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HOME IMPROVEMENT

Quick, simple ways to make a front door pop

Visitors' impressions of a home are often dictated by the home's entryway. Much as one may judge a book by its cover, the same can be said about the impression that a front door and entryway can create, regardless of how accurate that impression is.

Making certain changes to an entryway can go a long way toward improving curb appeal. Entryways also can set the scene for a home's interior. Whether one chooses to be classic or bold, modern or traditional, there are various ways to quickly transform a home's entryway.

- **Bold front door color:** Color can dramatically enhance an entryway. Painting an existing door or replacing it with a more vivid option can do the trick. The DIY Network says certain colors stand out as favorites. These include turquoise, yellow, red, indigo, orange and black. The door color should complement the other shades of the home, such as those on siding and trim.

- **Custom walkway:** Guide guests right to the front door with an attractive (and safe) walkway. Stamped concrete or decorative paver blocks may fit the bill. This walkway can extend to the street or to the driveway.

- **Contain plants.** Landscaping around the entry-

way should be neat and well-tended. Overgrown plants or shrubbery may give off an air of neglect. Container plants and carefully curated shrubs can create a neat and inviting aura.

- **Highlight the address.** Make sure the home can be found easily with bold and decorative house numbers. Consider two different address signs: one illuminated and easily viewed from the curb and another closer to the front door.

- **Utilize high-end materials.** The relatively small area of real estate by the front door enables homeowners to splurge on more opulent materials that can really add a feeling of luxury. These can include colorful tiles, ornate planters, decorative wooden doors or elaborate knobs and lighting fixtures.

- **Add architectural details.** Find out which architectural elements will meld with the style of the home and then incorporate them. Moldings, columns, shutters and trim are areas to consider.

The entryway to a home garners a lot of attention. Homeowners can enhance their spaces with entryways that really make a statement.

*Article courtesy of
MetroCreative*



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HOME IMPROVEMENT

Must-haves for an amazing kitchen remodel

Kitchen remodels are among the most popular home renovation projects, whether they consist of swapping out cabinet hardware or doing major demolition.

Due to the sheer amount of time families spend in the kitchen, not to mention the number of tasks performed in this space, it is easy to see why Remodeling magazine consistently ranks kitchen renovations as projects that will enable homeowners to recoup a high percentage of their investments. In the magazine's 2018 Cost vs. Value report, midrange major kitchen remodels costing

an average of \$63,829 recouped 59 percent of that investment.

When investing in a kitchen project, it is important to incorporate items that are coveted.

▪ **Deep, double sinks:** Having a double sink enables you to soak dishes in one side and then wash on the other. It also makes it easy to wash and prep produce for meals.

▪ **Kitchen island and bar stools:** Even though many meals are enjoyed around the table, there's something to be said for the convenience of a kitchen island and some well-placed bar stools for quick breakfasts

or snacks.

▪ **Smart kitchen storage:** Work with a contractor to include storage solutions built into cabinetry and the pantry. Slide-out shelving, nooks for a paper towel roll and custom-designed areas to store stand mixers and other necessities can make kitchens more functional.

▪ **Outdoor access:** If possible, design a kitchen so it is easy to access the backyard via sliding doors. This can make outdoor entertaining or even coffee on the deck much easier.

▪ **Under-cabinet lighting:** Fixtures installed under cabinets provide both ambient lighting and task light-

ing. Such lighting makes it easier to see what you're working on as well, as even well-placed overhead lighting can fail to illuminate dark corners and spots on the counters.

▪ **Convenient warming drawer:** This appliance provides backup to the oven. It's a slide-out drawer that

can keep prepared foods out of the way and warm until they are ready to be served. This is particularly handy for holidays and other entertaining.

▪ **Beverage station:** Designate one area of the kitchen to beverages, such as coffee and tea. Or make the area an informal bar. This can

limit traffic in the kitchen to a single area.

Kitchen remodels are exciting to envision, and several choices can make these high-traffic spaces even more coveted.

*Article courtesy of
MetroCreative*



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HOME & GARDEN

Potential culprits behind thinning grass

Thick grass is often a hallmark of a healthy lawn. If grass begins to thin, homeowners may feel as though all the time and effort they spent tending to their lawns was for naught.

Thinning grass can be caused by any number of things. And while it might take a little effort to address, thinning grass can be treated if homeowners correctly identify that cause of the problem.

Leaf spot

The Center for Agriculture, Food and the Environment at the University of Massachusetts Amherst notes that leaf spot diseases affect both cool- and warm-season turfgrasses. Various fungi can cause leaf spot. Symptoms and

the timing of the appearance of leaf spot will vary depending on which fungus is causing the problem.

For example, *bipolaris sorokiniana*, which affects grasses in warm, wet summer months, produces small spots that are dark purple to black. *Drechslera poae* is another fungus that causes leaf spot, and it also produces dark purple to black spots. However, it tends to appear in the spring when the weather is cool and moist.

Understanding the different fungi and when they typically strike can help homeowners identify what is causing their grass to thin. In such situations, professional landscapers can be invaluable resources as well.

Stripe smut

The University of Maryland Extension notes that stripe smut primarily poses a threat to Kentucky bluegrass that is older than three years. Pale green streaks that run parallel to the veins in the leaves and leaf sheaths are symptomatic of stripe smut, which tends to be noticed in spring and fall, when weather is cool. As the disease progresses, stripes turn black or a silvery gray, causing the leaf blade to shred and curl. After the blades have shred, they turn brown and die. The grass thins because stripe smut makes it vulnerable to problems like drought.

Ascochyta leaf blight

Lawns suffering from ascochyta leaf blight will become straw-colored.

According to the lawn care and pesticide experts at Ortho, when a lawn is affected by ascochyta leaf blight, its healthy grass blades will be mixed in with diseased grass blades. Most

prevalent in the spring, this disease can affect grass at any time during the growing season. That's because the ascochyta fungi invade leaf blades through wounds, such as those that can result from mowing. Ortho notes that dull lawn mowers can contribute to the disease, which might disappear on its own and can even re-

turn after it's seemingly been cured. Various issues can cause grass blades to thin. Working with a landscape professional is a great way to combat such issues before they compromise the look of a lawn.

Article courtesy of MetroCreative



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HOME IMPROVEMENT

Benefits of freestanding tubs

Few home design elements provide the instant wow factor of freestanding tubs. Freestanding tubs have an air of luxury that can help current homeowners relax and impress buyers when homes go on the market.

Freestanding tubs are typically made of cast iron or porcelain. The home improvement website HomeAdvisor notes that cast iron is durable and solid and retains heat well, which is great for those who want to spend more than a little time relaxing in a freestanding tub. However, because cast iron is so heavy, installing a cast iron tub may require structural reinforcement of the flooring, which

will add to the overall cost of the project.

According to HomeAdvisor, the average cost to install a tub varies widely depending on the type of tub, the materials its made of and other factors, including plumbing and piping. For example, the cost to install a freestanding tub will rise considerably if new plumbing and piping are necessary.

Before purchasing a freestanding tub, homeowners should seek estimates regarding installation, making sure to get them in writing. Contractors will determine if structural reinforcement is necessary and include such costs in their estimates. In addition, make sure to ask

contractors to investigate piping and plumbing so no surprises pop up after the tub has been purchased and work has begun.

If estimates from contractors aren't budget busting, homeowners can consider these benefits of freestanding tubs before making their final decisions:

- **Cleaning:** Because they're detached from other bathroom fixtures and not flush against the wall, freestanding tubs tend to be easier to clean than built-in bathtubs. Freestanding tubs are accessible from all sides, making it easy to reach all those nooks and crannies where grime can build up.

- **Return on investment:**

In its 2018 Cost vs. Value report, Remodeling magazine noted that upscale bathroom remodels recouped 56.2 percent of their cost at resale. That was a better return on investment than an upscale kitchen remodel (53.5 percent) and an upscale master suite addition (48.3 percent). The thought of a sizable return on investment can make relaxing in a freestanding tub that much more enjoyable.

- **Warmth:** Even freestanding tubs made of materials other than cast iron offer great heat retention. Stone resin bathtubs, for example, provide excellent insulation on cold nights. That's ideal for people who



ARTICLE COURTESY OF METROCREATIVE

want to unwind in the tub without having to exit early because the water has become cold.

Freestanding tubs can

transform regular bathrooms into luxurious oases.

Article courtesy of MetroCreative

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