected throughout the town. Simply bring a few containers to the recycling center and spread the mulch for an ornamental look or to insulate landscapes over winter and protect against weeds.

- Repurpose old items into planters. Old wheelbarrows, barrels, watering cans, and

other items can be repurposed into container gardening vessels. Figure out if items marked for the garbage bin can be incorporated into garden features instead.

- Invest in plants that are easy to propagate. Perennials are the gardener's friend when it comes to saving money. These plants sprout anew each year, and many, such as sedum, catmint, ferns, hostas, and black-eyed Susans, can propagate by division. Figure out the best times of year to divide the plants and start growing them in individual containers before planting the sturdy new shoots in the ground. A single variety of plants grouped together in mass plantings is affordable and easy.

- Shop end-of season sales. Garden centers may begin to make room for holiday items come the fall. Take advantage of reduced costs on remaining plants and landscape accessories during this time of year. Plants can be covered or allowed to thrive indoors until they can be planted in the spring.

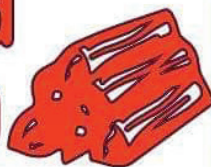
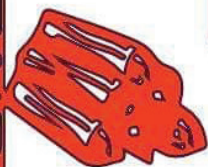
- Pool your resources. Homeowners planning on a big landscaping or revitalization project may want to speak with neighbors to see if they're interested in doing the same. Contractors guaranteed business from a few homes in the same neighborhood may be willing to negotiate lower prices for the volume of work on things like driveway repaving, deck- or fence-building, or installation of paver patios.

Some handy ideas can help homeowners transform landscapes without spending too much.

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# Prepare your garden for winter's onslaught



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A little pre-winter TLC can ensure gardens make it through winter unscathed.

Individuals who don't live near the equator or in another warm climate know that winter will rear its chilly head this year. Cold temperatures and snowy conditions may be excellent for skiing and sledding, but gardeners recognize these conditions are not ideal for their plants.

The inevitable slowing of activity in the garden during fall marks a time to shift attention from constant plant care to preparing the landscape for next season. It may be tempting to simply let Mother Nature take over, but a little pre-winter TLC can ensure gardens make it through winter unscathed.

## Remove spent plants

Decomposing organic material is the basis for compost and other fertilizers. However, vegetable plants that are left to sit can lead to decay in the garden. Decaying plants can serve as hosts for pest populations and diseases. Rotting vegetables also can drop unwanted seeds into the soil, which eventually can strip nutrients that normally would go to next year's crops.

Ornamental plants and perennials

can be cut back in fall. Cut down stalks and remove leaves.

## Plant a cover crop

The gardening resource *This Is My Garden* recommends planting a cover crop to set the stage for a successful spring. A cover crop protects the soil and can return nutrients to it. When the soil is bare during winter, weed seeds can easily blow in and lie in wait, ultimately becoming a problem during the ensuing year. Cover crops can include clover or field peas, which will increase the levels of available nitrogen.

## Amend the soil

Fall is a perfect time to add soil amendments, such as manure and compost. These fertilizers will add nutrients and break down gradually, enriching the soil over the winter.

## Replenish mulch

Gardeners may have added mulch around shrubs and other areas of the landscape early in the season because it is attractive. But mulch also does much to reduce water loss

and protect the soil from erosion. It may inhibit weed growth as well. Replacing mulch when the mercury drops can insulate the soil, which helps to regulate soil temperature. A thick layer of mulch around root vegetables left in the garden can offer protection against hard frosts.

## Divide bulbs

Divide plant bulbs and plant them where you want flowers like daffodils and tulips to grow in the spring.

## Prune dormant plants

Wait until plants are dormant to prune them and adjust their shape. Most shrubs and trees should be pruned in late winter, right before new growth.

## Move potted plants

Bring delicate plants into a sheltered area, such as a greenhouse or indoor garage, so they can continue to thrive during the winter.

Fall and winter still provide opportunities to spend time in the garden. At this point in the year, gardeners can prepare landscapes for the next season.

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# 5 things driving interest in EVs

(BPT) - If you think you've been seeing more plug-in cars on the road or hybrid vehicles in the carpool lane lately, you are not imagining it. A recent Deloitte report found that high fuel prices, combined with lower maintenance costs, has EV interest poised for continued growth among U.S. consumers.

Hankook Tire's latest Gauge Index took a closer look at what's driving interest in EV and hybrid vehicles:

## Gas prices play a big part

Perhaps it is the obvious answer, but the high prices at the pump are among the biggest incentives for those looking to make the switch from a traditional gas-powered or internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicle to a hybrid or EV. According to the Gauge, most Americans (51%) find spending less money on gas as the most appealing benefit of EVs.

## Environmental concerns are rising

Other drivers are more environmentally minded in their decisions: nearly a quarter (24%) say the environmental impact of an EV is the most appealing reason for them to switch. According to the EPA, electric vehi-

cles typically have a smaller carbon footprint than gasoline cars, even when accounting for the electricity required to charge them.

## EVs can go the distance

Technology advancements have given EVs a leg up when it comes to distance - though many drivers (51%) still underestimate how far one can travel on a full charge. On average, an EV can go about 250 miles on a single charge. And considering the average household travels approximately 50 miles on a typical day, according to the Federal Highway Administration's latest National Household Travel Survey, that makes EVs a strong option for most.

## Maintenance matters for many

There are specific maintenance considerations for EVs, but the benefit for many is that maintenance typically costs less than for an ICE vehicle - up to 30% lower!

However, Hankook found that many drivers will need to brush up on what those particular maintenance considerations are before they make the switch - only 29% know that EVs have different maintenance requirements to their

gas-powered counterparts. Similarly, only 22% of drivers know that if you are aiming for optimum performance, EVs should use tires designed specifically for EVs. (On the bright side, 82% are aware that there is a difference between a hybrid and an EV.)

## EVs offer plenty of options

The growing popularity of EVs also leads to growing options - whether you prefer to drive a sedan, coupe, SUV or light truck, there's an EV option for you. The EPA notes that there are currently more than 50 plug-in hybrid and electric vehicle models on the market, with vehicle class options likely to continue expanding in coming years. So for those seeking alternate options, there are plenty to go with!

And here's a fun fact for those considering a personalized license plate for their EV - Hankook found the two most popular vanity plates for EVs are CHARGEME (26%) and OUTOFGAS (24%).

With all of the benefits that EVs and hybrids offer for those seeking to lower costs and their overall environmental footprint, it's no wonder that the Gauge found 60% of drivers either currently own or lease a hybrid or EV, or plan to in the future.

**“On average, an EV can go about 250 miles on a single charge.”**



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