

FALL CLEANING | ROOFS | INSULATION | YARD & GARDEN | VEHICLE CARE

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Before You PRESSURE WASH

Summer can be hard on the exteriors of our homes. If you're ready for deep cleaning, pressure washing is the easiest and most thorough option.

It can give you a clean slate if you're considering any touch-ups. Still, safety can be a concern with these powerful machines. Here's a checklist to consider before you pressure wash.

ELECTRICAL DANGERS

Washers with over 100 pounds per square inch of pressure can be extremely dangerous, potentially causing severe injuries. Test the ground-fault circuit interrupter before using the machine. Pressure washers must be plugged into a properly grounded receptacle. Never remove the third prong from the power cord. This is designed to protect you by providing proper grounding. Wear rubber-soled shoes that provide insulation. This will protect you from any potential electrical shocks.

If you must use an extension cord, make sure the connection is kept away from standing water. Always use a heavy-duty extension cord that is specifically rated for use in wet locations. Never attempt to splice or cut the machine's power cord or any extension cords. This poses a serious risk since it can lead to electrical malfunctions. Those who have gasoline-powered washers should avoid

air intakes and enclosed spaces, since the exhaust can be toxic.

OPERATOR ERRORS

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reminds users to refer to the safety instructions in their owner's manual. In general, avoid pointing the pressure washer at yourself or others. Be cautious with the high-pressure spray since it can move objects around, potentially causing harm to bystanders or yourself. Never allow children to operate a pressure washer, and keep them away while the equipment is in use. Many operator errors happen in situations where there is a lack of adult supervision.

IN CASE OF ACCIDENT

If you injure yourself with a pressure washer, remember that even seemingly small wounds can be more serious than they might appear at first.

For more manageable mishaps, it's recommended to wash the wound thoroughly with soap and clean water, removing any dirt or debris. This will help prevent potential infection. Cover the wound with a bandage or clean cloth to protect against contamination. Otherwise, seek immediate medical treatment, as needed.

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Publisher/Executive Editor Steven Pappas

General Sales Manager Tim Duguay

Customer Service Manager Melody Hudson

Creative Services Manager Keri Franzoni

Advertising Kristine Wolfrom

Design Tiahna Gillam, Fran Grabowski

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FALL (YES, FALL) CLEANING



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It gets far fewer mentions, but fall cleaning is every bit as important as the kind done each spring.

Summer is for outdoor activity, and that inevitably leads to tracked-in dirt, mud and sand. Opened windows invite dust and other airborne particulates. At the same time, the looming cold usually harkens to a more settled time, with more time spent indoors. That's why it's best to take advantage of the autumn months to get your home in its best shape for winter.

GETTING STARTED

To begin your fall cleaning regimen, focus on decluttering your home and getting rid of items that you no longer need. Sort belongings into categories including things to be stored, donated, recycled, repaired or disposed of. Take the opportunity to organize your storage space and maximize its efficiency. The easiest way to approach things is to follow the so-called "20-20 decluttering rule": If you can replace any item for less than \$20 in 20 minutes, it's time to get rid of it.

DEEP CLEANING

Once things are downsized and organized, you're ready to deep clean. Create a list of tasks that you would like to tackle, focusing on things that aren't part of your regular cleaning routine.

Key areas to work on include carpets and baseboards, kitchen cabinets and walls. Set aside time to wash your windows inside and out, including the casings and sills. Move furniture and beds so you can better sweep or vacuum underneath.

REGULAR MAINTENANCE

Before it gets cold, replace filters and check your heating system to ensure everything is properly functioning. Schedule an appointment with a professional if concerns arise. Inspect and sweep chimneys if you have wood-burning fireplaces. Check all your batteries, especially those in carbon monoxide detectors, weather radios and smoke detectors.

OUTSIDE TASKS

Clean gutters prevent water damage, a key concern during winter storms. If you inspect and repair them yourself, follow recommended safety procedures including having a work partner. Clean and put away any outdoor furniture that won't be in regular use. Drain and then store your garden hoses. Check all weather stripping and caulking around windows and doors. Power wash any decking to prevent the growth of mildew and mold.

THE ROOF Over Your Head

Winter brings its own special stresses to a roof.

Extrême amounts of moisture, freezing and thawing cycles, and the weight of snow itself can put an unmanageable amount of stress on aging structures. That's why fall is such a smart time to repair or perhaps even totally replace your roof, as recommended. Begin with a thorough inspection.

GETTING AN INSPECTION

The American Society of Home Inspectors recommends getting a professional roof inspection twice a year. You can perform your own spot checks in the meantime. Look for any cracked or curling shingles on the outside, while noting stains or damp areas in the attic. Address these issues before the coldest months since they may become more challenging and costly to fix in the wintertime.

During a professional inspection, experts will thoroughly examine your roof from the exterior and interior of your home. They'll assess the condition of the shingles, paying close attention to any ice dams. The inspector will evaluate the overall state of the chimney, if you have one. Once inside, they'll look for signs of moisture,

mold and ventilation problems, while evaluating the insulation.

MAKING REPAIRS

Conduct repairs in autumn to ensure the best outcomes. For instance, treatments for moss and lichen may require up to 180 days to take full effect. Installing new shingles in cold temperatures can lead to failure. Finally, repairing icy roofs is extremely hazardous work, so issues identified too late may have to wait until spring before they can be properly resolved.

KNOW THE RISKS

The inspector will draft a comprehensive report detailing any identified issues, their level of urgency, and a proposed course of action. If you live in a region with lots of winter precipitation, they'll note that your roof may be susceptible to collapse due to the sheer weight of snow. Even a well-maintained roof can only withstand approximately 20 pounds of snow per square foot, according to insurance experts. That's why regular fall inspections are so crucial. In some instances, snow removal may even be necessary during the winter season. Talk to an expert today to find out more.



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TIME FOR INSULATION

Dropping temps are one of the surest ways to discover insulation problems around the home.

Cold breezes begin slipping in under doors and around windows. You may find cold spots in your home, or notice a drastic change in your utility bills. These are signs that your insulation and weather stripping require inspection, repair or replacement:

IDENTIFYING THE PROBLEM

Up to 10% of air leakage in a home happens in gaps around windows, according to air conditioning experts. Try applying window film to seal these gaps, simply by heating it with a hair dryer. If temporary fixes are unsuccessful, consider investing in new windows. Look for replacements with higher Energy Star ratings to reduce your monthly expenses.

For additional advice, consult a professional repair technician or staff at your local hardware store.

Some drafts may not be so easily noticed. To identify less obvious drafts, walk around doors and windows with a lit candle. Place the flame around the edges. If it flickers, that's an indication of the presence of a draft. In some cases, you may need the assistance of a professional inspector to locate other hard-to-find areas where cold air is seeping

in. Inspectors will pay close attention to attic access points, insulation and fireplace dampers.

EASY SOLUTIONS

Depending on the size of the gaps, you may be able to use simple foam tape or weather stripping as a solution. Additionally, new sweeps can be installed to seal gaps between thresholds and the bottom of the door. For smaller points of entry, weighted socks – sometimes called “door snakes” – can be used as a barrier. Some smaller leaks may be solved by using cost-effective caulking.

IMPROVING INSULATION

With winter weather setting in, fall is a smart time to assess your insulation needs. Ensure that the insulation has proper ventilation to the exterior of your home, including soffits, gable vents or ridges. Batt or blown-in insulation can impede the necessary dissipation of heat, posing a fire hazard. The typical insulation depth for most attics ranges from 10 to 14 inches, depending on the material used. Check to ensure that vents are clear to avoid any moisture-related issues. Do not place new insulation over old insulation.



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LEAVE THOSE LEAVES ALONE

- Raking has long been part of our
- autumn rituals. But leaves actually
- play a vital role in maintaining the
- balance of the ecosystem around us.

Here's why leaving those leaves alone is the best idea, with tips on how to use them instead.

PROVIDING SHELTER

Leaves serve as shelter for insects during the fall and winter seasons, including butterflies and other pollinators that keep our flowers and food supply vibrant and strong. By leaving the leaves in flowerbeds and other areas away from the grass, you can provide a safe haven for these very beneficial insects. As they flourish, you'll also be ensuring the health of green and growing things everywhere. Move leaves from grassy areas into beds and garden areas. They will serve as insulation during the colder winter season. You can mulch it all to provide additional nourishment for your lawn.

MULCHING OPTION

Instead of simply removing leaves by raking or blowing them away, consider turning them into mulch to create a natural fertilizer. Most people simply run a lawnmower over them, breaking down leaves into smaller pieces. That prevents your grass from dying in the dark. It allows leaves to more

quickly decompose, enriching the soil with valuable nutrients.

Some lawnmowers come with a built-in mulch setting, or you can purchase a mulching kit to attach to the mower. They're typically used on the highest setting of the mower, but follow suggested manufacturer guidelines when using these kits. In the case of taller drifts of leaves, it may be necessary to make multiple passes. You can more evenly distribute mulched debris by raking it across the yard.

OTHER USES

Leaves can suffocate your lawn, creating dead patches of grass.

Remember that the next time you have weeds. Cover them with leaves as an aid in eliminating weeds during the autumn and winter months, while avoiding pesticides altogether. If you have large bare areas on your property, leaves or mulch can help prevent weeds from taking root.

Another option for dealing with leaves is to relocate them to a designated area in your yard for composting. If your accumulation of leaves is so large that it doesn't decompose by spring, simply transfer it all to the compost bin.



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GET PLANTING

People associate planting with spring, but in many cases what you do during the autumn months is just as important.

Invest in the future of your garden right now to ensure a vibrant display of flowers as the weather warms. Take advantage of the cooler weather to prepare the soil for the season to come. You'll be creating the perfect environment for a stunning array of blooms.

SELECTING BULBS

When selecting bulbs, be prepared for a wide variety of choices. All will offer their own unique colors, blooming times and shapes. Popular options for autumn planting include tulips, hyacinths, daffodils, snowdrops and crocuses. To create a visually appealing garden, consider the sunlight requirements, height and bloom time of each variety. To increase the chances of success, choose bulbs that are free of blemishes, firm

and — perhaps most importantly — suitable for your specific climate zone.

CONSIDER THE TIMING

Autumn is the ideal time to plant bulbs since this allows for the establishment of strong roots before the ground freezes. Aim to plant bulbs six to eight weeks before the typical freezing period in your particular area. The timing may vary depending on your climate zone, so it's smart to consult with local gardening resources. Talk to experts at your local extension office or nearby nursery to determine the optimal planting window for your region.

PREPARING THE SOIL

Proper soil preparation is essential for promoting healthy root development and vibrant blooms. To create the best conditions, choose a well-drained location that receives

ample sunlight. Clear the planting area of any rocks, weeds or debris. Loosen the soil and enrich it with organic matter or compost to bolster its fertility and overall health. This can help with drainage.

READY TO DIG?

Different types of bulbs require different planting depths, so always follow the specific guidelines for each variety. As a general rule, bulbs should be planted at a depth that is two to three times their particular height. Encourage proper growth and air circulation by spacing bulbs according to the recommendations provided on the package. Consult with a local gardening expert if you're unsure about this. For a more natural and visually appealing effect, consider planting in clusters.

PLANNING AHEAD: What's Next

- Look ahead now to make sure that you have all the supplies needed for another long winter.



You don't want to be snowed in or experience a sudden power failure only to realize that you need some crucial item. Start preparing in the fall when the demand for these things isn't so high, and you might save a little money, too.

STAYING WARM

Make your home winter-ready by ensuring that you have enough cozy items like extra blankets, thick jackets, hats, gloves and space heaters. Consider installing a programmable thermostat to maintain the perfect indoor temps. You'll be inside more as conditions turn colder, so consider a purifier to improve the air quality in your home. If you have fireplaces or wood-burning stoves, stock up on properly seasoned firewood. If you rely on other fuel sources, purchase an amount that's adequate to last throughout the winter.

LOSING POWER

Unfortunately, winter storms can lead to power failures. To avoid being caught off guard, create an emergency kit in advance. Include essential items such as batteries, flashlights, a

first aid kit, a battery-powered radio and plenty of bottled water. Stack your pantry with non-perishable food items. If your area suffers from prolonged outages, consider purchasing a generator as a backup power source.

STAYING HEALTHY

Fall and winter typically bring an increased risk of colds, flu and other illnesses. Take necessary precautions like practicing good hygiene, staying current on your vaccinations, and maintaining a healthy lifestyle to help minimize your chances of getting sick. Update and fill your prescriptions and keep an ample supply of over-the-counter medications to alleviate common symptoms — including cough syrup, fever reducers and sore throat lozenges.

GETTING READY

If you live in a place with harsher winters, stock up on all the essential snow removal tools like snow shovels, de-icing agents and ice scrapers. Regularly inspect and maintain your tools to ensure they are in optimal working condition. Maintain a winter car kit, with emergency items such as extra blankets, an ice scraper, jumper

cables, a flashlight, shovel and non-perishable snacks. Get ready for the cold with a new

patio heater. Depending on how much you get, purchasing a snow blower might make sense.



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Time to **WINTERIZE**

As the temperatures begin to drop, prepare your vehicle for looming seasonal changes. Winterizing your car safeguards your investment and ensures the safety of everyone, even in the worst snowy or icy conditions.

YOUR BATTERY

Cold weather is not kind to car batteries, as their chemical reactions slow down with dropping temperatures. If your car has been slow to start, or the battery is simply aging, you may need to replace it before cold weather sets in. Take advantage of the battery checks that many auto parts stores offer for free.

BEFORE YOU GO

Another crucial aspect to focus on is your vehicle's tires, since they play such a vital role in keeping everyone safe out on the road. The amount of tread remaining on your tires significantly affects their performance, particularly during wintry months.

To easily determine proper tread depth, insert a penny into the grooves with President Abraham Lincoln's head upside down and facing you. Examine the entire tire, ensuring that none of his head is visible. If you can see all of Lincoln's head, it indicates dangerously low tread. You should immediately purchase new tires.

While inspecting the tread, check

the air pressure in your tires. Refer to the tires themselves or the owner's manual to determine the correct pressure for your vehicle. The best time to check is after the car has been stationary for at least 30 minutes.

WIPER BLADES AND FLUIDS

Visibility can be limited when the weather turns cold. Ice and snow can do long-term damage to wiper blades. Take time in the fall to replace if needed. As the fall and winter progress, keep an eye out for brittle or dry rubber on the wipers and streaks on the windshield. That's a sign of trouble. At the same time, remember that vital fluids are needed to keep the windshield clear and the engine running smoothly in challenging conditions. Check fluids and refill before winter's arrival.

AWD OR 4WD SYSTEMS

Maintenance is essential for all-wheel drive or four-wheel drive systems, especially if they haven't been used all summer. Refer to the owner's manual for maintenance requirements.

CHANGING YOUR OIL

You've just passed through one of the year's most challenging periods for a car engine, as the heat of summer tests even the best motor oils.

Winter presents its own challenges, however, so be sure to stay on schedule with your oil changes.

Traditionally, the recommendation was to switch out your oil every 3,000 miles but due to advancements in automotive technology, this has now shifted to intervals of 5,000, 7,000, or sometimes 10,000 miles. So, refer to your owner's manual for specific guidelines rather than relying on outdated information.

Checking your oil level regularly is a good practice, as your vehicle may require additional oil even if it is relatively new. Consult your owner's manual for instructions on how to properly check your levels. While older cars typically use a dipstick for this purpose, newer models may have a sensor that automatically monitors the oil.

To check your oil using a dipstick, park on a level surface, turn off the engine, and let the car cool down. Next, open the hood, locate the dipstick, remove it, wipe it clean and reinsert it fully, then remove it again. Look for markings on the dipstick indicating the optimal oil level. If the oil level falls within the designated range, your vehicle is in good condition.

When the oil level is below the minimum mark, you'll need to add more oil. The color of the oil should typically be gold or light brown. A lighter color could indicate a coolant leak, while the presence of metal particles may suggest engine damage.

The recommended oil

weight should be indicated on the oil cap or in your owner's manual. Synthetic oil may be recommended in your owner's manual. It's formulated to withstand high temperatures and breaking down, giving the oil a longer lifespan.

If you live in an area with extreme temperatures or frequently take short trips, synthetic oil may be a

smart option to consider.

But if you don't drive under these conditions, and synthetics are not recommended by the vehicle manufacturer, it's safe to avoid paying extra for these blends. Older vehicles that are functioning well don't typically require a specialty oil. If you're unsure and the owner's manual doesn't provide enough guidance, consult your local dealer.

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EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Vehicle
breakdowns can
be even more
hazardous when
they happen in
harsh weather
conditions.

That's why it's so crucial to take advantage of the weeks and months before winter to prepare a wide-ranging emergency plan just in case.

Make sure you have several essentials in the event of an unforeseen issue with your vehicle. Among the most important items that the National Safety Council recommends are jumper cables. They're a must-have item since a dead battery usually occurs unexpectedly. Any battery will lose its charge over time, but that can be especially true in cold weather. A good set of jumper cables could save the day.

Flat tires are another common issue that can happen without warning, and they're a significant risk during the winter because of uneven and slippery roadways. Inspect your tires now and replace them if needed. Most vehicles come with a small emergency spare tire, but remember that it's only suitable for short distances — typically 30 to 50 miles. These down-sized versions are also usually speed-limited. So consider investing in an additional all-weather tire in case of emergency.

Many drivers don't keep basic first aid

supplies on hand, but they are an essential element of emergency planning. A well-stocked kit contains bandages, gauze, antibiotic ointment and tape, among other necessary items. If you were to be injured during a collision or while changing a tire, this kit becomes invaluable.

Keep rain boots and a poncho in the vehicle so you're prepared to investigate a breakdown or change a tire when it's rainy or snowing. Look for all-weather gear with reflective colors or purchase reflective tape from a nearby auto parts store and apply it to your clothing.

Unfortunately, breakdowns don't happen only during the daytime, so pack a flashlight and spare batteries for it in your emergency kit. You'll need better visibility while performing these tasks than any phone light can provide. Conserve your phone battery for as long as possible.

There may be an extended waiting period for assistance, particularly in the most challenging conditions. So, include extra clothing, non-perishable snacks, a blanket and drinking water in your emergency kit.



PROTECTING THE EXTERIOR

Sun, stray rocks and birds are always a threat to your vehicle's exterior.

Autumn and the coming winter months may provide still others, from falling debris to road salt. Here's how to keep your vehicle's paint job vibrant and glossy.

REGULAR CLEANING

Regularly wash your car, ideally once a week, even into the winter months. If possible, avoid washing your car in direct sunlight. Start by removing dirt and dust by rinsing it with water or a soft, clean cloth. This will reduce the risk of scratches on your paint.

Use a car-specific cleaner with the cloth. Avoid using dish detergent or other cleaners that may contain chemicals that are harmful to your car's finish. Treat stubborn mud, accumulated road salts and bird droppings with an automotive spray bar. Thoroughly rinse the car to remove any

soapy residue, then dry it with a microfiber towel or a clean cotton rag to prevent water stains and any other potential damage.

AFTER THE WASH

Next, apply wax or a sealant to maintain the appearance of your car. This provides a protective layer against harsh elements such as the sun, bugs and bird droppings. To ensure optimal results, wax the car every six weeks after thoroughly cleaning it. Just be aware that small pieces of dirt and debris can potentially cause damage to the clear coat if trapped within the wax.

Paint sealants may offer superior performance compared to wax. If applied correctly, they give your vehicle an even brighter appearance — though they may accentuate existing paint imperfections,

swirls or scratches. Seal your car's paint job every six months. For the best results, carefully follow all application instructions from the manufacturer.

WHERE TO PARK

When parking your car, choose shaded areas whenever possible. Additionally, if you have the option, park your vehicle in a garage or a designated car shelter at home. This prevents the paint from fading and shields your car from the outdoors' damaging effects. In situations where covered parking is not available, it may be smart to invest in a high-quality car cover. When making your selection, ensure that the cover snugly fits your vehicle and that it's both water-resistant and breathable.



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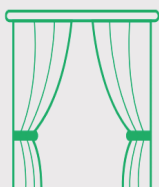
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Watch for COMMON ISSUES

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Fall is the time to closely watch for looming problems with your vehicle, since they can become so much worse with colder weather.

In some cases, routine maintenance will uncover small problems before they become big ones – but it's always smart to keep an eye out for common issues in between service visits. Here's what to look for:

WARNING LIGHTS

Vehicles now come standard with a variety of lights in the dashboard to provide warnings about issues throughout the system. The lights illuminate when a sensor in the engine control unit or computer detects an issue. Consult your owner's manual to become familiar with what these lights indicate. If your car or truck is still under warranty, you'll have to take it to the dealer so a licensed employee can make repairs. Otherwise, find a trusted mechanic to get things back on track.

POOR MILEAGE

Poor fuel mileage is typically caused by worn-out or dirty components like filters or sensors. Problems within this system create a situation where more fuel is needed to run the engine at required speeds. To prevent or correct these issues, take your car or truck in for regular servicing and maintenance.

ENGINE SPUTTERING

If your engine is sputtering, there is a problem with the vehicle's complex system of ignition or fuel components. They work together to power your car or truck. Fixing this may be as simple as bringing in the vehicle for maintenance. Otherwise, component replacement may be required. Always follow the manufacturer's recommendations.

TROUBLE STARTING

There may be problems with your starter motor or the battery. A vehicle's starter gets the engine going so that you can drive. Failure of this component is often due to damage to the starter motor, electrical solenoid or other electrical faults that may arise. See your dealer or trusted mechanic to make repairs.

More often, the issue is a dying or dead battery. Experts suggest replacing a vehicle's battery every three years or 50,000 miles, whichever comes first. This is recommended whether the battery shows signs of slowing down or not, to avoid an unsuspected breakdown. Other potential culprits if your car or truck won't start include a damaged battery temperature sensor or alternator.



FALL AND YOUR TIRES

Your tires will take a beating in the rainy and snowy conditions of winter.

Take this opportunity to inspect and potentially replace them, ensuring the safety of your car or truck and passengers inside as the seasons change. When properly maintained, your tires will help improve your fuel efficiency while providing more traction in challenging conditions.

It's important to check your tire pressure on a regular basis. Do this once a month, when the tires are cold. Under-inflated or over-inflated tires can make it harder to steer and brake, potentially leading to a traffic accident. At the same time, driving on improperly inflated tires can result in unnecessary fuel consumption.

Look for the recommended tire pressure on the vehicle information placard located on the inside of the driver's side front or back door, on the tire itself or in your owner's manual. In some cases, the number on the side of the tire represents the maximum tire pressure, not the recommended pressure.

ROTATION AND ALIGNMENT

In addition to monitoring tire pressure, regularly rotate and align your tires. Typically, tire rotation

should be done every 6,000 miles. Re-align them every 15,000 miles or so. For specific instructions regarding your vehicle, refer to your owner's manual. By rotating your tires, you ensure even wear. Proper alignment helps extend the life of the tire.

Colder months can be hard on road surfaces. Have your alignment checked if you hit an obstacle such as a curb, pothole or rough railroad crossing. Have your tires balanced every time you rotate them or when you change tires or wheels.

LOOKING THEM OVER

When inspecting your tires, check the tread and examine the tire for any cracks, protruding objects or bulges. A nail that is embedded in the tread may not immediately cause a leak, but it could result in a dangerous future blowout. That's why it's so crucial to have professionals inspect and repair any punctures or defects as quickly as possible.

When replacing your tires, avoid mixing and matching tires as this can lead to sub-par performance because of uneven tread wear. It may even lead to mechanical problems.



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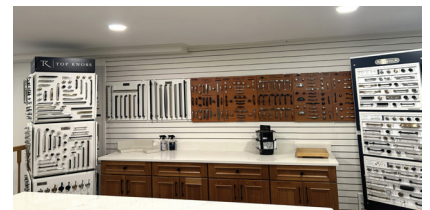
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