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tile can bring new life
to your home

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HOME DESIGN

Kitchen and home design trends poised for popularity in 2023

House Beautiful's Whole Home is back for its fifth year, loaded with modern conveniences and timeless charm. Located in the Buckhead neighborhood of Atlanta, this home marks the first time the project has featured renovating an existing property.

If you're planning to build or renovate in 2023, you can find inspiration from this elevated modern Tudor that focuses on living better at home. Keeping that in mind, two of the most important spaces in a home for ease of modern living are the kitchen and the owner's suite.

Kitchen: English vibes and upscale appliances

Indianapolis-based designer Whitney Parkinson took a traditional approach to the kitchen remodel, adding English flair with the high-end chef in mind. The space features warm woods, quartz countertops and antiqued mirror tile that make this brand new kitchen feel like it's been there forever.

Featuring a number of award-winning Signature Kitchen Suite appliances, the kitchen and entertaining spaces are filled with technology and smart organization. The oversized eat-in kitchen features the first-of-its-kind 48-inch built-in French Door Refrigerator with a unique combination of precise preservation technology and features, including a dual compressor system with exceptional capacity and functionality in a sleek, innovative design.

Offering several unique design features, the refrigerator can elevate the overall aesthetic of any kitchen and is available in stainless steel and panel-ready options. Its purposeful design offers one of the most versatile and larger width interiors in the industry with a total capacity of 26 cubic feet, Lift and Go drawers, fully adjustable door bins and LED lighting that is hidden away and focused on the food. The WiFi-connected unit includes a Dual Ice Maker with

slow-melting, spherical Craft Ice to elevate beverages of all kinds.

Parkinson also selected the Signature Kitchen Suite 48-inch Dual-Fuel Pro Range, the first range on the market with built-in sous vide functionality — in addition to induction and gas, all on the same cooking surface, along with two ovens below. Adjacent to the kitchen is a walk-in scullery and pantry, featuring the ultimate chef's tool — the wall oven with Speed Cook, steam-combi, microwave, convection, sous vide and broil — and the advanced PowerSteam ENERGY STAR certified dishwasher, marrying high efficiency, high performance and high style.

Owner's suite: Walk-in closets and laundry care

One of the primary suite's walk-in closets features the stylish, unique LG STUDIO Styler clothing care system that refreshes, deodorizes and sanitizes clothing with the gentle power of steam. This appliance takes fabric care to the next level with increased capacity for up to five hangers along with a pants press in the door, and an exclusive black tinted mirror for a full-length reflection.

Also featured in the primary suite and upstairs laundry room is the ENERGY STAR certified LG STUDIO WashTower, a single-unit vertical laundry solution that takes up half the floor space without sacrificing capacity. The smart design features an industry-first Center Controlpanel that offers convenient access to controls (no step stool needed). Plus, its built-in intelligence takes out the guesswork thanks to AI technology that selects optimal washing and drying settings for each load to deliver the best in fabric care.

To explore these rooms and learn more about the appliances and other features, visit housebeautiful.com.

Story courtesy of Brandpoint



Above: If you're planning to build or renovate in 2023, you can find inspiration from this elevated modern Tudor that focuses on living better at home.

Left: Indianapolis-based designer Whitney Parkinson took a traditional approach to the kitchen remodel, adding English flair with the high-end chef in mind.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF BRANDPOINT



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HOME ORGANIZATION



PHOTO COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

Tackling loose paperwork by deciding what needs to be filed away, what needs to be shredded and what can be recycled can make a big difference in making your home office feel more organized.

Spring clean your home office with these easy tips

In the pursuit of work-life balance, you may mentally compartmentalize your home office from the rest of the house. But that doesn't mean this space should get a pass where spring cleaning is concerned. Here are three easy ways to spruce up your workspace this season:

1. File

Make time to finally tackle that growing stack of paperwork. Decide what needs to be filed away, what needs to be shredded, and what can simply be recycled. (This would be a good time to manage those digital files as well.) If you don't already have a dedi-

cated filing system, put one in place to keep things organized moving forward. Short on floor space? Use a wall-mounted paper organizer instead of a traditional filing cabinet.

2. Dust

Improve indoor air quality for healthier, happier working hours. Periodically dust your desk, your computer and monitor, the baseboards, lamps and the tops of ceiling fans. Vacuum the carpet and rugs and sweep the floor. Also, consider using an air purifier to reduce dust, allergens and other air pollutants. If you're not sensitive to pol-

len, invite a fresh breeze by cracking open a window on warmer days.

3. Disinfect

After a rough cold and flu season, it's a good idea to reset your workspace by disinfecting the items you touch most frequently, such as doorknobs, cabinet handles, light switches, your keyboard, your mouse, land-line receivers and handheld devices. This is especially important to add to your checklist if your home office is visited by clients or colleagues.

Story courtesy of StatePoint Media

HOME IMPROVEMENT

5 signs it's time to renovate

Homeowners renovate their homes for a variety of reasons. Renovations can increase the value of a property and make homes safer and more comfortable for their occupants.

Improvements also can be made to stay current with the times or to give a home a new vibe. Statista projects \$510 billion will be spent on home improvements in 2024. The home improvement market is generating significant revenue. In fact, nearly a quarter of Americans opting to renovate their homes will spend an average of \$10,000 on their projects. According to a Home Stars Renovation report, 8% of Canadian homeowners who have renovated have spent more than \$20,000 on a home improvement project.

Kitchens and bathrooms often get the most attention when it comes to home improvement. However, every room and space in a home may need a renovation at some point, and the following are five signs it's time to renovate.

1 . Age. The National Association of Home Builders states that 50% of U.S. homes are over the age of 40. That means that age alone could dictate a need to renovate, particularly if some materials are original to the home. For example, asphalt roofs typically last 25 to 30 years, while window frames can last 20 to 50 years depending on how well they have been maintained.

2 . Inconvenient layout. Some homeowners scratch their heads when faced with awkward floor plan layouts. While one may live with the inconvenience for some time, typically a floor plan that isn't working for the homeowner is a major driver of renovations.

3 . Outdated looks. A home can look dated even if it is a relatively recent build. That's because trends change quickly. For example, dark, cherry cabinets that were popular just a little while ago have now been re-

placed by lighter color palettes. Homeowners whose homes do not match the looks emulated in design magazines may consider a change, particularly if they're planning to sell soon.

4 . Deterioration. Signs of water, storm or structural damage should be addressed as soon as possible. Any deterioration should be a strong indicator that it's time to renovate.

5 . Efficiency. Escalating utility bills could be indicative of an inefficient home. Homeowners can conduct energy audits and then improve the areas where energy loss may be occurring, such as windows, doors, siding, and insulation.

Homeowners can renovate their homes when they see fit, but various signs may warn that it's time consider updating or remodeling a home.

Story courtesy of Metro Creative Connection



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Homeowners can renovate their homes when they see fit, but various signs may warn that it's time to consider updating or remodeling a home.

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HOME DECOR

4 ways to make your home come to life with colorful and patterned tile

Whether you are looking at making a dramatic statement or adding a pop of color to a more neutral space, tile is an excellent and expressive choice for any home renovation project. Because of the range of glazes, surface patterns and materials, there are virtually limitless options to elevate and personalize your home.

Tile's expressive nature allows you to define your spaces with pattern, color and personality. You can use tile to update your flooring, create a focal point within a room — like a coffee nook, bar area or fireplace — or as decorative borders.

If you're considering updating your home's design, check out these four ways you can create welcoming and unique spaces using tile.

1. Ideal for kitchens

Because of tile's versatility and vast range, it's a natural choice for adding color and pattern to your kitchen. For example, if you have a white kitchen, choose a colorful tile with interesting patterns or textures to draw the eye. A benefit of using tile in the kitchen is that depending upon the tile selected, it can also provide the strength and durability to address any cooking misadventures with its easy maintenance.

For a stunning kitchen backsplash that presents an artful, visually compelling pattern within a room, opt for a textured tile like the bespoke Senso by Kelly Wearstler collection. De-

signed by award-winning American designer Kelly Wearstler in a collaborative partnership with ANN SACKS and handcrafted in its Portland, Oregon, factory, this stoneware tile collection imparts the beauty of plaster without the upkeep and expense.

"Plaster has such a beautiful hand quality," said Wearstler. "It is a favorite application for subtle, yet standout features in an interior ... translating this subtle surface into versatile stoneware opens the potential for truly striking design moments throughout the home."

2. Bold patterns for bathrooms

Tile is also an excellent choice for bathrooms for many of the same reasons it's become so popular for kitchen surfaces. Its water-resistant quality makes it the perfect material to add color and pattern to showers, walls and flooring.

The ANN SACKS Liaison by Kelly Wearstler Tuxedo Check tile pattern offers the natural colorations and veining of marble. The stone tile's durability and bold design make it a practical and visually striking choice for a bathroom renovation.

"There is an earthiness to these tiles and a rich tactile quality natural to these designs that I love," said Wearstler. The collections of geometric patterns and symmetry of these marble tiles provide contrast, soft shading and textural nuance to any bathroom project.



PHOTO COURTESY OF BRANDPOINT

Using these four tips, you can creatively incorporate tile into your interior and exterior spaces for a simple yet striking renovation.

3. Outdoor spaces

Tile isn't limited to indoor design. It's tough enough to withstand the natural elements as well as daily use. It's a versatile option for pool surrounds, fountains, pavers, and outdoor kitchens and patios.

The Liaison Linqs collection is a great choice for outdoor projects, depending on climate and method of installation. Like the Tuxedo Check pattern, the geometric designs are imaginative and playful, with visual textures and natural colors that add depth and compo-

sition to any space.

4. Adding decorative touches

While tile is a great material for big projects, it also excels as a decorative element. Ceramic tile is a superb choice to create decorative accents throughout your home.

It can range from traditional to contemporary in approach with various colors, shapes and patterns to help you express yourself. Whether in an imaginative fireplace surround, in-

triguing trim, elegant border or sophisticated backdrop, there is virtually no limit to the creativity and level of customization you can achieve.

Wearstler's Scout tile collection by Ann Sacks pushes boundaries with ornamental linear, geometric and curvaceous shapes that draw focus to accentuate spaces — large and small — from dramatic feature walls to intricate borders, and can be mixed and matched to create one-of-a-kind installations. Also handcrafted in Portland, the collection's

range of custom glazes, colors and distinct designs was designed to make a space come to life.

Are you ready to add intrigue and variety to your home? Using these four tips, you can creatively incorporate tile into your interior and exterior spaces for a simple yet striking renovation. To view Ann Sacks Kelly Wearstler Collection designs and other Ann Sacks tile and stone options, visit annsacks.com.

Story courtesy of Brandpoint



Tile's water-resistant quality makes it the perfect material to add color and pattern to showers, walls and flooring.

PHOTO COURTESY OF BRANDPOINT

HOME MAINTENANCE

Five places in your home you're forgetting to clean

With warmer weather, blooming flowers and longer days right around the corner, for many, this means one thing: spring cleaning.

Whether you already have your essential cleaning supplies and a playlist queued up or don't know where to begin, accomplishing a major deep clean that leaves your house sparkling can feel rewarding.

But before you dive into your to-do list, you need to get your cleaning tools in order. It's best to opt for tools that are versatile and multi-purpose to lighten your load as you might be overlooking a few areas or items in your home that are long overdue for cleaning. Products like Clorox Disinfecting Wipes can wipe out dirt, grime and allergens while also tackling illness-causing germs and viruses. Once you have your tools in order, you can start tackling these forgotten spots that you may be missing.

Tops of ceiling fans, shower heads and doors

Out of sight, out of mind. Often, you don't clean what you don't see, but getting rid of hidden dust can make a big difference in minimizing the allergens around your home.

First things first, work from the tallest to lowest surfaces. With an extendable duster, wipe down the tops of light fixtures, doors, cabinets and picture frames, ceiling fan blades and even the top of your shower head in the bathroom, all of which are prone to collecting dust you're likely not seeing daily. Vacuum once you're done to pick up any of the dust that may have ended up on the floor.

Baseboards

You walk past your baseboards every day, but most people don't give them a second glance. But when not cleaned regularly, baseboards are prime real estate for dirt and grime build-up.

Wiping down your baseboards with Clorox Disinfecting Wipes, which are safe to use on a variety of hard, non-porous surfaces around your home, as part of your regular cleaning routine is an easy way to pick up the dust and dirt that's gathered, especially for painted white baseboards that can show dirt easily.

Inside your fridge, cabinets and pantry

Most people are guilty of holding onto produce past its prime or forgetting about expired flour lurking in the back of the pantry. While it's hard to ignore grease splatters on your stove or pasta sauce spills across your counter, cleaning the inside of your fridge, cabinets and pantry may not be a part of your everyday routine, but doing so every three or four months can remove lingering grease, grime and crumbs and cut down on potential odors.

As part of your next refrigerator refresh, start by tossing all expired products or produce. You can use disinfecting wipes to pick up any crumbs, wipe away sticky or dried-on spills and kill 99.9% of viruses and bacteria while you're at it. After you're done, rinse or wipe down any food contact surfaces, like your produce shelves, with warm water and allow to air dry.

Next, remove everything from your pantry and cabinets, working in sections if needed. Toss out any ex-



PHOTO COURTESY OF BRANDPOINT

Clorox Disinfecting Wipes are safe to use on a variety of hard, non-porous surfaces around your home.



PHOTO COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

Often, you don't clean what you don't see, but getting rid of hidden dust can make a big difference in minimizing the allergens around your home.

pired items along the way, and once empty, vacuum up any lingering crumbs. Following that, you can wipe surfaces down with a disinfecting wipe to clean, disinfect and deodorize at the same time. Now you're ready to restock the shelves.

Under appliances

Appliances such as your stove, refrigerator, washer and dryer can harbor hidden dirt, dust and even crumbs. Once or twice a year, it's worth moving what you can, like your

Out of sight, out of mind. Often, you don't clean what you don't see, but getting rid of hidden dust can make a big difference in minimizing the allergens around your home.

fridge which is typically on wheels, or using the crevice attachment of a vacuum to clean beneath and around the base of the appliance. You can also wipe the areas down to remove crumbs, stubborn food smudges, grease and grime.

Cleaning tools

That's right — your cleaning tools need a little TLC too. Your cleaning supplies deserve the same attention as the rest of your home to avoid simply spreading around the dirt and grime.

On top of emptying your vacuum regularly, make sure to remove dust, hair

or threads clinging to the beater bar or brush. You can disinfect toilet brushes, mop heads and smaller tools like brushes and sponges in a hot water and bleach solution regularly to help you get a more thorough clean and ensure that your tools are ready for your next big deep clean.

Knowing how to uplevel your cleaning routine can help you maintain a cleaner space and a happier you. To find more tips and product recommendations like these, visit [Clorox.com](https://www.clorox.com).

Story courtesy of Brandpoint



Accomplishing a major deep clean that leaves your house sparkling can feel rewarding.

PHOTO COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

HOME IMPROVEMENT

7 things to know before replacing windows

The decision to replace windows often comes down to aesthetics and necessity.

The harder the HVAC must work, the more homeowners will pay in energy costs.

Old windows also may be points of entry for water and insects. Despite the importance of windows, Money magazine advises that new windows make up only a fraction of the home's total exterior "envelope," resulting in only about 5 to 15 percent of total energy savings.

But there are still plenty of reasons to invest in new windows.

1 . Vinyl or aluminum may be best. Lumber is farmed rather quickly today and solid wood products may not stand up to elements as well as wood used a half-century ago. To avoid rot, vinyl windows often are an affordable and durable choice. Homeowners also have the option of wood windows with aluminum cladding, which are long-lasting.

2 . Moisture problems indicate windows need to be replaced. Condensation that shows up as fogging between double-pane windows or on the inside of windows indicates that the windows are starting to fail. If installing a vapor barrier in the basement or crawl space, ventilating properly when showering or cooking, or using a dehumidifier indoors does not remedy the situation, it might be time to replace windows.

3 . Windows add curb appeal. Beyond functionality, replacement windows immediately update the look of the home and can improve curb appeal since they are one of the most prominent features on the exterior of a home. If a house needs an update, replacing windows and can be a quick and affordable update.

4 . Consider other energy-efficient upgrades. Sometimes older windows can be sal-



PHOTOS COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

When upgrading windows, also think about how certain windows can cancel out noises and make homes more soundproof. Some windows can help reduce outdoor distractions like leaf blowers or lawn mowers.

vaged, especially if they are not damaged and only moderately drafty. Replacing panes, sash cords, weather stripping, and even glazing may be less expensive than replacing a window. Plus, older homes with attractive windows complement one another. To keep energy bills down, think about adding insulation to the attic and basement — which is a good idea even if you are replacing windows.

5 . The wrong windows can adversely affect home value. The National Association of Realtors says homeowners

get about 73% of their replacement window investment back when they resell a home. But choosing the wrong windows might lower the value of the home. It's important to match the look of the original windows, including window material and the divided light pattern (the number of panes in each window) with the original windows.

6 . Think about soundproofing, too. When upgrading windows, also think about how certain windows can cancel out noises and make homes more soundproof. Some windows can

help reduce outdoor distractions like leaf blowers or lawn mowers.

7 . Proper installation is key to longevity. Replacement windows are only as good as their installation in many cases. Poor installation and orders of standard rather than custom sized windows could result in poor fitting and seals. Homeowners should carefully vet and review window replacement contractors to find the best professionals for the job.

Story courtesy of Metro Creative Connection



Sometimes older windows can be salvaged, especially if they are not damaged and only moderately drafty.



PHOTO COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

Drafty windows can reduce energy efficiency in a home, requiring HVAC systems to work harder to keep interiors comfortable.

HOME DECOR

Factors to consider when buying furniture

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.



PHOTO COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

Figure out which style best fits your family's lifestyle and taste before making a major furniture purchase.

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.

Story courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

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.



PHOTO COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

Searching for furniture can be a tad overwhelming, especially when homeowners do not know where to begin.

HOME DECOR

Tips for budget-friendly home decor

Home interiors can be spruced up in a number of ways. Ideas run the gamut from relatively inexpensive changes in paint color to more extensive (and expensive) remodels that may include demolition and reconstruction. Investing in new home decor is another way to breathe new life into spaces, and this approach that falls somewhere in the middle in regard to cost.

Material and product costs remain high across

the board, so individuals interested in changing the furniture and other design elements in their homes might be seeking ways to do so in the most affordable way possible. In such instances, homeowners can try these budget-friendly ways to overhaul their home decor.

- Create the illusion of more space. Light, bright and white are key attributes to remember when selecting design elements for rooms where you want

to create the illusion of more square footage. Painting the walls in very light colors, increasing natural and artificial light, including using well-placed mirrors to reflect light, and decorating with light-colored fabrics can help a space seem more roomy.

- Replace the accessories. Replacing curtains, area rugs, throw pillows, and chair cushions is an easy way to change a room without a big investment. Consider updating some

wall art and tying color schemes together with all of the newly introduced elements.

- Splurge on statement pieces that will be used frequently. These may include chandeliers, unique rugs or an eye-catching piece of furniture.

- Shop 'discount' stores for furniture and accents. Traditional design centers can be great places to find plenty of high-quality merchandise. However, don't overlook local discount or

close-out centers that may have items at very reasonable costs. Stores like Home Goods, At Home and Big Lots routinely get new merchandise that changes with the season, helping homeowners to refresh their spaces without having to dig deep into their pockets. Shop the high-end stores for inspiration, then try to find "dupes" in the discount stores that will mimic the looks for less.

- Cut out the clutter. Modern homes are lean and

clean. A home's interior instantly looks more high-end and appealing when the clutter is removed. Consider keeping main living areas free from too many knickknacks and other accents. If you want to display a special collection, set aside a room specifically for such items. There are many budget-friendly ways to make interior spaces more inviting.

Story courtesy of Metro Creative Connection



Rooms featuring neutral colors and minimal clutter tend to appear large and modern.

PHOTO COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

HOME SAFETY

Illnesses attributed to radon exposure

Contaminants in air can contribute to a variety of negative health outcomes. It can be easy to assume that only chemicals that enter the air from fossil fuels or products used in manufacturing or other activities are dangerous. However, even natural substances can be hazardous.

Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas that forms when uranium, thorium or radium break down in rocks, soil and groundwater. In some instances, radon may be found in high concentrations indoors, such as in homes and workplaces. People are regularly exposed to radon. Even though radon is something that comes naturally from the earth, that does not make it safe — particularly in high doses.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Surgeon's General's Office estimate that radon is responsible for more than 20,000 lung cancer deaths each year in the United States. Particles from radon become trapped in the lungs and contribute to the formation of cancer. It may take years before health problems occur. Individuals who smoke and also are exposed to high levels of radon are at even higher risk of lung cancer — around 25 times higher.

Lung cancer is the only health effect that has definitively been linked to radon, advises the EPA. There is no evidence that radon causes other respiratory diseases, including asthma. Furthermore, there is no evidence that children are at a greater risk of radon-induced lung cancer than adults, advises the EPA.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there are many ways for individuals to protect themselves from radon.

- Test your home and office to determine radon levels. Radon kits can be purchased at home improvement retailers and online.
- Seal cracks in floors and walls with plaster, caulk or other materials designed for this purpose. Consult with a radon mitigation professional if there are high levels of radon and extra measures are needed.
- Improve ventilation in the house by opening windows and using fans to circulate air as a temporary strategy to reduce radon.
- Ask for radon-resistant construction techniques to be built into new homes.
- Mitigation contractors may recommend soil suction, which prevents radon from entering the home by drawing the radon from below and venting it through a pipe or pipes into the air above the home where it is diluted.
- Crawlspace sheeting can be used in homes with crawlspaces. This involves covering the earthen floor with high-density plastic sheeting, used in conjunction with a vent pipe and fan.

Radon occurs naturally but it can have lasting health effects. It's best to address radon issues early on and to take the correct preventative or remediation measures to address high radon levels.

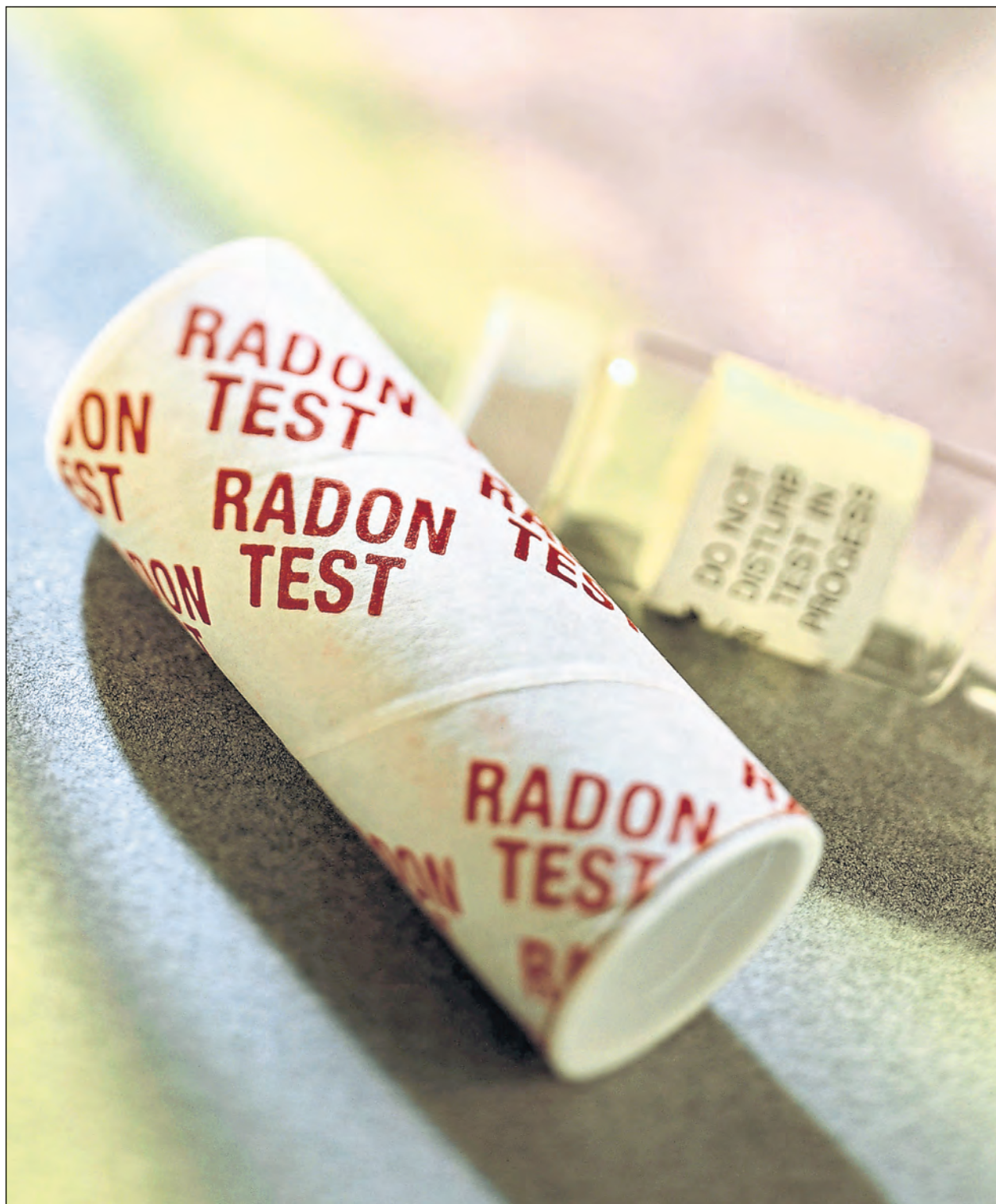


PHOTO COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there are many ways for individuals to protect themselves from radon.

Story courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

HOME ORGANIZATION

How to shop for spring household essentials with ease

Whether your spring plans include cleaning your living spaces top to bottom or taking up an outdoor fitness routine, you'll likely need some household supplies to fuel your seasonal endeavors.

With so many new products being introduced all the time on both store shelves and online, you may be wondering which items have already passed muster with other consumers. Fortunately, resources exist to help you quickly hone in on the best of the bunch. Product of the Year USA, the largest consumer-voted awards program centered around product innovation, recently announced the winners of the 2023 Product of the Year Awards. Determined through a national study of 40,000 American shoppers in partnership with Kantar, a global leader in consumer research, each winner's packaging boasts a red seal of approval.

"Today's savvy consumers expect products that are smart, efficient and easy to use. At the same time, the amount of access they have to different merchandise is unprecedented," says Mike Nolan, global CEO of Product of the Year Management. "We're proud to be providing shoppers and their families with trusted guidance and information as they sort through their many options."

Demonstrating the ever-evolving trends seen in the U.S. market, the year's winners are a round-up of the top products for function, design, packing or ingredients. As you stock up on spring essentials, consider the following 16 winners in household and personal care categories:

- Auto Dish Care: Cascade Platinum Plus — Procter & Gamble



PHOTO COURTESY OF STATEPOINT MEDIA

Whether you tend to shop for household essentials online or in brick-and-mortar stores, it's smart to rely on resources that can help you make better choices.

- Body Cleanser: Dial Body Wash — Henkel

- Car Care: Rain-X Truck & SUV Wiper Blade — ITW Global Brands/Rain-X

- CBD: CBD Sleep Gummies — Sky Wellness

- Children's Health: Children's ZYRTEC Allergy Chewables — Johnson & Johnson Consumer Health

- Digestive Health: Dulcolax Chewy Fruit Bites —

- Sanofi Consumer Healthcare

- Hair Growth: Nature's Bounty Optimal Solutions Hair Growth — Nestlé Health Science

- Home Cleaning: FamilyGuard Brand Disinfectants — S.C. Johnson & Son

- Home Essentials: Ziploc Endurables — S.C. Johnson & Son

- Immediate Relief: Car-

- mex Weather Guard Lip Balm — Carma Laboratories

- Mattress: Nectar Premier Mattress — Resident Home LLC

- Topical Pain Relief: Icy Hot Pro — Sanofi Consumer Healthcare

- Weight Management: Nature's Bounty Optimal Solutions Metabolism Booster — Nestlé Health

- Science

- Wellness Device: Aspercreme Flexi-Motion — Sanofi Consumer Healthcare

- Wellness Supplement: Nature Made Wellblends — Pharmavite LLC

- Women's Daily Supplement: Nature's Bounty Optimal Solutions Advanced Hair Skin & Nails — Nestlé Health Science

For additional information about this year's winners, visit productoftheyearusa.com.

Whether you tend to shop for household essentials online or in brick-and-mortar stores, it's smart to rely on resources that can help you make better choices.

Story courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

HOME SAFETY

How to make bathrooms safer for seniors

“Danger” might not be the first word to come to mind when individuals consider their bathrooms, but perhaps it should be? After all, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that each year more than 1.5 million aging adults visit emergency rooms for fall-related injuries, many of which occur in the bathroom.

Many falls and spills that occur in the bathroom can be prevented. Seniors or their loved ones can make some minor adjustments to bathrooms so falls are less likely to happen.

- **Install grab bars in the shower and bath and elsewhere, as necessary.** Grab bars make it easier for aging men and women to get into and out of the shower or the tub by giving them something to hold onto. This can be especially helpful for seniors who must step up and over their tubs to bathe. Though they’re primarily used in showers and tubs, grab bars also can be installed alongside toilets for seniors who could use a little help sitting down and getting up from their toilets. AARP notes that sheltering arm grab bars provide the best support around toilets. Such grab bars come around both sides of the toilet and look similar to armrests.

- **Install LED lighting.** Poor lighting in a bathroom can make it hard for seniors to see, which can make them more vulnerable to slips and falls. That’s especially so for seniors who find themselves making frequent bathroom visits overnight. Even bathrooms with seemingly adequate lighting may be dangerous if they feature dated light fixtures that rely on incandescent bulbs to light the room. Incandescent bulbs burn out with greater frequency than LED alternatives, which can last for years. The longer bulbs last, the less often seniors need to change them, which also reduces their risk for injury. In addition to replacing traditional fixtures with LED alternatives, individuals can plug in LED night lights that make it easy to see when making nighttime visits to the bathroom.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

Various measures can help make bathrooms safer for aging individuals.

- **Utilize non-slip bath mats.** Non-slip bath mats often utilize rubber-backed liners to ensure the mats stay put even when floors get wet or damp from condensation after a hot bath or shower. Non-slip mats can be placed where individuals will enter and exit the shower and even by the toilet and sink so individuals always feel steady on their feet.

- **Clean bathrooms regularly.** Bathroom surfaces can grow slippery from soap scum, condensation and previous spills. Prompt and routine cleaning can re-

duce the likelihood that seniors will fall in their bathrooms. Seniors who have difficulty keeping up with household cleaning can hire a cleaning service or ask a younger relative to help them keep their bathrooms clean and safe.

Seniors can fall anywhere in a home, but may be more likely to do so in a bathroom. Various measures can help make bathrooms safer for aging individuals.

Story courtesy of Metro Creative Connection



Grab bars make it easier for aging men and women to get into and out of the shower or the tub by giving them something to hold onto.

HOME MAINTENANCE

6 signs you may need a new HVAC system

There's no place like home, especially when that home is a comfortable and safe haven. One of the ways residents find comfort in their homes is by maintaining the right indoor temperatures, which fluctuate along with the seasons. While there is much to be said about opening windows and doors to let Mother Nature do her thing, indoor comfort is often maintained with an HVAC system.

HVAC stands for heating, ventilation and air conditioning. It can include heat pumps, furnaces and air conditioning units. It is an automated system that works by adjusting a thermostat to regulate air temperature, and sometimes humidity, in the home. According to Enviguard, a commercial contracting provider, HVAC systems also may be used to improve indoor air quality through filtration and oxygen replacement. As with any mechanical device, an HVAC system has a life span that must be considered. Should any of the following conditions be present, it is likely time to consult with an HVAC technician to see if repairs or replacement of the entire system is warranted.

1 . Age. If the HVAC system is more than 10 years old, it could be time to begin budgeting for a new unit. Many modern, efficient systems may last 12 to 14 years with routine maintenance. But it's good to keep an HVAC system's age in mind so you can readily recognize when it might start to fail.

2 . Longer or constant running times. An efficient, properly working system will quickly heat or cool the home and then turn off. A system that is turning on repeatedly or having to run for awhile before the set temperature is reached could be nearing the end of its utility.

3 . Strange noises. Groaning, banging or loud humming noises should be addressed. While these noises may indicate that certain components



PHOTO STORY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

HVAC systems are vital to keeping indoor environments comfortable and safe.

need maintenance or replacement, they also could be symptoms of age and a system nearing failure.

4 . Frequent repair visits. Knowing the HVAC company's repair person by name is a sign that the system has re-

quired too much work in recent months. Repeated issues and repairs are probably signs that it's time to consider a system replacement.

5 . Higher bills. Sticker shock when receiving electricity or gas bills likely mean the HVAC

system isn't working efficiently and might need to be replaced.

6 . Poor indoor air quality. If the home is dusty or humid or even if allergies seem to have cropped up out of nowhere, this could indicate a poorly functioning HVAC system.

HVAC systems are vital to keeping indoor environments comfortable and safe. Such systems may exhibit certain signs that indicate they need to be replaced.

Story courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

HOME DECOR

How to be a nurturing plant parent in 3 easy steps



PHOTO COURTESY OF RAWPIXEL

With the right tools and knowledge, anyone can become a nurturing plant parent.

Plants add color, life and vibrancy to your home's indoor and outdoor spaces and can even improve indoor air quality. However, if you are new to plant ownership, you may be wondering how to make your foliage thrive. Here's are three tips for healthier plants:

1 . Make a move. Many plants that do well outdoors in the warmer months can't tolerate the cold. So don't wait for sub-freezing temperatures to bring planters indoors for the season. Be sure to give your newly-transported plants the right amount of light. This may require using special grow lights. Keep in mind though that different types of plants thrive better with different color spectrums and intensities, so group plants under the right lights accordingly. If your indoor

air is dry in winter, you may find that misting the leaves of your warm climate and tropical plants will help provide needed humidity.

2 . Prevent pests. Unfortunately, keeping houseplants often attracts insects that can harm them and bug you. But there are steps you can take to prevent a pest problem in your home. One important thing you can do is to be sure you are not overwatering plants. Too much water in effect drowns plants. It can also create standing water that becomes a breeding ground for flying insects. You can also provide round-the-clock protection from fruit flies, gnats and flies by plugging a Zevo Flying Insect Trap into a regular outlet near your plants and wherever

flying insects enter your home or gather. Rather than chemical insecticides, the traps use multi-spectrum light technology to attract flying bugs into a discreet glue sheet cartridge. When the cartridge is full, replace it and toss the used one without ever having to touch a dead bug. To learn more, visit zevoinsect.com.

3 . Know your lifestyle and limitations. There are many plant species that while beautiful, don't require much care. So, if you're new to owning plants, consider starting out with lower-maintenance options, such as succulents or snake plants. Because these plants don't need much water, they are also great options for those who travel frequently or those who are simply forget-



PHOTO COURTESY OF STATEPOINT MEDIA

Provide round-the-clock protection from fruit flies, gnats and flies by plugging a Zevo Flying Insect Trap into a regular outlet near your plants and wherever flying insects enter your home or gather.

ful. Have furry friends? Always check whether a given plant is toxic to pets before bringing one home.

Having a green thumb can seem like magic. However, with the right tools and knowledge, anyone can become a nurturing plant parent.

Story courtesy of StatePoint Media

Unfortunately, keeping houseplants often attracts insects that can harm them and bug you. But there are steps you can take to prevent a pest problem in your home. One important thing you can do is to be sure you are not overwatering plants. Too much water in effect drowns plants.

HOME IMPROVEMENT

THE HIDDEN COSTS OF DIY

The home renovation industry is booming, and that's reflected in the cost to upgrade a home. Home Guide says remodeling a kitchen costs \$25,000 on average, and a bathroom renovation runs around \$10,000. Though rates fluctuate depending on a host of variables, renovations can cost \$15 to \$60 per square foot depending on the project.

The average homeowner wants to save as much money as possible when renovating their home. Many think doing much of the work themselves is the easiest way to keep costs low. What some homeowners may not realize is that DIY can be costly and prove a big hassle in the long run. The following are some hidden costs of DIY and renovating in general.

Time

DIY projects are a major drain on free time. Homeowners taking the DIY route typically work on weekends or after work. Few people can take off and devote their undivided attention to a remodel like a contractor can. Time is a valuable resource that is not renewable. Therefore, think of a DIY project in terms of what it would equal in lost wages. Because homeowners are not professionals, a DIY project may take double the time it would take a contractor. It may be worth it to simply hire it out.

Mistakes

Many resources are available to help DIY enthusiasts work on a project, but there are still tricks and techniques learned after years on the job. DIYers may damage their homes by taking shortcuts or not understanding how to do a job properly. A plumbing mis-



PHOTO COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

DIYers may have to purchase tools as they engage in new projects. These expenses can add up and negate the savings of doing some of the work yourself.

take, for example, may lead to flooding that damages another room in the home. And such mistakes may not be covered by homeowners insurance policies.

Fines

Permits are required for many home improvement projects. Forgetting to obtain permits or not realizing one

may be necessary could subject you to hefty fines and/or force the job to be redone so it's up to code. Professionals likely know the rules regarding permits and often include the cost of acquiring permits in an estimate.

Remediation

It's only after opening up walls or removing floors

that you may discover issues you did not anticipate, such as termite damage or mold. These unforeseen factors can drive up the overall costs of a project. Disposal Removing old building materials or gutting a room is part of many renovations. Chances are this refuse simply cannot be left at the curb for trash pickup.

As a DIYer, you may not factor the costs for a dumpster or the time and money required to haul debris to a recycling or landfill center.

Tools

DIYers may have to purchase tools as they engage in new projects. These expenses can add up and negate the savings of doing

some of the work yourself.

DIY projects may initially seem like a way to save money, but weekend warriors should calculate the hidden costs associated with DIY renovations before deciding to do some work on their own.

Story courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

HOME IMPROVEMENT

New tax credits increase appeal of heat pumps for homeowners

More and more people are turning to heat pumps to heat and cool their homes. It is estimated that 18 million American households already use them. With new energy incentives being offered, and more homeowners choosing greener technologies, that number is expected to rise dramatically.

What is a heat pump?

Heat pumps are powered by electricity and transfer heat using refrigerant. Heat pump technology moves heat outside your home in warmer months and is able to pull heat into your home during cooler months. Here are three reasons to consider one for your home:

1. Sustainability. Heat pumps are electric and don't burn fossil fuels like furnaces do, mak-

ing them more environmentally friendly. In fact, heat pumps are becoming the heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) industry go-to for reducing consumers' carbon footprints.

2. Control. Newer two-stage and variable speed heat pumps offer high- and low-stage heating to warm your space when outdoor weather changes; they operate more efficiently for longer periods of time at lower speeds and use less energy. They provide more precise temperature controls and more consistent comfort. Both options contribute to managing humidity levels too.

3. Technology. Heat pumps today are more advanced than ever and handle both heating and cooling by redistributing air.

Carrier's Infinity 24 Heat Pump with Greenspeed Intelligence operates at temperatures down to -15 degrees Fahrenheit, making heat pumps an advanced solution for mild and colder climates. Does your region get colder than that? Heat pumps can be combined with a gas furnace for a dual fuel system that is energy efficient and cost effective. Looking ahead, heat pumps that work in colder temperature are in development and will be available soon.

Get the right size

There are several factors that go into picking your ideal heat pump. The size of your home, climate, sun exposure, desired features and ductwork all play into the size of heat pump. An undersized unit will work overtime to

hit target temperatures. A unit that is too large will achieve the desired temperature before its cycle is complete and waste energy. It is best to work with a professional dealer in choosing the heat pump that is best for your home.

Money-saving tips

Heat pumps, including installation, can range anywhere from \$3,000 to \$15,000 or more. Thankfully, there are many cost-saving options for homeowners.

The Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 includes federal tax credits that reward homeowners for purchasing certain high-efficiency HVAC equipment, including many of Carrier's line of heat pumps. Up to \$8,000 in tax credits are available for all-electric heat pumps.

Lower energy consumption means energy bill savings, up to

\$500 on energy bills every year in some cases. Look for Energy Star certification and Seasonal Energy Efficiency Ratio (SEER) ratings. The SEER rating is like your car's mileage per gallon — the higher the number, the greater the potential for savings.

Many manufacturers and utility companies also offer rebates and low-rate financing. For example, Carrier's heat pump rebate offerings are listed on their website. At the time of this publication, up to \$1,300 in rebates are being offered for most units.

Beyond the basics, today's heat pumps offer new comfort-enhancing, energy-saving features that could help you reduce your heating costs.

Story courtesy of StatePoint Media



PHOTO COURTESY OF STATEPOINT MEDIA

It is estimated that 18 million American households already use heat pumps to heat and cool their homes.

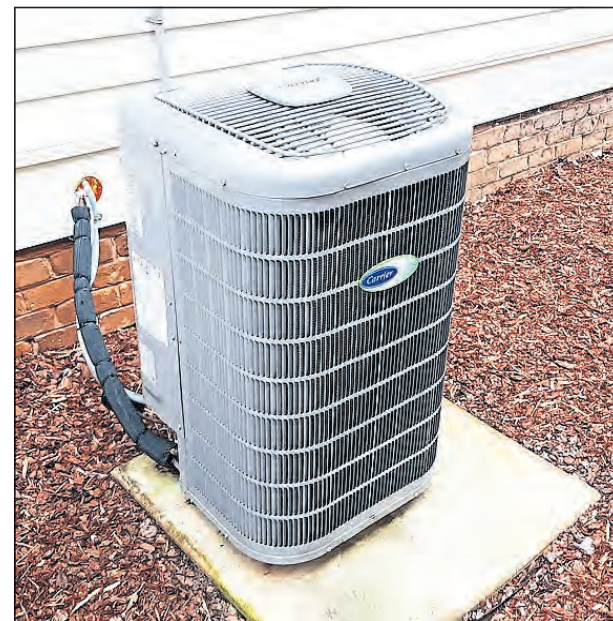


PHOTO COURTESY OF FLICKR

Today's heat pumps offer new comfort-enhancing, energy-saving features that could help you reduce your heating costs.

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HOME IMPROVEMENT

How to handle a lengthy renovation

The global pandemic reignited people's passions for home renovations, as they directed dollars that would normally have been spent elsewhere into the places where they were now spending the most time —

their homes. According to the 10th annual Houzz & Home survey of more than 70,000 respondents in the United States, higher-budget projects cost around \$85,000 or more in 2020, compared with \$80,000 in

the two years prior. Kitchen projects were the most popular among renovating homeowners.

Even though many COVID-19-related restrictions have lifted and life has largely returned to regu-

lar programming, renovations remain a popular investment. Homeowners embarking on home renovation projects understand that a certain measure of upheaval is to be expected, but some may not fully an-

ticipate the impact that renovations have on daily life. The following are some tips for making it through a lengthy renovation.

- Discuss the timeline with contractors. It may be easier to make a plan for

how much life will be disrupted if you have an idea of how long the renovation will be (if everything goes according to plan). Sit down with contractors and have them spell out the minu-

RENOVATION » PAGE 27



PHOTO COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

Renovations can disrupt life, but often are well worth the sacrifices homeowners must make to see them through to completion.

tiae of the project so you'll be able to anticipate what's going on day-to-day.

- Start at the right time. Some contractors may say they can fit your project into their schedules in between other jobs. While this may seem convenient and timely, your work may be put on hold if there are delays with the other job or jobs. Instead, it may be

better to hold off until the contractors can devote the bulk of their attention to your renovation.

- Recreate commonly used spaces elsewhere. A kitchen or a bathroom remodel often requires giving up spaces that are used throughout a typical day. Unless you have a spare full bathroom or kitchen, you'll need to make due.

Set a microwave, tabletop electric burner and a coffee pot on a folding table in the garage or utility room. Rent or purchase a small refrigerator where you can store a few necessities. Ask your contractor to set up a makeshift outdoor shower so you have a place to get clean when the bathroom is under construction.

- Pack up and cover. Re-

modeling one room may cause a trickle down effect on other areas. Dust from drywall sanding can infiltrate many rooms in the home. Pack and label boxes with items not immediately needed and store them in another area. Cover most things so a film of dust won't form on them.

- Adjust your schedule.

Sleeping in will be a thing of the past for the duration of the renovation, as may be working from a home office. Try to get out of the work zone as much as possible for new scenery and respites from the noises and smells.

- Ease up on cleaning standards. It's challenging to keep a home clean during a renovation. Re-

lax standards and expect a mess for some time. Explain to guests what they'll find if they drop by.

Renovations can disrupt life, but often are well worth the sacrifices homeowners must make to see them through to completion.

Story courtesy of Metro Creative Connection



PHOTO COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

A kitchen or a bathroom remodel often requires giving up spaces that are used throughout a typical day.

HOME MAINTENANCE

3 ways to prep your home for bug season

It can be tempting to think that bugs simply disappear in the cooler months. The truth is that many bug species have evolved to survive all year long, sometimes hiding in the warm nooks and crannies in and around homes. Others go into a hibernation-like state.

“Bugs can be a lot

smarter and more resilient than you may realize. Even if you don’t see household pests right now, some may still be waiting in your home for those first warm days to signal them to become active, search for food and find a mate,” says Emma Klingman, senior products research at Zevo, a maker of pest control

products with naturally-inspired ingredients you can feel good about.

To prep your home for bug season and outsmart pests, follow these three steps:

1. Tidy up. Household pests love snacking just as much as people do, but you don’t need to play host

to them. After meals, wipe down tables, counters and other kitchen surfaces. Be sure to regularly sweep and vacuum crumbs, as well as mop up to eliminate sticky food residue. Keep a tightly-fitting lid on your garbage bin, and rinse cans and jars before recycling them.

2. Be ready. Even an immaculate home will face pest problems at some point. That’s why it is important to have tools on hand to catch a problem early, before it becomes a much bigger one. Zevo’s Instant Action sprays target and shut down biological pathways found in insects, not in people or

pets. Likewise, the brand’s traps use a UV and blue light system to attract and capture flying insects, and they have a discreet design that can serve as a bouncer at your home’s entry points. It’s also smart to use these traps in potential problem areas, such as near trash cans and fruit bowls and near



PHOTO COURTESY OF STATEPOINT MEDIA

Even an immaculate home will face pest problems at some point. That’s why it is important to have tools on hand to catch a problem early, before it becomes a much bigger one.

toilet bowls and drains.

3. Safeguard the yard. Defending your yard from pesky pests will not only improve the comfort of your home's outdoor spaces, it will help prevent insects from finding

their way indoors. Be sure to eliminate standing water by properly tending to your lawn and by periodically clearing downspouts of debris. Any water feature in your garden should use running water. If you have a patio or deck, consider screen-

ing it in. If you don't love the look of screened walls, installing ceiling fans can be an effective alternative. Run the fans whenever you entertain to deter unwanted guests, such as mosquitos, from crashing the party.

Of course, it's always a

good idea to apply bug repellent when spending time outdoors. Find a formula that will be easy to use, such as the new on-body products from Zevo, which include a pump spray, aerosol and lotion. They offer eight hours of protection from mosqui-

toes and ticks and are lightweight, odorless and not sticky.

"As we usher in gorgeous spring weather, it can be an especially challenging time of year to keep bugs at bay at home. But with the right tools and strategies, you can

help prevent and combat infestations as they arise," says Klingman.

For more usage tips and more information, visit zevoinsect.com.

Story courtesy of StatePoint Media



PHOTO COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

Household pests love snacking just as much as people do, but you don't need to play host to them.

HOME DECOR

4 tips for integrating nature into your interior design

This spring home improvement season, get inspired by the outdoors with biophilic design.

“Biophilic design — the concept of integrating nature into interior design — is not only gorgeous, it fosters a healthy living environment, promotes happi-

ness and comfort, and reduces stress,” says Jennifer Kline, multimedia graphic artist at ProVia. “There are many ways to reap these wellness benefits while adding vitality to your living spaces.”

To connect to the natural world within your home,

consider these ideas:

Foster tranquility

Taking a stroll through the forest can summon feelings of tranquility. Capture this inner peace at home from the moment you step inside with a fiberglass woodgrain entry

door. Those from ProVia provide authentic-looking woodgrain textures, such as oak, cherry, mahogany, knotty alder and fir, and can accommodate various door glass enhancements. Engineered for energy efficiency, they’re also a sustainable choice, helping you

protect the natural world as you embrace its splendor. Other design choices, such as exposed rustic ceiling timbers, rich hardwood furniture, warm hardwood floors and vinyl woodgrain windows can help you carry the forest motif throughout the home, while imbuing in-

teriors with richness and warmth.

Let light in

“If you’re lacking natural light, it’s time to open those blinds and drapes and let the sunlight stream through your windows. It may also be time to con-



PHOTO COURTESY OF RAWPIXEL

Design choices such as rich hardwood furniture, warm hardwood floors and vinyl woodgrain windows can help you carry the forest motif throughout the home, while imbuing interiors with richness and warmth.

sider a few enhancements that will help you enjoy more sunshine and observe your natural surroundings, even when you can't be outdoors," says Kline.

For kitchens and breakfast nooks, bathrooms and dens, consider vinyl garden windows, which invite more light into your space and include shelves ideal for housing indoor plants, such as fragrant herbs. Their three-dimensional design helps give rooms an airy, spacious

feel. Family rooms and bedrooms are great locations for vinyl picture windows, which let in large amounts of light while providing unobstructed views of outdoor scenery. Need inspiration? Visit ProVia's Window Photo Gallery at provia.com/windows.

To brighten your foyer, add an entry door with glass. Energy efficient sliding glass patio doors also let in sunlight, and give you the option to invite fresh air

into your home or enjoy the melodies of singing birds on nice days. Skylights can flood small or closed-off spaces such as walk-in closets or bathrooms with light and give you views of blue skies.

Let it grow

To give your home a welcoming, fresh feel, add various houseplants and indulge in fresh-cut flowers. A windowsill with small plants of varying shades

of green can add texture, while larger potted plants near doorways help guests feel welcome. Fill dark, underutilized spaces with taller plants and place bright, lightly-scented garden flowers in such spots as the kitchen island and coffee tables. Use earthen or wood-carved vases for additional warmth.

Create drama

From the warm brown tones of a picturesque

southwestern mesa to the cool, earthy feel of quarried rock, manufactured stone veneer adds rugged texture, intriguing patterns and shapes, and a variety of hues straight from Earth's natural color palette.

Whether you're creating a focal point in a bedroom with an accent wall, adding character to your kitchen with a stone veneer backsplash, surrounding a tub with stone veneer for a spa-like bathroom, or highlight-

ing your fireplace, different stone profiles and grout colors can help you customize the look. Experiment with combinations using ProVia's visualizer tool found at provia.com/stone/grout-visualizer.

"Incorporating biophilic elements into your interior design can transform your home into a warm respite from your busy life," says Kline.

Story courtesy of StatePoint Media



PHOTO COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

To give your home a welcoming, fresh feel, add various houseplants and indulge in fresh-cut flowers.

HOME DECOR

One-day home projects to transform your spaces

Want to give your home a fresh look but don't have a lot of time to spend? Check out these five home projects that can be completed in just one day.

Refresh the wall paint

If there's one area in desperate need of a refresh, painting is a great place to start. With the right planning (and an early start), you can easily paint a room in a day. Purchase the materials you need, including primer, the paint color of your choice, brushes and rollers, and a high-quality painter's tape like FrogTape Multi-Surface painter's tape. Made with PaintBlock Technology, FrogTape ensures crisp and professional paint lines, so there will be no time wasted on touch-ups.

Once you have your supplies, tape the walls, apply primer and paint away. In just one day, a fresh coat of paint will have the room feeling brand new.

Enhance the entryway

Your entryway should give your guests a warm welcome. A few simple solutions for sprucing up this area are organizing shoes, hanging up coats and adding a pop of color by laying a rug at the door. If you have the space, time and budget, you could consider larger improvements such as adding a bench, shoe storage or a coat rack. Complete the look by adding decorative pillows to the bench or adding frames to the wall.

Replace bathroom accessories

One way to make a space look more contemporary is to update the hardware and fixtures. This works particularly well in bathrooms where showerheads, faucets, towel bars and cabinet handles can be swapped out for matching, on-trend matte black or gold finishes. Other small, easily



PHOTO COURTESY OF STATEPOINT MEDIA

Rearranging the furniture in a room can make it feel brand new.

replaced items include shower curtains, towels, bathmats, soap dispensers and toothbrush holders. These swaps may seem minor to make, but they can make a big difference in the look and feel of the room.

Organize cabinets, drawers and shelves

Once the hardware has been replaced on cabinets and drawers, open them up and get things in order. Start by going through what you have and deciding what can be eliminated. Clearing out clutter is particularly important for open shelves that are visible in the room. Once you've decided on what to keep, replace

items in an organized manner so they're easy to find going forward. Sorting out these small spaces can help keep things running smoothly.

Rearrange a bedroom

Sometimes you just need to look at what you already have with a fresh perspective. Rear-

ranging the furniture in a room can make it feel brand new. It can be as easy as switching which side of the bed the nightstand is on or moving the dresser to another spot on the wall. Best of all, this approach doesn't require spending money on new items or supplies — all you need is your creativity and imagination!

For more DIY inspiration, visit frogtape.com.

With so many DIY projects that can be done in just one day, there's no need to put the task off. Consider giving your home the refresh it deserves now.

Story courtesy of StatePoint Media



PHOTO COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

One way to make a space look more contemporary is to update the hardware and fixtures.

HOME DESIGN

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 expan-

sive 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.

▪ Install under-cabinet lighting. Another inexpen-



PHOTO COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

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.

Kitchen

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sive 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 cre-

ate 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 al-

ternative 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.

Story courtesy of Metro Creative Connection



PHOTO COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

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.

HOME IMPROVEMENT



PHOTO COURTESY OF BRANDPOINT

With the new LG OLED Flex, you get the perfect combination for gaming, productivity and TV viewing – that can switch from a flat to a curved screen at the push of a button.

4 top home tech trends and innovations from CES 2023

If you love being up to date on the latest home innovations, you can't do better than the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) each January. Viewing the highlights from CES lets you explore the newest technology to entertain you and your family or make household chores that much easier. For tech-savvy consumers and anyone seeking great new solutions in home technology, this year's offerings do not disappoint.

Here are four outstanding innovations from LG Electronics featured at CES 2023

that can enhance your home.

Be ahead of the curve

If you've never watched movies or played your favorite video games on a curved TV screen, this belongs on your list for 2023. With the new LG OLED Flex, you get the perfect combination for gaming, productivity and TV viewing — that can switch from a flat to a curved screen at the push of a button. Viewing and gaming on a curved screen offers a more immersive

experience, providing more depth and sharper visual contrast. You can sit back and enjoy 4K UHD video content through webOS, streaming services and TV Tuner, or lean into an epic video game with built-in streaming game services. This TV is also tilt and height adjustable, so you can set up the most comfortable space to enjoy your favorite content.

Whether flat or curved, this TV's built-in evo technology delivers the same exceptional picture quality and performance

that have made LG OLED TVs so popular.

Get your serious game face on

For the ultimate gaming monitor, the new LG UltraGear™ Monitor is the world's first OLED 240Hz gaming display. Available in 27- and 45-inches, its ultrawide screen provides a rapid 0.1 millisecond Gray-to-Gray (GTG) response time, while the innovative OLED display provides outstanding picture quality and high contrast ratio to help gamers easily detect enemies



PHOTO COURTESY OF BRANDPOINT

The new LG Styler® ShoeTower combines LG Styler ShoeCare and ShoeCase, creating a smart, convenient dual shoe care and storage solution to clean and display your favorite footwear.

Tech

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in any gaming environment, even in the darkest scenes. The anti-glare coating minimizes screen reflections in dark environments, while its curvature maximizes immersion. The V-shape stand offers tilt, height and swivel adjustment to allow gamers to enjoy the large screen just as they want it.

This UltraGear monitor's large screen, high refresh rate and fast response time make it the perfect solution for gamers looking to experience next-generation games with cutting-edge

equipment.

Indulge your shoe obsession

If you love shoes but are guilty of leaving them in boxes in your closet, here's your opportunity to show your shoes some love. The new LG Styler® ShoeTower combines LG Styler ShoeCare and ShoeCase, creating a smart, convenient dual shoe care and storage solution to clean and display your favorite footwear.

ShoeCare meticulously sterilizes and deodorizes the interior and exterior of any shoe using LG's unmatched steam technology. It features an intuitive 2.4-inch touch LCD display, al-

lowing you to select cleaning mode, operation process and more.

The Styler ShoeCase is a welcome addition to any home with its modern, streamlined design. This new storage concept features a technologically enhanced design ensuring the optimum humidity and temperature to keep your footwear looking its best. With a modular design that can be configured in various forms and transparent panels for easy viewing, Styler ShoeCase is a space-friendly solution for storing and showcasing your footwear.

Through LG's ThinQ app, the dual ShoeTower system can be controlled remotely

via your smartphone, making it a truly innovative must-have, whether you're a shoe lover or just need a shoe maintenance solution for the whole family.

Reimagining laundry

For those seeking practical solutions to the problems presented by laundry appliances, especially in limited spaces, the LG's newest LG WashTower™ model is the answer. Offering a full-size dryer above a full-size front-load washer, these machines provide increased capacity while lowering the height compared to existing 24-inch stacked washing machines and dryers — so you can clean more without sacrificing

space. Unlike conventional stacked laundry pairs, LG's exclusive Center Control™ panel is positioned in the middle of the unit, providing easier access to all functions to optimize your laundry experience. The washer's AI DD™M Technology provides optimal washing performance by detecting load size, fabric softness and soil level of clothes, adjusting the proper detergent amount based on soil level, and even reduces fabric damage by 10% when washing delicate items.

Even better: Vent installation is not required in the dryer, allowing for even more flexibility. Thanks to LG's Dual Inverter Heat Pump system, the dryer

uses up to 50% less energy than other models and drying at lower temperatures to better protect your clothing.

The unit is also compatible with LG's ThinQ Care service, helping ensure optimal performance by providing usage alerts and maintenance tips LG's ThinQ app. Starting in March 2023, the unit will also be compatible with LG ThinQ UP, which provides regular downloadable updates to give users a personalized experience.

Explore these and other great innovations for your home at LG.com.

Story courtesy of Brandpoint

HOME DESIGN



PHOTO COURTESY OF SINGH DEVELOPMENT

Homes that are tucked away in quiet areas, yet short drives to shopping and entertainment, are a must-have for today's homeowners.

Essential home features that today's homebuyers crave

By Lana Mini

A well-designed home can make life seamless and happier, and what today's homebuyers want continues to evolve. Amenities that were once considered optional are now must-haves for many individuals and families.

So what transforms a house into a truly desir-

able home? Kyle Anderson, of Singh Development in West Bloomfield, which is currently building its second phase in the Charleston Park community of South Lyon, has spent years understanding what people want in a new home.

"Today's homebuyers are savvy and sophisticated and want beautifully designed homes that start with tremendous curb appeal, but

are also luxuriously functional for today's modern lifestyles," Anderson said. "It always begins with location."

Anderson said today's homebuyers appreciate and crave serenity, winding paved roads and ample green space — simultaneously they also need easy and quick access to thriving shopping areas, dining, quality schools and enter-

tainment spots.

"Modern, small town charm is popular, but so is being away from it all at home. We want the convenience of being a short drive from walkable downtowns and quick access to major cities while our homes should be tranquil, that's why location is priority number one."

At the home itself on the exterior, statement front en-

tries such as intimate covered porches and grand two-story porches with a large chandelier window elevate curb appeal. Three car garages are also at the top of the "must have" list, rather than just a "maybe."

Inside the home, Anderson said space is key.

"Square footage is crucial and 2,300-3,300 square feet is the most popular. Homeowners want open floor

plans for that light and airy feeling, yet offering areas of privacy throughout."

While a couple years ago during the pandemic, people were satisfied with an isolated corner of the home serving as a home office, today they want an attractive "flex room" with natural light and large windows; an everyday space that can be used as a home office, yoga room, playroom, or



PHOTO COURTESY OF SINGH DEVELOPMENT

Amenities that were once considered optional are now must-haves for many individuals and families in today's housing market.

craft room.

Upping the ante, more luxury features are wanted in today's work from home space such as French doors or a pocket office with built in countertops. From there, the comforting feel of cozy spaces continue

to be craved with breakfast nooks near the kitchens, family rooms designed with marble surround fireplaces, and large bedrooms with spa features.

"The four bedroom home is almost a requirement today," he said. "Our

home designs have evolved with the needs of families who want walk-in closets for most, if not all, of the bedrooms and at least one master bedroom with a spa bathroom attached including soaking tubs," Anderson said.

Moving on to the kitchen, the life-enhancing features are gourmet social islands, extra cabinet space and walk-in pantries are here to stay and will continue to grow in demand. The surprising craveable feature: second kitchens.

"Second kitchens are growing in popularity in South Lyon and nationwide, actually. They started as spice kitchens to capture the scents from really fragrant cooking — but today those second kitchens are for multi-generational fam-

ilies which are continuing to increase. Second kitchens need to be as top quality as the main kitchen with backsplashes and granite."

The saying is true that our homes are our castle, perhaps now more than ever.

HOME MAINTENANCE



PHOTO COURTESY OF BRANDPOINT

Solid hardwood floors are beautiful and timeless, and they can last for decades with proper maintenance.

Tips to help your hardwood floors last for generations

Solid hardwood floors are beautiful and timeless, adding value to any property. However, there's a misconception that real hardwood floors are difficult to maintain. The truth is that they can last for decades, as long you follow a few simple steps on a regular schedule.

In fact, the time that goes into maintaining hardwood floors isn't much more extensive than any other flooring material. The key is to practice regular care and cleaning for your hardwood to

keep grit and dirt from scratching the wood.

"Hardwood floors are special, and if properly taken care of, you can have a living, organic, premium floor that lasts for generations," said Jen Meska, director of Merchandising for LL Flooring (formerly Lumber Liquidators). "But to keep them in top shape, it's essential to have a regular cleaning schedule and be extra-mindful of any conditions in your home that could damage your floors."

Tools, tips, and tricks

Meska says to start with the fundamental tools for caring for hardwood flooring: a dust mop for everyday cleaning, a vacuum for weekly cleaning, and a microfibre mop that can get damp (not wet!) for monthly, deep cleaning.

To keep day-to-day dirt and grit off your floors, aim to sweep or vacuum weekly. When using a vacuum for regular cleanings, opt for a soft floor attach-

ment or hardwood setting that disengages the beater bar (this is the bar that rotates when cleaning carpet.) By disengaging it on hardwood and avoiding a vacuum or attachment with hard bristles, you can avoid any scuffing or scratching of your floors.

If you have heavy furniture placed directly on your hardwood, be sure to use felt pads on the feet to avoid scratches, and replace them regularly. This also includes furniture that is moved frequently, such as dining room chairs.



PHOTO COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

To keep day-to-day dirt and grit off your floors, aim to sweep or vacuum weekly.

Strive to do a deep clean monthly to ensure you pick up the dirt and grime that inevitably forms over time. A great hardwood flooring care set is LL Flooring's Bellawood Floor Care Maintenance Kit, which comes with a bottle of floor cleaner, a mop head and handle, washable wet mop microfiber pad, dry mop

pad and a variety pack of felt pads.

This set is GREENGUARD Gold Certified, which means it's third-party tested for low chemical emissions and therefore safe to use at home. It's also urethane-safe and won't leave a dull-streaky residue on your floors, so they'll look refreshed when

you're done cleaning.

What to avoid

Relative to most other flooring materials, solid hardwood is sensitive to moisture, whether that be due to wet shoes or just changes in humidity. Therefore, it's important to keep any amount of standing water off the planks.

That means ditch the traditional mop and bucket, which can leave behind water that could cause your floors to swell, crack or splinter.

Another critical thing to avoid is harsh cleaning solutions which include ingredients like chlorine bleach, ammonia, pine oil or undiluted vinegar. These

can dull your floors by affecting the protective finish, causing lasting damage.

By following these simple steps, your hardwood floor should stay in good shape for many years to come.

"The best thing about hardwood flooring is that it's a sustainable, living, or-

ganic material that takes on its own unique character throughout its lifetime," said Meska. "Each plank is unique and tells its own story, and with the proper care, they can serve as the design foundation of your home for generations."

Story courtesy of Brandpoint

HOME DESIGN



PHOTO COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

All-season rooms can be an ideal addition to a property, providing extra space for entertaining or lounging and a connection to the outdoors.

Let the outside in with all-season rooms

Many homeowners express interest in creating fewer barriers between the interior and exterior of their homes. Some may have backyards built for entertaining and want to facilitate the transition between the inside of the residence and the outside when guests arrive. In other instances, homes may back to a nature preserve that homeowners want to enjoy more readily. Whatever the reason for bringing the outside in, all-season rooms can serve

as a welcoming bridge between indoor and outdoor spaces.

What is an all-season room?

Also known as a four-season room, all-season rooms are specially engineered spaces that provide a connection to the outdoors no matter the season. They are like sunrooms, but climate-controlled so that they will be comfortable throughout winter, spring, summer, and fall.

What is the difference between a three-season room and an all-season room?

The biggest difference between these two spaces is the level of usage and the capacity of the room to be heated and cooled. Individuals who reside in climates with moderate year-round temperatures may get by with a three-season room. However, those who experience all four seasons may

need a more insulated space to make the room usable throughout the year.

Features of all-season rooms

One of the more notable features of an all-season room is an abundance of windows, which allow plenty of natural light to shine in. All-season rooms also can feature creature comforts like a reading nook, outdoor kitchen spaces and televisions. Retractable screens can be installed

Rooms

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when privacy or shade is desired.

Maintaining a comfortable temperature

All-season rooms can be built with adequate thermal insulation and energy-saving features. Insulation will be installed in the walls and roof, and homeowners may have a choice of window ratings for efficiency. Some all-season rooms are specially equipped with HVAC systems that may or may not be tied in to the home's general heating and cooling system.

Some people use portable heaters or air conditioners to control the temperature in all-season rooms. It's best to speak with an all-season room contractor to identify heating and cooling needs.

How much does an all-season room cost?

Prices vary by region and are contingent on the features homeowners desire. According to the outdoor resource Garden Center Care, a three-season room can cost anywhere from \$8,000 to \$50,000 to build. A four-season room can cost \$20,000 to \$80,000 to add. If there is an existing three-season room, it may be more affordable to upgrade the space into an all-season room, but an architect and contractor should inspect the space to determine the scope of the project.

All-season rooms can be an ideal addition to a property, providing extra space for entertaining or lounging and a connection to the outdoors.

Story courtesy of Metro Creative Connection



All-season rooms can serve as a welcoming bridge between indoor and outdoor spaces.

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CONNECTION

HOME ORGANIZATION

Spring cleaning: Don't toss that 'junk,' it may be valuable

It's time to hit the garage, basement, attic and closets for that age-old task of spring cleaning. Before hauling unwanted possessions to the curb, you may be surprised to learn they might be valuable — especially if you have sports cards and memorabilia gathering dust.

With prices of sports cards rising in recent years, take time to determine if yours are valuable and how to best sell them.

"Older sports cards and memorabilia aren't just highly collectible; they can be worth lots of money. Recent sales of scarce vintage cards have topped anywhere from thousands of dollars to tens of thousands, even hundreds of thousands. And really rare cards can go higher," says Al Crisafulli, Auction Director at Love of the Game Auctions, an internet sports auction house that helps families identify and sell valuable items.

Crisafulli has assisted people in selling such keepsakes as a grandparent's autograph collection and an uncle's childhood baseball cards, for tens of thousands of dollars. In one life-changing event, he helped a family determine that a baseball bat that spent decades protecting their home was used by Hall of Famer Lou Gehrig — and Love of the Game Auctions sold it for almost half a million dollars. Today, that bat could bring more than a million dollars.

The key is understanding what makes old sports collectibles valuable. To help, Crisafulli is sharing some tips:

Older is usually pricier

Cards from the 1960s and earlier are collectible, and those from before the 1940s can be worth a lot of money, especially those depicting stars. Do you have cards of Hall of Famers, such as Mickey Mantle, Babe Ruth, Honus Wagner or Ty Cobb? Even non-stars from the early days of a sport can be worth big bucks, especially if the cards have no creases and retain sharp corners and original gloss.

If you have very old cards from the 1880s through the 1930s, look for tobacco, gum and candy brands, such as Old Judge, Piedmont, Sweet Caporal, Goudey or American Caramel.

If you want to sell sports items for the most money, consider a specialty auction, such as Love of the Game, which has the expertise to properly research sports ephemera and maintains bidder lists of collectors specializing in sports. More information is available at loveofthegameauctions.com.

Postcards and photographs

We all have keepsakes of vacation destinations, but most aren't valuable. However, photographs and postcards depicting sports stars and ballparks can be signif-

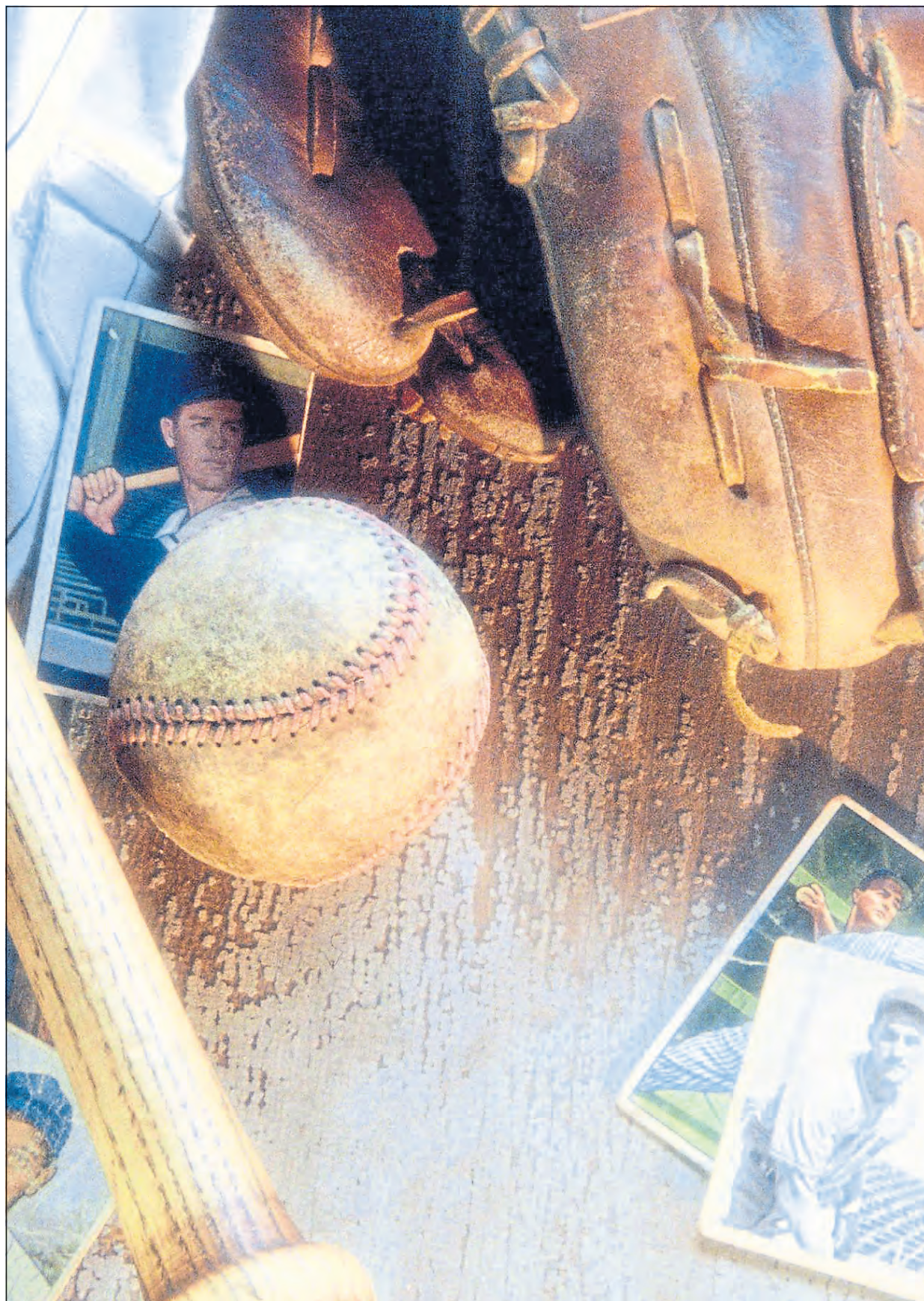


PHOTO COURTESY OF STATEPOINT MEDIA

Before hauling unwanted possessions to the curb, you may be surprised to learn they might be valuable — especially if you have sports cards and memorabilia gathering dust.



PHOTO COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

Don't just clean out your "junk" this spring, examine it closely to potentially maximize its value.

icant. Look for early "real photo" postcards from the 1900s through the 1940s, which are photographs printed on postcard backs.

As with sports cards, star power matters, so preserve those Babe Ruths as opposed to images of your

great grandma's baby cousin once-removed. And when it comes to photos, look for old markings on the back, such as photographer, publication and date stamps.

Memorabilia

Set aside old advertis-

ing posters depicting sports stars and food, tobacco or sporting goods brands. Ads from magazines aren't valuable, but those used as store displays and for other marketing purposes can be pricey. Tin signs from the 1960 and earlier can be

highly prized, but reproductions aren't.

Your family's sporting goods, such as balls, gloves and bats, can be valuable. Pre-1950s uniforms and catcher's masks, helmets and other equipment are highly collected, especially

when endorsed by star players. Top condition brings the highest prices, but even used equipment can be valuable.

"The golden rule is the older the sports card or item, the more valuable it usually is. Pre-1975 pieces start to get interesting and

are worth researching," says Crisafulli.

Don't just clean out your "junk" this spring, examine it closely to potentially maximize its value.

Story courtesy of StatePoint Media

HOME SAFETY

Safety upgrades for seniors' homes

Many seniors want to spend as long as possible residing in the comforts of their own homes. According to AARP's 2021 "Home and Community Preferences Survey," more than three-quarters of U.S. adults age 50 and older prefer living at home. But getting older often comes with certain deficits that may not make current living situations the safest for seniors.

Retirement Living reports that an older person is treated in an emergency room for a fall-related injury nearly once every 10 seconds. Falls cause millions of injuries and 32,000 deaths a year, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Seniors may be affected by low vision, mobility limitations, cognitive decline, balance issues, and loss of muscle strength. Certain adaptations may be necessary if seniors want to stay in their homes, particularly in older homes that have not recently been renovated.

Change knobs to levers

This is an easy modification. Levers are much easier for individuals with arthritis or persons who lack dexterity in their hands. Everything from doorknobs to faucet knobs can be replaced with levers.

Create zero-threshold entryways

Zero-threshold entryways, also known as flush entries, do not require crossing a lip or any raised barrier. They can appear on doorways and showers and make it easy for people



PHOTO COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

There are many home modifications that can be made to help seniors safely age in place.

who have mobility issues, as well as those using scooters, walkers and wheelchairs, to move about unencumbered.

Clear clutter/move obstructions

One inexpensive modification is to remove extraneous furniture and accessories. Such a change widens walking spaces in a room and accommodates

walkers and wheelchairs. In addition, furniture can be pushed to the room's perimeter to make moving around easier. It's also important to remove area rugs, as they're often tripping hazards.

Install grab rails and supports

Minimizing falls could come down to providing

support in key rooms of a home. Adding grab rails in the bathroom near the toilet and in the shower can help a person use those facilities without assistance. Install a grab rail close to seating in the kitchen to add support.

Consider smart lighting

Motion-activated or

darkness-activated lighting switches and fixtures can automatically turn on lights, thereby improving visibility. Also, rocker light switches are easier to maneuver than standard toggles.

Invest in a stairlift

Single-story homes are preferable for growing older gracefully, but many seniors live in multi-story homes. A

stairlift makes a multi-floor home more accessible, according to Elder, an elder-care service provider. Stairlifts make it easier to traverse staircases and reduce the risk for falls.

These suggestions are just a few of the many home modifications that can help seniors safely age in place.

Story courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

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