

Warm weather and extra hours of sunlight spark flowering trees and plants to bloom anew. This is the time of year when the air is sweet with the aroma of blossoms and the familiar hum of insects can be heard all around.

Not all "bugs" are the same this time of year. While you probably won't want ants invading your backyard grill fest, the presence of bees nearby can be a good thing — even if those curious yellow-and-black critters get a little close for comfort from time to time. That's because almost 90 percent of wild plants and 75 percent of the leading global crops depend on animal pollination, indicates the World Wildlife Federation.

Bees are remarkable creatures in small packages. The following are some bee facts to buzz about, courtesy of the WWF, Save the Bees[™], NASA, and the Texas A&M University Honey Bee Information Site.

There are roughly 20,000 species of bees around the world. Most of them are solitary bees.
Bees have five eyes. Two of the eyes are large compound eyes with hexagonal facets. The other three are small, simple eyes.

• Honeybees have a move called the "waggle dance." It is a clever way of communicating to tell them where to go to find the best sources of food.

• Bees can carry up to 122 times their body weight in pollen and nectar.

Bumblebees leave footprint scents
 CONTINUED ON PAGE D2





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Improve Wellness with Affordable Bathroom Upgrades

(Family Features) Wellness is at the forefront of nearly everyone's mind, including keeping germs at bay and creating surroundings that promote mental and physical health. Even small, but important, spaces like the bathroom can benefit from changes with wellness in mind.

A bathroom can be one of the easiest rooms in your home to give a little extra TLC toward creating a healthier lifestyle. These costeffective measures can turn your bathroom into a more practical, functional space that promotes your well-being.

SWITCH UP SURFACES

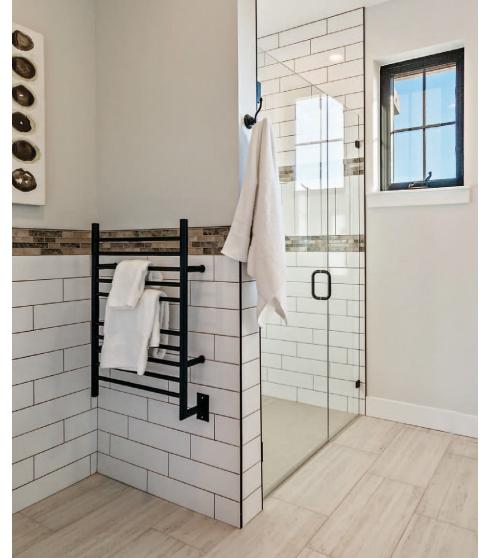
The countertops in your bathroom, much like the flooring, must be able to withstand a lot of water. Nonporous vanity tops, such as those made from quartz, hold up to being wet constantly and can help keep germs from breeding. In addition to being easy to clean, a solid-surface option like quartz never needs to be sealed or polished, making it an aesthetically pleasing, long-lasting option. CLEAN GREEN

Bathrooms are often hot and steamy places, and water vapors in



the air can carry potentially harmful chemicals from cleaning products. Green cleaning products are made to control the spread of bacteria and viruses using safe and effective means. Not only are they helpful in preventing asthma attacks and other respiratory ailments, but they are a low-cost way to improve overall indoor air quality.

What you use to clean yourself is just as important. Using green or



organic personal care items can help reduce toxin exposure and lessen the likelihood of an allergic reaction. REDUCE HUMIDITY

All that steam can affect your health in other ways, too, since it creates a humid environment that encourages mold and mildew. A heated towel rack is an inexpensive way to add a touch of luxury to your space while generating heat that helps reduce humidity and the growth of mold and mildew, therefore benefitting indoor air quality.

Heated towel racks like those from Amba Products come in a variety of finishes and styles to coordinate with your decor. For modest accommodations, the Radiant Small is a space-saving choice, and freestanding models are available if wall space is at a premium. Another advantage: Since the racks dry towels, they'll stay mildew-free longer and don't need to be washed as often, which helps save valuable natural resources.

ENHANCE AIR QUALITY

Creating a green, spa-like oasis with plants can bring wellness benefits that don't break the bank. Indoor plants help rid the environment of pollutants, and the energy and ambiance they add may have mental health benefits, too. Plants like mother-in-law's tongue or peace lily are popular options to incorporate as natural air purifiers. EXPLORE COLOR

A bathroom's color palette can also play a role in your wellness goals. Warmer shades like red and orange enhance energy while cooler colors like green and blue can be calming.

Begin planning bathroom upgrades that improve your health and well-being with more tips and ideas at ambaproducts.com.

BEES FROM PAGE D1

behind. They are able to distinguish between their own scents, the scent of a relative and the scent of a stranger as they look for food. They also can avoid flowers already visited.

• Should a queen bee perish, the hive workers will select a new young larva and feed it a special food called "royal jelly." The larva will develop into a fertile queen.

• Bees flap their wings 190 to 200 times per second. They can fly up to 15 miles per hour.

• Female bees can sting; males do not. Losing the singer will cause the bee to die. The honeybee only can sting once because its stinger is barbed. Bumblebees and hornets can sting multiple times because they have smooth stingers.

• It can require nectar from two million flowers to make one pound of honey.

• Many bees are not aggressive. Simply moving away from them can prevent a person from being stung. Generally, bumblebees and honey bees will only sting by accident or if a nest is being disrupted.

• Wasps are different from bees in that they are mostly known to be predators. They eat other insects and often food that people eat, which is why wasps are more likely to be found around your cookout. Bees tend to be covered in hair, while wasps (which include yellow jackets) are smooth.

Bees are remarkable creatures and should be celebrated as the weather warms up.



*See store for details some exclusions apply. Sale ends March 31, 2022

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5 STEPS TO PREP YOUR YARD FOR SPRING

(Family Features) When spring arrives, days of enjoying your outdoor living space aren't far away. Getting your yard ready for months of outdoor enjoyment will take a little work, but you'll quickly see and appreciate the results.

These five steps can have you on your way to a lush, healthy lawn and outdoor area in no time. **1. DETHATCH**

Throughout the winter, dead grass and other debris accumulate on your lawn. This waste, known as thatch, can be quite a hindrance to your spring lawn. It promotes fungi, encourages pests and keeps new grass seed from sprouting. You can use a special dethatching rake or any rake with sturdy tines.

2. AERATE

Before spreading grass seed, you'll want to give the new roots room to spread and grow. Aerating the lawn helps make your soil more welcoming to new growth by allowing moisture, nutrients and air to sink deeper into the soil. Depending on the size of area you need to aerate, two of the easiest options are doing the job by hand or using an attachment on a riding lawn mower.

3. PRUNE

The lawn isn't the only place debris can pile up. Your flower

beds and any other vegetation can become a holding ground for twigs, branches, leaves and other yard waste. Give your plants, shrubs and trees a close look to find broken, damaged or dead material and remove it to make way for new growth.

4. WEED

Even the healthiest lawns are susceptible to weeds, but getting a jump start on weeding early in the season can help you keep control. You can manage weeds by treating with an herbicide before the sprout or, if you prefer, there are chemicalfree alternatives like vinegar, salt or cornmeal. Be aware that many alternative products don't distinguish between the vegetation you want (like grass) and weeds, so these remedies are best used along borders and within beds to discourage weed growth.

5. SEED

Winter weather and wear can cause uneven patches in the lawn. Seeding in the spring requires more work than the fall (especially if you tend to have hot, dry summers), but with enough nurturing and regular water, you can fill those spots in for a more uniform lawn.

Visit eLivingtoday.com for more advice to make your outdoor living space spectacular.



Seniors have a choice when it comes to home improvements



If the thought of another home improvement project or repair makes you cringe, perhaps it's time to think of getting out from under the weight of homeownership and consider making the move to a senior living community! No more home improvement projects. No more home maintenance. No more mowing or shovel-

ing. A lot more time for the things you love to do in life!

Here are some amazing benefits of moving to a senior community:

- Living at home can be very lonely. Can you imagine moving to a community filled with other people of the same age and same interests?
- Zero Home & Yard Maintenance. If the toilet or hot water heater at home breaks, it could be a big hassle. When you are renting an apartment, the maintenance team will handle it! Yard needs mowed? There is someone to do that too!

The goal of a senior living community, such as Danbury Senior Living, is to give you the freedom to enjoy your senior years while providing you with all the services you may need!

- Entertainment & Activities. Wouldn't it be nice to sit down with 15 of your neighbors to take a cooking class? Or movie night in the theater just down the hall? What about an exercise class that's specifically geared toward your strengths and needs?
- FOOD! When home alone, many seniors do not eat well because they don't want to cook. How many times have you said to yourself, "What's the use of a big healthy meal for just me?" A move to Danbury means three meals chef-prepared meals every day... and we do the dishes and clean-up!

The goal of a senior living community, such as Danbury Senior Living, is to give you the freedom to enjoy your senior years while providing you with all the services you may need! Visit www.DanburySeniorLiving.com to see how you can start to Experience the Danbury Difference today!



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Tips for Spring Clean Your Home Inside and Out

(Family Features)

Spring cleaning isn't just about purging dirt and grime. It's also the perfect opportunity to take inventory of items around your home. As you tackle this season's cleaning, look for ways to improve your overall living space, from getting rid of things you no longer need to adding items that can work harder for you.

Consider these five ways to tackle your home inside and out this spring.

Make organizing easier. As you clean each space, look for easy ways to reduce unsightly messes and improve organization. If your entryway always becomes a jumbled pile of shoes and coats, consider adding a storage bench and hooks to bring some order to the area. If the kids' toys always accumulate in the living room, add a storage chest or large baskets to store them when not in use. If tools and equipment make the garage unusable, install shelving units to keep everything in place.

Eliminate the excess. Spring cleaning is also an opportunity to declutter and make way for something new, either by donating or selling unused things. Whether it's last sea-

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son's fashion and accessories or unused tech and fitness gear, that item you never used - or haven't used in a while - may be exactly what someone else is looking for. Online platforms can make the process easy and be a way to earn extra cash or help fund other home upgrades. Look for marketplaces that help you maximize your return; eBay, for example, is giving sellers 200 free listings every month, meaning you only pay after your items sell.

Reimagine your living space. If one area is becoming too crowded or doesn't serve your family's needs, consider items you can repurpose for another part of the home. For example, move an unused chair in your living room into a bedroom to create a reading nook. Keep your focus on function as you make changes that accommodate your lifestyle.

Make smart additions. Once you've cleared your space, and sold things you no longer need, you can convert that extra cash into reliable home appliances and tech. For example, purchase or upgrade items like vacuums, lawn mowers, power washers, drills and more to help take your spring cleaning to the next level. You can make your money go further by choosing certified refurbished products; some marketplaces like eBay offer inventory that has been professionally inspected by the manufacturer, or a manufacturer-approved vendor, to look, feel and work like new.

Commit to revisiting regularly. It's

easy to let clutter and disorganization slide when you get busy with life's demands. Once your spring cleaning and reorganizing is complete, commit to reassessing your home on a monthly or quarterly basis so you can make small adjustments along the way, rather than face a major project every year.



Did you know?

It's no secret that a good-looking lawn can entice buyers when selling a home, but homeowners may not realize just how much they can benefit from even the smallest investments of time and money in their home exteriors. According to the Top Agent Insights Q2 2019 Report from HomeLight, low-cost outdoor home improvements to a landscape provide sizable returns on investment. For example, the report found that a \$268 investment in a lawn care service can lead to a \$1,211 increase in home value at resale. Similarly, \$340 worth of fresh mulch can increase home value at resale by \$769. More than 85 percent of real estate professionals who participated in the HomeLight survey recommended other small and simple projects, including removing dirt, grime and cobwebs from a home entrance and trimming trees and shrubs prior to putting a home on the market.

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Pros and cons to open-concept homes

Open-concept homes have become increasingly popular in recent years. An open-concept home is one in which the rooms flow into one another with limited obstruction from walls or other barriers. According to the National Association of Home Builders, 84 percent of new single-family homes have fully or partially open layouts.

While they may seem like a new trend, open floor plans are anything but. Early American homes featured open, often one- or two-room units built around the central kitchen/ hearth. This maximized warmth and functionality. Homes evolved as incomes grew, and soon homes had several smaller rooms with specialized functions.

What's old has become new again. However, before diving head first into a new home purchase or a big renovation to realize an open-concept dream, consider the pros and cons to determine if it's really right for you. Advantages of open floor plans

Open floor plans facilitate the flow of natural light throughout a space and can promote air flow, helping to reduce warm or cool pockets of air in otherwise closed-off rooms.

Open homes make socializing easier, even when people are doing different things. While someone is cooking dinner in the kitchen, he or she can still interact with someone else playing video games in the family room or paying bills in the home office. Entertaining also is easier, as mingling with guests is much more convenient when walls are not getting in the way.

A smaller home can feel much

larger if it employs an open concept. The square footage is not divided into smaller quarters, which sometimes are rooms (such as formal dining rooms) that are only used a few times per year. This eliminates underused spaces and opens up sight lines in the layout.

The value of real estate has risen dramatically since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, and prospective buyers may prefer an open-concept plan because it can help them minimize building costs. Disadvantages of open floor plans

Open layouts are not for everyone. The same sense of space that occurs when walls are taken down may make rooms feel cavernous and less cozy, particularly in homes with ample square footage. In addition, privacy can be hard to come by when all rooms feed into one another.

When the kitchen is not separate from the family room space, that makes it easy for noise to compromise the area's comfort levels. There is no hiding from noise in an open floor plan, as sounds from voices, television shows and appliances tend to echo and blend together. And if the home is a single-story layout, those noises from the main living areas also may carry to adjacent bedrooms.

Smoke and smells are another thing to consider. When something on the stove spills over, a small range hood will not be practical for clearing smoke from a large space. Though the aroma of freshly cooked food is enticing, it can make it hard for cooks to keep guests out of the kitchen.

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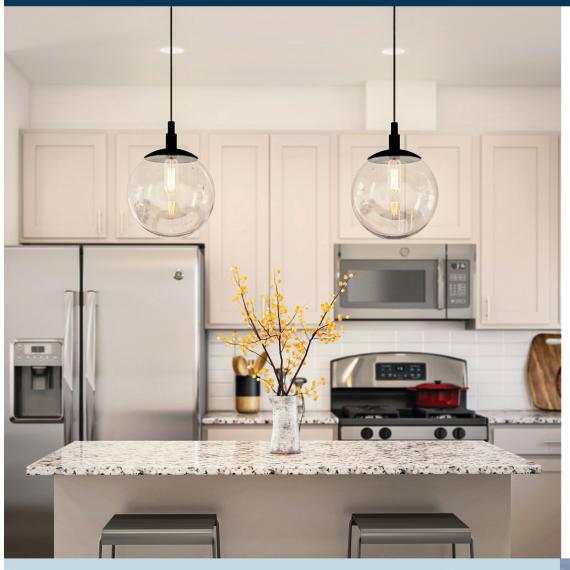
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