

A photograph of a house with a garden of tulips in the foreground. The house is white with a porch and a garage. The garden is filled with pink and yellow tulips. The sky is blue with some clouds.

# Spring HOME & GARDEN

A Special Supplement to

**MailMax**

Your Good News Paper

APRIL 2024

## How to create more privacy on your property

An inviting backyard can serve as a welcome retreat from the hustle and bustle of daily life. After a long day at the office or an exhausting day spent transporting kids to and fro, it's hard to resist the allure of a peaceful outdoor space in which to unwind.

Privacy is a key component of any backyard oasis. Some homes may be so remote that privacy isn't an issue. But many suburban homeowners recognize they might need to tweak their landscapes if they hope to create a private oasis outside.

### Fencing or planting?

Most homeowners looking to create more privacy on their property will have to choose between fencing and planting. Fencing provides immediate privacy because, once it's installed, no one can see into the yard. Fencing also doesn't require watering or other immediate upkeep, which will be necessary when planting to ensure tree roots can establish themselves.

But planting has its benefits as well. Planting for privacy is essentially creating a living fence that can grow over time and provide even more privacy as trees reach maturity. Plants also tend to be less costly than fencing. The home renovation experts at BobVila.com estimate that fencing projects typically cost between \$1,667 and \$4,075. However, fencing projects can cost considerably more than \$4,000, especially for homeowners with

large properties they want to enclose. Large, mature trees can be expensive, though it's unlikely they will cost as much as fencing. In addition, fencing requires more maintenance and will potentially need to be replaced, while native trees won't require much upkeep and can last for generations.

### Planting

Homeowners who choose to plant for privacy will next have to decide which type of plants to add to their properties. Evergreens provide year-round privacy because they don't shed their leaves, so these are the ones most often chosen when creating a living fence. A number of varieties of evergreen trees can do the job, but it's important that homeowners consult with a landscape architect prior to choosing trees so they can ensure the trees will thrive when faced with the growing conditions on their properties. During such a consultation, homeowners may discuss the following popular privacy trees.

- Leyland cypress: The Arbor Day Foundation® notes that the Leyland cypress is popular for hedges and boundaries, likely because a typical tree reaches a mature height of 60'-70' and can spread as wide as 25'. The Leyland cypress grows fast, which may appeal to homeowners who don't want to wait to establish privacy.

- Green Giant Arborvitae: There are different varieties of the arborvitae, but the

Green Giant tends to be the go-to option for privacy. The ADF notes that Green Giants will grow up to three feet per year until they reach maturity, providing a fast-growing option for privacy planters. The Green Giant can spread as wide as 20 feet at maturity, which is another attribute that makes it so popular among homeowners desiring privacy.

- Eastern White Pine: The ADF notes that the eastern white pine, which can reach heights as high as 80 feet, is favored in spacious yards. That's likely due to its height

and its potential spread, which can reach 40 feet. Homeowners who choose the eastern white pine might like it for its resemblance to a Christmas tree, and in fact it is widely used for that purpose. The privacy provided by the eastern white pine is significant, but it might be best suited to especially large properties.

Whether it's fencing or planting, homeowners have many options to consider as they seek to create more privacy on their properties.



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## 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 regular 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 anticipate 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 minutiae 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.

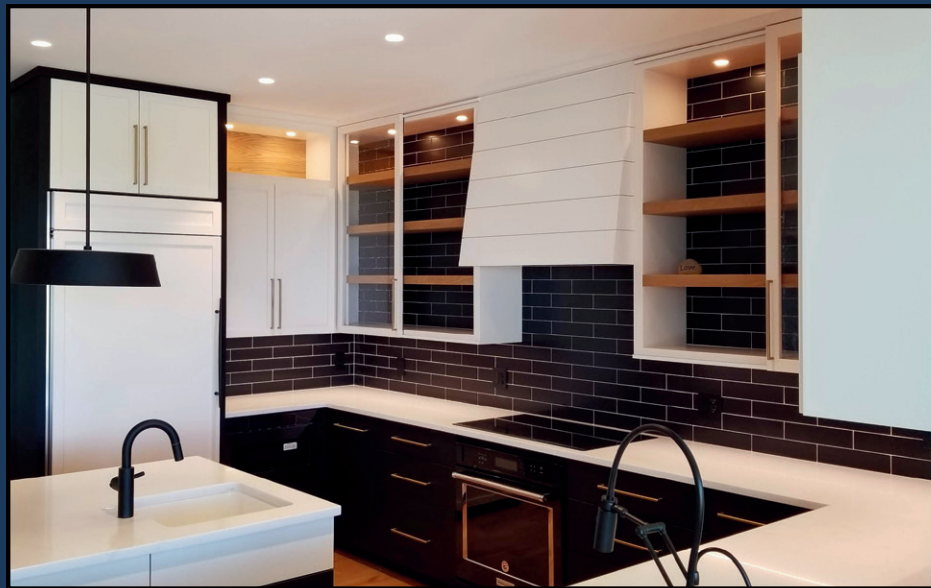
- Recreate commonly used spaces elsewhere. A kitchen or a bathroom remodel often requires giving up spaces that are used throughout a typical day. Unless you have a spare full bathroom or kitchen, you'll need to make due. Set a microwave, tabletop electric burner and a coffee pot on a folding table in 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. Remodeling 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 respite from the noises and smells.

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



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## How to prepare soil for spring planting

Spring is a season of rejuvenation, and perhaps nowhere is that rebirth more noticeable than in the yard. Each spring, grass begins to grow again as inviting landscapes beckon people outdoors.

Extra sunlight and rising temperatures make spring a great time to plant flowers, grasses and trees. To ensure successful planting, homeowners must take steps to prepare the soil. Healthy soil can provide the ideal conditions for roots to take hold, helping plants establish themselves before potentially harsh summer conditions arrive. Preparing soil might seem like an extensive job, but a simple approach may be all that's necessary to create conditions that promote plant growth this spring.

- Clean up the previous months' mess. Whether homeowners live in regions marked by year-round warmth or places where winter typically features heavy snowfall, it's a good idea to clean up an area prior to spring planting. Fallen leaves, rocks, grass clippings, and other debris can contribute to compacted soil that makes it hard for plants to establish strong, healthy root systems. Clear away any debris prior to planting before taking the next step in your soil preparation routine.

- Loosen the soil. Once debris has been cleared away, loosen the soil. Depending on the size of the area where you'll be planting, you may need to invest in tools like a shovel,

spade, spading fork, and/or a lawn edger. If you're planting in a small area, such as a deck planter box that still has soil from last year's planting inside it, you can either clean the box and replace the soil entirely or dig around with a handheld trowel, cultivator and/or weeder. It's important to loosen all of the soil around where you will ultimately plant prior to planting to ensure water can reach the roots and help them establish themselves once planting is completed.

- Test and, if necessary, amend the soil. A simple pH test can help determine the acidity or alkalinity of the soil. This is an important step as soil that is too acidic or alkaline can decrease the availability of nutrients the plants will need to thrive. In addition to conducting a pH test, which can be purchased at little cost at a local home improvement store, homeowners can contact their local Cooperative Extension Service to test their soil quality. These tests will reveal soil pH, but also can shed light on the texture of the soil and other components. Once the test is conducted, the local Coop Extension Service may recommend amendments to improve the nutritional quality of the soil so new plants can thrive.

Soil conditions go a long way toward determining if new plants will thrive. Preparing the soil prior to spring planting can ensure a successful season.




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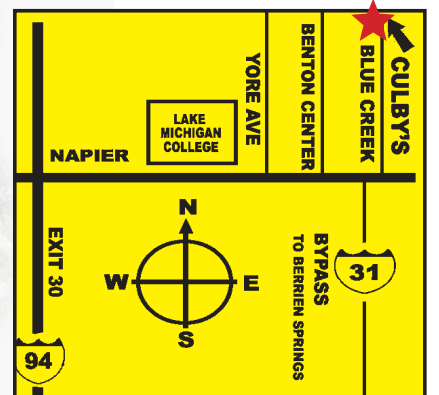
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## Shedding some light on home solar

Consumers shopping around for home improvement projects may be leaning toward overhauls that can reduce energy consumption and save them money in the long run. This is a driving factor behind a growing number of homeowners investigating solar energy for their residences.

### How does solar power work?

Solar power harnesses the sun's energy and converts it into electricity that can be used in homes. Many people are familiar with photovoltaics (PV), which are the panels that absorb sunlight and create an electric field across their layers. Another solar technology, known as concentrating solar power, is primarily used in large power plants and is not appropriate for residential use, according to Energy.gov.

According to the Office of Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy, hundreds of thousands of solar panels have been put in use across the United States since 2008.

### Costs associated with solar

The upfront expense of solar panels is significant, costing anywhere from \$10,000 to \$14,000 for initial installation. However, comparatively speaking, homeowners can spend \$1,500 or more per year on electricity, so solar panels will pay for themselves over time. Keep in mind that costs may vary depending on energy needs and how many panels will be required to service the system.

### How much electricity can I expect?

The Federal Trade Commission's Consumer Advice says that the amount of power generated from a solar energy system depends on a few factors:

1. The average number of hours of direct, unshaded sunlight your roof gets each year;
2. The pitch (angle), age and condition of your roof, and the compass direction it faces;
3. The size and strength of your system; and
4. Environmental factors such as snow, dust or shade that may cover the system.

### Save even more money

Consumers can contact their utility companies to find out if they provide homeowners who produce solar power with "net metering." This program pays the homeowner money or gives credit for excess power the system produces and returns to the electric grid. Individuals also may be eligible for energy tax credits or other benefits.

Homeowners may find it worthwhile to explore solar energy, particularly if they consume a high amount of electricity.



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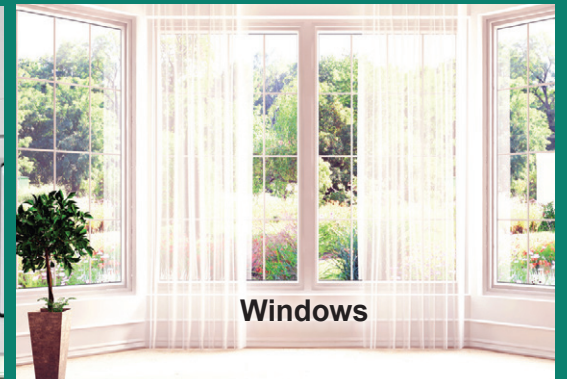


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## The many styles of front doors

A grand entryway simply wouldn't be complete without an impressive front door. A front door can dazzle guests and create a homeowner's desired vibe before anyone even steps inside, which only underscores how important the choice of door style can be.

When shopping around for a new front door for their homes, homeowners can consider the many popular styles as they seek to choose one that fits an existing scheme or use a new front door as a springboard to a redesigned home interior.

- **Farmhouse:** Farmhouse doors are not all one and the same. Traditional farmhouse doors provide a rustic look that's become popular in home decor over the last decade or so. Modern farmhouse doors are a little less rustic because they incorporate more contemporary elements into their design. Each option is ideal for homeowners who aspire to create a farmhouse vibe in their home interiors and exteriors.

- **Modern:** Modern front doors tend to boast a bold look and many are made up of large glass panels. Some homeowners prefer modern front doors because the glass in them allows lots of natural light into their home's interior. The added light in the entryway appeals to homeowners who want to brighten up these spaces, which tend to be dark in homes with more traditional doors.

- **Traditional:** Traditional front doors may be the most recognizable to today's homeowners. Often solid wood but sometimes enhanced with glass, traditional doors may feature subtle, yet ornate designs. Traditional front doors might feel out of place in modern or rustic homes, so they're generally best suited to homes with owners that prefer more traditional decor inside their homes.

- **Custom:** It's important that homeowners recognize they need not pigeonhole themselves into a particular design style for their front doors. Custom front doors may be costly, but many door manufacturers or contractors customize front doors. Custom doors may suit homeowners' with unique ideas about decor, and some can even mimic other popular styles while still featuring subtle differences. For example, homeowners can request an arched double door that, while unique, features many of the same qualities that characterize traditional doors, including ornate designs.

A front door can greatly influence the first impression people get of a home. That makes it worth homeowners' time and effort to explore the many different front door styles now available.



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## Gardening offers more than a day in the sun

Millions of people embrace opportunities to get back in their gardens each spring, and they might be reaping more rewards from that activity than they realize. According to the American Institute of Stress, gardening sparks a level of creativity among enthusiasts, and that can help to alleviate stress by

lowering levels of the hormone cortisol. In addition, authors of a 2022 study published in the journal Urban Forestry & Urban Greening concluded that gardening during the COVID-19 pandemic helped people cope with coronavirus-related stress through outdoor activity.





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## What to know about reseeding or replanting your lawn

Spring marks the return of flowering plants and warm weather. And homeowners know that spring also ushers in the return of home renovation season.

Homeowners undoubtedly have an extensive list of projects on their to-do list this spring, and that may include helping their lawns and gardens recover after a long winter. Unpredictable weather, which can include drought and excessive rainfall and everything in between, can take its toll on a lawn. In certain instances, the best solution may be planting new grass. But homeowners can consider these tips before they begin the process of reseeding or replanting their lawns.

- Scarify the lawn. Scarifying a lawn can help to create a clean slate, but the timing must be right. Various lawn and garden experts, including those at BBC Gardeners' World Magazine, recommend scarifying in spring or early autumn. But don't jump the gun when scarifying in spring by scarifying before the lawn has started to grow after a dormant winter. Scarify when the soil is a little wet and the grass is once again actively growing. Scarifying can remove any lingering weeds from last season and also pull up any moss

that might have taken hold over the winter. Without weeds and moss to contend with, freshly planted seeds are in better position to thrive.

- Work with a landscaping professional. Homeowners with manageable lawns can likely scarify their own lawns with a relatively inexpensive plug-in scarifier. However, scarifying can be a strenuous physical activity, particularly for homeowners with large lawns. In such instances, homeowners can benefit from working with a qualified landscaping professional. Such a professional can scarify the lawn and subsequently reseed or replant new grass. The latter task is not so simple, as the lawn care experts at Scotts® note that choosing the correct seed is a vital part of reseeding or replanting a lawn. Choosing seed may sound simple, but it's a potentially complex decision that requires knowledge of the existing grass, including when to plant it. Certain grasses are best planted in spring or early fall, while others are best planted in summer. A qualified landscaping professional can identify the existing grass and plan the seeding or planting around this important detail.

- Prepare to water the lawn. Watering is vital to the long-term success and health of freshly planted grass seed. Scotts® urges homeowners to keep the top inch of soil consistently moist, but not soggy. That requires a daily commitment, and setting a multi-function hose nozzle or sprinkler to the mist setting once per day or more if it's hot outside can increase the chances grass will grow in thick and strong. Scotts® recommends keeping the top two inches of the soil moist until the new grass reaches a mowing height of roughly three inches. Once that benchmark has been reached, watering frequency can be cut back to about twice per week, but now the soil should be deeply soaked instead of misted. The soaking will help roots grow deep into the soil.

Spring is a great time for homeowners in various regions to reseed or replant their lawns. With the right approach, homeowners can enjoy a full and lush lawn throughout summer.



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## Turn your yard into a vacation-worthy oasis

Warm weather means more time to relax outdoors. For those homeowners lucky enough to have entertaining spaces outside, spring and summer provides plenty of opportunities to enjoy fresh air under the sun or stars.

Over the last few years, families have become especially familiar with what works about their yards and where there is room for improvement. Pandemic-related travel restrictions and early stay-at-home mandates resulted in plenty of time spent in backyards on staycations. Even though many such restrictions have been lifted, homeowners may have seen the benefits of having functional respites right outside their doors.

A backyard renovation can cost anywhere from \$5,000 to \$50,000. The American Society of Landscape Architects suggests homeowners budget the cost of a major landscaping project at between 5 and 10 percent of their home's value. Large or small, here are ways to make an outdoor oasis at home.

### Create living privacy

Living in close proximity to neighbors may make privacy harder to come by. Wood or vinyl fences, however effective, may not provide the all-natural look many people desire. Vertical gardening, which trains easy-care vines like English ivy, Clematis or various climbing roses to grow on trellis or fencing adds greenery and privacy. Hedges

and fast-growing shrubs also can be used for natural barriers.

### Install a pool

Pools are the ultimate spots to cool off on hot days. An elaborately shaped inground pool can blend in with the landscape and offer the ultimate hang-out zone. However,

above-ground pools also serve the purpose and are more budget-friendly. Stock tank pools are popular among those who want minimal pool expenditure or have small spaces to work with. Stock tanks are metal vessels traditionally used as watering holes for livestock. They also can be "adult kiddie

pools" when combined with some plumbing. Galvanized steel frames make them sturdy. With floats and other accessories, they can become the perfect oasis.

### Provide outdoor atmosphere

Create a bespoke bistro vibe by using freestanding planters and posts along with hanging lights to make an intimate outdoor hangout spot at night. For those with permanent structures, like a deck or a gazebo, lights can be strung across the area or on railings or edging.

### Extend the living space

Decks and patios can help make outdoor entertaining areas more comfortable by eliminating the need to sit on the grass or gravel. Plus, they add another "room" to the home. When paired with weatherproof patio furniture, such as sofas, loungers and tables, a private seating area can be crafted and utilized for any number of entertaining desires.

### Hang a hammock

Few things evoke feelings of relaxation better than a hammock. Fitted between two trees (or two posts if trees are sparse), a hammock is an ideal place to grab a nap or read a book.

Additional oasis-inspired ideas include outdoor kitchens, letting up lanterns, cascading water features, and bird feeders to attract the sounds of nature.



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## Signs a home exterior needs updating

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

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

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

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

- **Unightly landscaping:** It's not only the physical components of the home that may suggest an update is necessary. Homeowners without a green thumb may have exterior landscaping that has seen better days. If a spring or summer day spent tending to your landscaping is not your ideal weekend pastime, then consider replacing unsightly landscaping with low-maintenance plants or hardscaping. These alternatives to more needy plants can create curb appeal without requiring any extra work for homeowners.

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



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## Budget-friendly ways to freshen up your home's exterior

As any homeowner knows, renovation projects tend to cost a lot of money. The average cost of a home renovation is difficult to gauge, as such endeavors run the gamut from complex projects like a kitchen overhaul to simpler ones like painting a room inside a home. Indeed, the National Association of the Remodeling Industry notes that scope is what drives the cost of a renovation project.

Though there might not be an "average cost" of a renovation project, homeowners can expect to spend thousands of dollars on projects that are not very small in scale. Navigating such an expense at a time when inflation remains high might be difficult for some homeowners looking to maintain the appearance of their home exteriors. However, there are many budget-friendly ways homeowners can tend to the exterior of their properties.

- **Power washing:** Power washing won't break the bank but it can revive the look of a home. Power washing removes dirt and grime from the siding of a home and a power washing can be used to clean porches, walkways and patios as well. Hardware chains like Home Depot and Lowes typically rent power washers, but homeowners who don't want to do it themselves can hire a professional for a few hundred dollars, if not less. Power washing after winter can be a good idea, as the elements can take a toll on a home's exterior. A good power washing before spring and

summer entertaining season can thus give a home a fresh, clean look without breaking the bank.

- **Furnished front porch:** A furnished front porch can serve as a welcome sign to neighbors and provide a great place to relax with a morning cup of coffee and a good book.

Homeowners with a small porch won't need to bust their budgets to upgrade their front porch furnishings. Some small chairs with bright cushions, a small table and a rug underfoot can revamp an entryway at low cost.

- **Window box installation:** Installing window box planters is another cost-effective way to brighten up a home's exterior. Homeowners can hang window boxes outside windows on the front of their homes and then fill them with brightly colored flowers to add an inviting pop of color to their home exteriors. The experts at Better Homes & Gardens urge homeowners to take weight into consideration before buying window planters. Keep in mind that soil and developed plants can be heavy, so look for a sturdy box as well as one that has drainage holes.

- **Replace hardware:** Another simple way to freshen up a stale exterior is to replace hardware. Door knobs, knockers, house numbers, and even the mailbox can appear dated after a while. Replacing these items is inexpensive and quick but can have a profound impact on how the exterior of a home appears to residents and visitors.

Exterior renovations need not break the bank. Various simple and inexpensive tweaks can quickly revitalize the exterior of a home.



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## The benefits of planting native species

Spring and summer present ideal growing conditions for many plants, making these seasons an ideal time to tend to lawns and gardens. Though it's easy to succumb to the temptation of exotic plants, avid gardeners and eco-conscious planters recognize the significance of native plants.

Novices may not realize that native plants are much better for a landscape and the local ecosystem it calls home. Recognition of the many benefits of native plants can make for healthier lawns and gardens and a healthier planet as well.

- Native plants are built for local climates. One of the issues gardeners who plant exotic plants run into is keeping those plants thriving when weather turns harsh. For example, exotic plants may require extra watering in areas that experience drought or even long periods without precipitation in spring and notably summer. The United States Environmental Protection Agency reports that at least 40 states anticipate water shortages by 2024. Planting native plants can help to combat those shortages by reducing the need to water plants if conditions become dry in late spring and summer.

- Native plants save money. It's also important to note that native plants save homeowners money. Because they're capable of thriving in local conditions, native plants tend to require less watering, which can help homeowners reduce their utility costs. But

native plants also require less upkeep, which means homeowners can save on potentially costly, not to mention eco-unfriendly, pesticides and other amendments in order to maintain the look of exotic plants. And though

it's not always the case, exotic plants tend to cost more at nurseries than natives.

- Native plants save gardeners time. In addition to saving money, native plants don't require as much attention. Though spring

and summer is a great time to be in the yard, it's also a great time to be out and about. Because native plants thrive in local conditions, gardeners won't need to spend much of their free time tending to them. Exotics tend to require a lot of extra attention and effort, especially when conditions become harsh. Spending more time outdoors in harsh weather does not appeal to most gardeners.

- Native plants blend in with an existing landscape. Native plants look natural within an existing landscape, adding some instant aesthetic appeal without breaking the bank. When planting exotics, homeowners may feel a need to redesign their entire gardens to create a certain look (think Japanese garden). That can quickly consume a budget and take up a lot of free time in both the short- and long-term.

Planting season marks a great time to revitalize a landscape. Choosing native plants when doing so pays numerous dividends for homeowners and the planet they call home.



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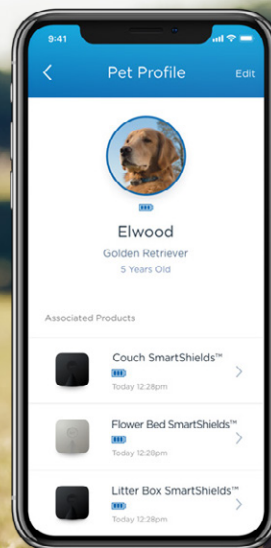
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## Tips to revitalize a garden this spring

Gardening is a rewarding hobby that pays a host of significant dividends. Many people love gardening because it allows them to spend time outdoors, and that simple pleasure is indeed a notable benefit of working in a garden. But the National Initiative for Consumer Horticulture notes that gardening provides a host of additional benefits, including helping people get sufficient levels of exercise, reduce stress and improve mood.

With so much to gain from gardening, it's no wonder people look forward to getting their hands dirty in the garden each spring. As the weather warms up, consider these tips to help bring a garden back to life.

- Discard the dead weight. Winter can take its toll on a garden, even in regions where the weather between December and early spring is not especially harsh. Discard dead plants that have lingered into spring and prune any perennials that need it. Branches that fell during winter storms also should be removed at this point if they have not previously been discarded.

- Test the soil. Soil testing kits can be purchased at local garden centers and home improvement retailers. Such tests are inexpensive and can reveal if the soil needs to be amended to help plants thrive in the months to come.

- Mulch garden beds. Mulching benefits a garden by helping soil retain moisture

and preventing the growth of weeds. Various garden experts note that mulching in spring can prevent weed seeds from germinating over the course of spring and summer. That means plants won't have to fight with weeds for water when the temperature warms up. It also means gardeners won't have to spend time pulling weeds this summer.

- Inspect your irrigation system. Homeowners with in-ground irrigation systems or above-ground systems that utilize a drip or soaker function can inspect the systems before plants begin to bloom. Damaged sprinkler heads or torn lines can deprive plants of water they will need to bloom and ultimately thrive once the weather warms up.

- Tune up your tools. Gardening tools have likely been sitting around gathering dust since fall. Serious gardeners know that tools can be expensive, so it pays to protect that investment by maintaining the tools. Sharpened pruners help make plants less vulnerable to infestation and infection. Well-maintained tools like shovels and hoes also make more demanding gardening jobs a little bit easier, so don't forget to tune up your tools before the weather warms up.

It's almost gardening season, which means gardeners can start on the necessary prep work to ensure their gardens grow in strong and beautiful this spring.



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## Tips to make a yard less attractive to ticks

Backyards are ideal places to spend warm afternoons soaking up some sun. Lazy days in the yard are a big part of what makes warm weather seasons like spring and summer so appealing. But those afternoons can quickly go off the rails when an unwelcome visitor makes its presence known.

Ticks can be found throughout the world, but the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes that only a select few types of ticks transmit bacteria, viruses and parasites, or pathogens, that cause diseases in people. But even if the number of tick species that transmit diseases to humans is relatively low, ticks that can infect humans are a notable threat. Such ticks carry pathogens that the CDC notes can cause a number of diseases, including Bourbon virus, Ehrlichiosis and, of course, Lyme disease, among others.

Human beings can come into contact with ticks in their own backyards. But humans can take various steps to make their lawns less welcoming to ticks.

- Cut your grass short and keep it that way. Black-legged ticks are transmitters of Lyme disease, which the CDC notes is the most common vector-borne disease in the United States. Lyme disease also poses a growing threat in Canada, where data from the Public Health Agency indicates human-reported Lyme disease cases increased from 144 in 2009 to more than 2,100 in 2022.

Black-legged ticks do not like environments that are dry and hot, so short grass makes lawns less attractive to this type of tick. Consumer Reports advises homeowners who have let their grass grow a little too high (around five or six inches) to bag their clippings when

cutting the grass. Lots of clippings on the grass can provide a respite from the heat for black-legged ticks.

- Create a tick barrier if your property abuts woods. Woods provide a cover from summer heat that black-legged ticks crave. So

properties that abut the woods may be more vulnerable to these unwanted guests than yards that do not border woodlands. A barrier of dry mulch made of wood chips between a property and a bordering wooded area can help repel ticks, who won't want to settle in often dry, hot mulch beds.

- Plant with infestation prevention in mind. Some plants can help to repel ticks because they boast certain characteristics that ticks cannot tolerate. The fragrances, textures and oils of plants like garlic, mint, lavender, marigolds, and others create less welcoming conditions for ticks. Homeowners can speak with local garden centers for advice on tick-repellant plants that can thrive in their particular climate and on their properties.

- Remove yard debris. Piles of wood, leaves and brush can make for good conditions for ticks that transmit disease. After raking leaves and gathering brush, discard the resulting piles immediately.

These measures will not necessarily prevent all ticks from establishing themselves on a property, so individuals are urged to inspect their bodies and the bodies of their pets after a day in the yard.





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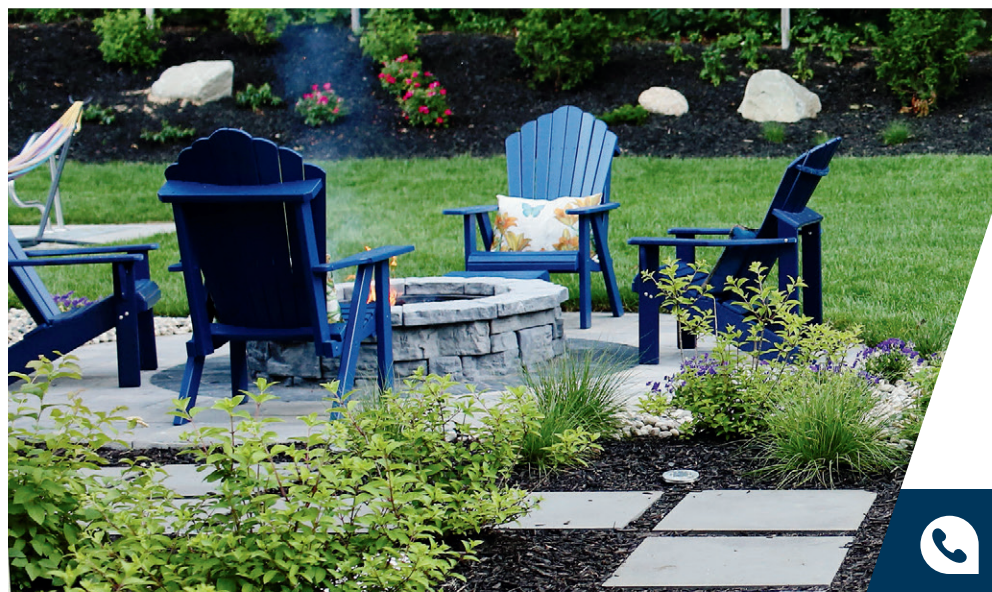
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