

KITCHEN | FURNITURE | EXTERIOR | HOME DESIGN | PLANTS
LANDSCAPE | AUTO ACCIDENT | AUTO MAINTENANCE

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Quick and easy ways to give your **KITCHEN A NEW LOOK**



Kitchens are often described as the busiest rooms in a home. Kitchens are where meals are prepared and tend to be go-to gathering spots on holiday get-togethers and during other events when homeowners host family and friends.

With so much time spent in the kitchen, it's easy to see how homeowners might grow a little bored by these rooms. The cost of a kitchen remodel won't be cheap, as the home improvement resource Angi.com notes that the typical cost of such a project in the United States is between \$13,000 and \$38,000. Angi.com estimates even indicate that a high-end remodel could cost homeowners as much as \$61,000. That's beyond many homeowners' budgets. But the good news is that there are many quick and easy, not to mention less expensive, ways to give a kitchen a new look.

Repaint and restyle the cabinets

Cabinet space is an undeniably precious commodity in a kitchen, especially as more and more homeowners embrace their inner chef and cook more complicated meals at home. After all, the more expansive a home chef's culinary repertoire, the more space that person needs to store all the tools of the cooking trade. A full cabinet replacement is unnecessary if the cabinets are still functional and not overcrowded, so repainting them can be a great way to give the kitchen a new look while keeping costs reasonable. During the painting project, homeowners can install new cabinet knobs and/or drawer pulls to freshen up the style of the cabinets even further.

THERE ARE MANY QUICK AND EASY, NOT TO MENTION LESS EXPENSIVE, WAYS TO GIVE A KITCHEN A NEW LOOK.

Install under-cabinet lighting

Another inexpensive way to give a kitchen a new look is to install under-cabinet lighting. Under-cabinet lighting serves both an aesthetic and practical purpose. From a purely aesthetic standpoint, under-cabinet lighting can make a kitchen feel more warm and keep the kitchen illuminated when meals aren't being prepared and homeowners don't want to have their overhead lights on but still want to be able to navigate the kitchen safely. During meal prep, under-cabinet lighting can illuminate counters so it's easier to chop, peel and perform other prep tasks.

Replace existing backsplash

Replacing backsplash is another simple, inexpensive and effective way to give a kitchen a new feel. Homeowners can opt for something neutral that won't upset their existing decor or go with a more bold backsplash that immediately draws the attention of anyone who enters the room. This simple job can be done by the average do-it-yourselfer and the cost of new backsplash won't break the bank.

Replace existing seating

Whether you have an island countertop with bar stools or a breakfast nook with cushioned seats, replacing the seating is a budget-friendly job that can create a new look when entering the room. Countertop bar stools come in many styles, so giving this area of the kitchen a new feel can be as simple as shifting from classic, high-back stools to more modern swivel stools with a chrome base. For the breakfast nook, replacing a light-colored bench cushion with a bolder alternative can instantly transform the look of the space.

Kitchen remodels can break the bank. But there's a host of budget-friendly ways for cost-conscious homeowners to revitalize these popular spaces in their homes.

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Factors to consider when **BUYING FURNITURE**



While furniture may not be the most costly investment, it's also not the cheapest, which is why getting it right is important.

Buying furniture can be an exciting prospect. The opportunity to breathe new life into a home with the addition of different furnishings inspires many people. However, at the same time, searching for furniture can be a tad overwhelming, especially when homeowners do not know where to begin.

Statistics Canada reports that Canadians spend an average of \$934 on furniture each year. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that, in 2017, Americans spent an average of \$2,484 on furniture. While furniture may not be the most costly investment,

it's also not the cheapest, which is why getting it right is important.

Determine your needs

The first step in purchasing new furniture is to decide what is needed. Assess current furniture and think about what works for certain pieces and what doesn't. Then you can gear purchases around desired features. For example, if you've determined chenille fabric holds on to too much pet fur, the next couch may be leather or microfiber.

Measure more than once

Measure your room multiple times

and create a mock floor plan. This will help when figuring out if certain pieces can fit into the space. Some retailers even offer floor plan software on their websites so that you can upload the dimensions of your room and see how certain items will fit in your spaces. In addition, be sure to measure the width of doors to ensure that it's easy to get the furniture into the home when delivered.

Determine your style

Figure out which style best fits your personality and lifestyle. This may be traditional, transitional or modern.

Incorporate pieces accordingly, or mix and match to create a look that is completely unique.

Confirm materials

Consider your budget when choosing the construction materials for the furniture. Solid wood tends to be more expensive, but often more durable than engineered products. In addition, check to see how items are built. Pull out drawers and check hinges to ensure the quality is there.

Save money on sales

Furniture can be expensive, but there is room for savings. Shop when retailers offer seasonal sales. Consider warehouse retailers, which often sell select items at a discount.

Read reviews

Before taking the plunge, be sure to read reviews of items and retailers. While items may appear perfect, reviews can shed light on how pieces stand up to wear and tear.

Shopping for furniture means taking steps to measure, match style, read reviews, and find pieces that fit homeowners' lifestyles.



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SIGNS A **HOME EXTERIOR** *NEEDS UPDATING*

Renovations are a great way for homeowners to reshape their homes. Some may aspire to renovate so their home is more reflective of their personal taste, while others may do so in an effort to make their homes better align with modern styles and sensibilities. Regardless of why a homeowner chooses to renovate, the need to do so is often evident to the naked eye, especially when the time comes to update home exteriors.

Curb appeal is often discussed in regard to the effects it can have

when selling a home. But curb appeal is equally important for homeowners who aren't putting their homes on the market. A well-maintained, aesthetically appealing home is a source of pride, while a home with fading curb appeal can make homeowners feel a little sheepish. Homeowners who want their homes to maintain their curb appeal can look for signs that it's time to update their home exteriors.

Curling shingles

The roof may not be the first thing

people think of when pondering curb appeal, but a damaged roof can contribute to problems that ultimately affect the exterior and interior of the home. Multiple curling shingles indicate it's time to replace the roof. The sight of curling shingles is not pretty, but the larger issue in such instances is the potential for costly water damage when water gets in through the affected shingles.

Dated entry door

Many home improvement experts

HOMEOWNERS WHO WANT THEIR HOMES TO MAINTAIN THEIR CURB APPEAL CAN LOOK FOR SIGNS THAT IT'S TIME TO UPDATE THEIR HOME EXTERIORS.

insist they can determine when a home was built or most recently renovated simply by looking at the front door. Steel and glass doors are popular in modern homes, so homeowners with front doors with ornate designs and oval glass inserts can likely benefit from an upgrade to their entryway. A modern front door can make a statement and real estate experts note how popular updated front doors are among buyers.

Unsightly landscaping

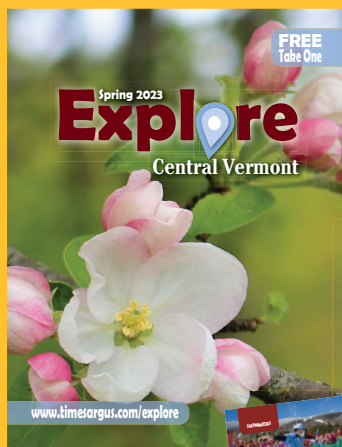
It's not only the physical components of the home that may suggest an update is necessary. Homeowners without a green thumb may have exterior landscaping that has seen better days. If a spring or summer day spent tending to your landscaping is not your ideal

weekend pastime, then consider replacing unsightly landscaping with low-maintenance plants or hardscaping. These alternatives to more needy plants can create curb appeal without requiring any extra work for homeowners.

Cracked driveways/ walkways

If the driveway looks like a busy road at the end of snow plowing season, chances are that's adversely affecting the impression people have of your home. In addition, cracked walkways indicate a need for renovations, as these areas are front and center when welcoming guests.

Updating a home's exterior can restore curb appeal and help homeowners feel better about their properties.



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Residential architects, designers and design-minded builders who participated said connection to the outdoors/nature will be an important influence on their design choices in the years to come.

The role of **NATURE** **IN HOME DESIGN** *in the years ahead*

Outdoor living spaces were prioritized during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, when public gatherings were greatly limited and individuals were urged to stay home as much as possible. Such demands have had a ripple effect on various industries, including home design. According to a survey conducted by the New Home Trends Institute in collaboration with Pro Builder, 58 percent of the more than 300 residential architects, designers and design-minded builders

who participated said connection to the outdoors/nature will be an important influence on their design choices in the years to come. In addition, 45 percent of respondents indicated increased attention will be afforded to outdoor entertaining spaces.

So what might the outdoor spaces of homes built in the not-so-distant future look like? Respondents to the survey anticipated a growing demand for various built-in outdoor features, including:

- Firepits or fireplaces

- Outdoor kitchens
- Gazebos or pergolas
- Pools
- Spas or hot tubs

Though trends and consumer demands are ever-shifting, architects and designers are anticipating that future homeowners will want more developed outdoor living spaces and greater access to nature, which is something current homeowners can keep in mind when renovating their properties.

A man with short brown hair, wearing a light green short-sleeved button-down shirt, is shown from the waist up. He is holding a pair of green-handled pruning shears and is in the process of trimming a dense green bush. The background is a clear blue sky with some distant trees.

Tips to pick **THE RIGHT PLANTS** *for your landscape*

Each year, gardening enthusiasts anxiously await the arrival of spring. Spring is a great season to plant new flowers, plants, grasses, and trees, making it a popular time of year to spend sunny days out in the yard.

Veteran gardeners may know their landscapes well and be able to pick the right plants on their own. Novices may need a little help as they look to give their landscapes a whole new look. The following are some helpful tips to help homeowners pick the right plants for their landscapes.

Conduct a site evaluation

A colorful landscape featuring an array of plants and flowers can be eye-catching and add curb appeal to a property. However, where plants will be planted is a significant variable that must be considered before homeowners choose what to plant. The Center for Agriculture, Food, and the Environment at the University of Massachusetts Amherst notes that site evaluation is the first step when picking plants. A number of factors must be evaluated, including light availability; water availability; exposure to the elements, including wind and extreme temperatures; and competition

from existing vegetation, among other things. Document these variables prior to picking plants. For example, take note of the area you plan to plant to see if it is full sun or partial shade, and then pick plants whose growing conditions align with those you observe.

Look at more than looks

Aesthetic appeal might be what homeowners most desire from their landscapes, but that appeal is only achieved when the right plants are chosen for a space. If the wrong plants are chosen, they're unlikely to thrive or they could threaten existing vegetation, thus compromising the overall appeal of the property. Native plants can often handle local weather conditions, so prioritize natives over more exotic plants whose key attribute is aesthetic appeal. If jaw-dropping aesthetic appeal is your top priority, speak with a local landscaping professional about which natives can provide that without compromising surrounding vegetation.

Consider maintenance prior to planting

Maintenance is another variable gardeners must consider. Newly

planted trees may require substantial watering until they're fully established their roots, and some homeowners may not have time for that. In addition, certain plants may require a considerable amount of pruning in order to create and maintain the look homeowners desire. Individuals must be willing to invest the time and effort necessary to maintain new plantings that require such diligence. If not, look for plants that don't require much maintenance while keeping in mind that even low-maintenance plants still require some effort and attention.

Consider local wildlife

If your lawn is routinely visited by local wildlife, then look for plants that won't look like a meal to these welcome, if uninvited, guests. For example, if you routinely see deer lounging around in your backyard, look for deer-resistant plants. This is a good way to protect your investment, of both time and money, and ensure minimal wildlife traffic through your newly landscaped yard.

Spring gardens are awe-inspiring, especially when homeowners embrace various strategies for successful planting.

What to do about

MOSS IN YOUR LAWN



A lush, green lawn is a point of pride for many homeowners. Eye-catching landscaping anchored by a healthy lawn is one of the key ways to improve the value and curb appeal of a home. In fact, the experts at HGTV say an attractive and well-maintained landscape can add as much as 10 percent to the value of a home.

Maintaining a thriving lawn takes effort, and that means recognizing when the green in the yard may not necessarily be coming from soft blades of grass. Invasive greenery, including moss, can infiltrate a lawn and that can be problematic if left unaddressed.

A mossy lawn is a sign that certain conditions are ripe for the moss, but not necessarily the grass, to grow. According to Lowe's, moss thrives in certain conditions, which should be addressed if homeowners hope to corral it.

- Moss does well in acidic soil, more so than traditional grasses. A soil test can confirm if the pH needs to be

adjusted to make it more hospitable to grass and less friendly to moss.

- Compacted soil and excess thatch can make it easier for moss to take root. These conditions also can make the soil damp and restrict drainage, something that promotes moss growth.
- Moss can grow in shady conditions. If patches of the lawn have been overrun by moss, there could be too much shade in the area. Trimming back trees or shrubbery may help; otherwise, homeowners may need to look into hardscape or plants that thrive in such conditions to remedy shady and damp areas on portions of their landscapes.

Moss typically can be removed the same way one would dethatch a lawn. It involves rigorously raking or agitating the lawn to loosen the moss. This can be done by hand with a rake, or in the case of a lot of moss

or a large lawn, with a dethatching blade attachment for a lawn mower.

Aerating the soil will help keep moss that was removed from returning. In addition, amending the soil so that it has a more dense nutritional profile by adding compost, as well as improving drainage and adjusting the pH, are keys to keeping moss from returning.

For pesky moss, The Spruce suggests making a solution of one box of baking soda to two gallons of water and spraying this solution on the patches of moss. It is a natural alternative to using chemical products. Certain sources indicate a glyphosate herbicide could work on moss, but the World Health Organization considers glyphosate to be a probable human carcinogen and it is prohibited in certain areas.

Moss may be green, but it's often not the type of green homeowners desire in their lawns. Learning about moss can help when removing it and preventing it in the future.

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What to do after an **AUTO ACCIDENT**

Car accidents occur every day. According to data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, there are more than five million car accidents in the United States every year. Forty-three percent of car accidents resulted in injuries in 2020.

No one wants to get into an automobile accident, which can be stressful and even fatal. Even accidents that do not result in any major injuries can be traumatizing. Knowing what to do in the immediate aftermath of an accident may make such instances less stressful.

Assess the situation

The insurance experts at GEICO, advise individuals involved in an accident to first determine if any of the involved parties suffered an injury. If you are injured, stay put. If not, check on the condition of the other driver. At this point do not admit any fault or reveal any policy limits.

Next, make a call to emergency services to request assistance from the police and an ambulance, if necessary.

Move your vehicle

If possible, pull the vehicle over to a safe, well-lit public location. This is especially important if you believe you were the victim of a staged accident, says the Insurance Information Institute. If the car will cause another road hazard, it is best to move it over to the side and use flashers to alert oncoming traffic. It is important that you don't

leave the scene, according to American Property Casualty Insurance Association.

Gather evidence

Have the police write up an accident report. You should take pictures of the damage to your vehicle, the other vehicle, if possible, and the scene of the accident, including any skid marks, debris and/or property damage. If there are any witnesses to the accident, get their names and contact information. You'll need this information when filing an insurance claim.

Exchange information

Collect the names, phone numbers, addresses and email addresses of other drivers and vehicle occupants and exchange insurance information with all drivers involved. That includes the insurance company name, policy number and the name of the insured.

Notify a friend or family member

Even if the accident is not serious, you may want to call a friend or family member to provide emotional support. If you've been injured, a friend or family member can meet you at the hospital and/or arrange to have your vehicle towed or returned home while you get the care you need.

Automotive accidents can be nerve-wracking. Knowing the steps to take can alleviate some stress.

What certain **NOISES** *may indicate* *about your car*

Automobiles have come a long way since their introduction more than 100 years ago. Though modern cars and trucks still employ some of the same principles as their forebears, the vehicles people drive today bear little resemblance to those that made waves in the early part of the twentieth century.

Modern automobiles are technological marvels, which has made both driving and maintaining a vehicle much simpler. In regard to maintenance, built-in diagnostic systems can now alert drivers when something is wrong with their vehicles. Though that feature is undeniably useful, drivers can still benefit from learning to recognize issues by ear. Many issues that can affect a car or truck produce unusual sounds, and learning what certain noises may indicate can help drivers detect problems as soon as possible.

Rattling sound in a wheel well

Most people have mistakenly placed clothing in a dryer without realizing they had spare change in their pockets. That mistake is immediately apparent once the dryer starts thanks to the unpleasant noise of coins bouncing off the interior of the machine. Drivers may hear a similar sound when behind the wheel and wonder what's behind it. Such a sound is often indicative that there's a loose lug nut inside the hubcap. This issue can arise when drivers don't tighten the wheel properly after changing their own tire, or if mechanics make the same mistake when rotating or replacing tires during a routine maintenance session.

Squeaking sound

The auto insurance experts at Geico(note that rear-wheel or four-wheel drive vehicles may produce a rhythmic squeaking sound when an issue arises with the universal joint. JD Power notes that the universal joint, often referred to as a U-joint, is part of the system that enables the rotating crankshaft in the engine of a vehicle to transfer that rotating motion to the rear wheels. U-joints get a workout whenever vehicles are driven, so they require maintenance,



and a squeaking sound is one indicator that the U-joint needs to be addressed immediately.

Squealing sound

A high-pitched squealing sound is typically indicative of worn out brake pads. However, Cars.com notes that if such a sound is only present when a car is first driven in the morning, it could just be surface rust being scraped off the rotors. After a few initial applications of the brakes, that sound might disappear. If it doesn't, the vehicle will likely need new brake pads.

Scraping on the windshield during rain

The scraping sound on a windshield when the wipers are in use should not be taken lightly or be interpreted as a sign that the rain is only falling slightly. In fact, that sound indicates the wipers are worn out, which means they're not effectively clearing the windshield. In addition, the wipers could be scratching the windshield each time they produce this sound, ultimately necessitating a costly windshield replacement. Wiper blades can be replaced in a matter of minutes, so address this issue promptly.

Learning to recognize the culprits behind various vehicle noises can help drivers nip problems in the bud before they compromise the automobile and the safety of the people inside it.

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