

# HOME IMPROVEMENT

*Fall 2016*



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## HOME DÉCOR

# Transform spaces into cozy retreats

Cool weather often drives people to spend more hours indoors than they do during the warmer months. Autumn is a time to winterize gardens, put away lawn furniture and prepare for the holiday season. Autumn also provides the perfect opportunity to begin home interior projects.

Many people decide to redecorate their homes to reflect each season. When temperatures change, it's time to transition from the light colors and breezy fabrics symbolic of summer to thicker, darker materials that evoke coziness.

With some inspiration and a little know-how, any homeowner or apartment dweller can cozy up a space in time for fall and winter.

- Invest in area rugs. While wood floors can look beautiful and work well with many different design styles, wood can feel chilly underfoot. Thick area rugs add warmth to a room and can help it look more lived-in. Area rugs also help a room appear more cohesive, coordinating with other colors in a space and providing a visual border.

- Practice layering in rooms. An affordable and relatively easy way to make a room seem more cozy is to layer fabrics and other accents. Layers can include throws and blankets. Remove place mats from the dining room table and use them on accent tables or an ottoman in the living room. Table runners also can add a splash of color to the top of bedroom dressers.

- Play with texture. Look for fabrics that boast texture and can add a tac-

tile feel to spaces. When used on throw pillows or small accents, faux fur can create that cozy cabin feel. Draperies made from nubby fabrics or those with grooves and ridges can add dimension to a room as well. Even a lampshade made of an unusual fabric, such as a waffle-patterned material, can add a little depth and warmth to a space.

- Re-evaluate your lighting. Lighting a space is more than just flipping on a switch. Finding the right balance of lighting fixtures can instantly transform the feel of a room. Create more warmth and a cozy feel by switching out bulbs from cooler shades to warmer ones — those that give off yellow and pink hues rather than cool blues. Accent lighting helps establish a comfortable space for curling up and reading a good book. Spot lighting, such as fixtures that are trained on artwork or inside of a curio or china cabinet, also can set a more welcoming mood.

- Install a bookshelf and start a book collection. Piles and stacked books can add warmth to any space. Books evoke the hallowed halls of schools and quiet nooks in the library. Fill shelves with books interspersed with additional design accents, and you will instantly make a room feel more inviting.

- Choose dark paint. Do not feel nervous about incorporating deeper shades in rooms. Dark colors give rooms a more enclosed feel than lighter colors, and that can create a warm and cozy feeling. This works particularly well in larger spaces



PHOTO COURTESY OF BRANDPOINT

that feel vast and empty. If you're scared to paint all of your walls, try a darker shade below a chair rail or just paint one accent wall.

- Add architectural elements. Think about

adding rich moldings to crown the ceilings or to frame doorways. If you have the space for a nook, create a window seat beneath a picture window or add a bench and cushions

in a corner for a nice escape spot.

Use the colder weather as an opportunity to reinvent some of the rooms in your home. With paint, texture, fabric, lighting

and more, rooms can be quickly transformed into cozy respites from the cold.

*Article courtesy of BrandPoint*



## HOME IMPROVEMENT

# Paint your home's exterior like a pro

Painting is an inexpensive way to transform just about any space. Many people paint the interiors of their homes, but home exteriors also can undergo dramatic makeovers with fresh coats of paint. Timing the job right and heeding some tips from professionals and do-it-yourselfers who have tread the painting path before you can make the job go smoothly.

## Consider the time of year

Consider local weather patterns and forecasts when planning an exterior painting project. Choose a time of year when there is little rain and low humidity, such as autumn. Keep



PHOTO COURTESY OF BRANDPOINT

in mind that the paint will require a couple of days to dry completely and cure, and that can be difficult in damp weather. Don't hamper the final outcome with poor timing.

## Prepare the painting surfaces

Resist the temptation to start painting straight away. Paint may not adhere to unprepared surfaces,

and dirt and other debris may show through and mar the finished product. Repainting a home's exterior will likely involve removing peeling or chipping paint prior to making your first strokes. Wear protective gear when scraping, sanding or brushing old paint, as such tasks can generate dust that can be dangerous to inhale, particularly if the old paint contains lead.

Employ a chlorine bleach solution to kill any mildew and to scrub any dirt from the house. In addition, repair any cracks or imperfections. For example, if you're painting stucco, you may have to fill in any pitting or holes. Use this opportunity to inspect caulking around windows and doors. Re-

caulk as needed to seal up drafty areas or those that may cause water infiltration prior to painting.

## Prime and cover stains

It may be a little extra work, but apply a quality primer as the first coat to hide any imperfections, such as wood knots or discoloration from weathering. Primer provides a smooth, even surface upon which to put your paint color. Once you have applied the primer, test your paint color in a small, inconspicuous spot to see how the color looks in the daylight. You do not want to paint the entire home only to find out you dislike the color.

## Try these painting techniques

Rent a paint sprayer for large surface areas. The sprayer will produce a more uniform application and is less time-consuming than painting everything with a brush or roller. Make sure you've chosen a high-quality paint, as the added expense is worth it if the paint lasts longer and coats more evenly. Also, if you have purchased multiple cans of paint, mix them all in one large bucket to ensure the same color; otherwise, the colors may not match perfectly.

The experts at HGTV recommend working your way from top to bottom

in a smooth, controlled manner, overlapping each stroke by eight inches. Trim and hard-to-reach areas should be left for brush work so you can maintain control over your tools.

If you are painting areas like steps or staircases, consider adding a little fine-grain sand to the paint to improve traction, as paint can be slippery when wet.

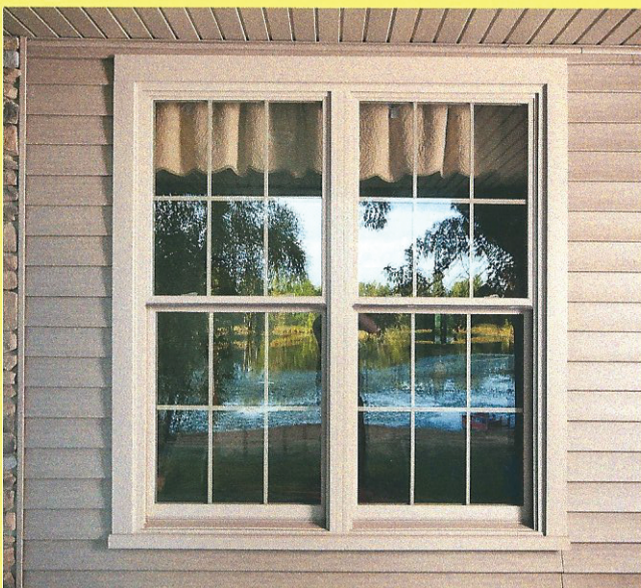
If painting your home's exterior is beyond your capabilities, hire a professional. He or she will get the work done in a timely manner, and you can rest assured that the job will be done correctly.

Article courtesy of  
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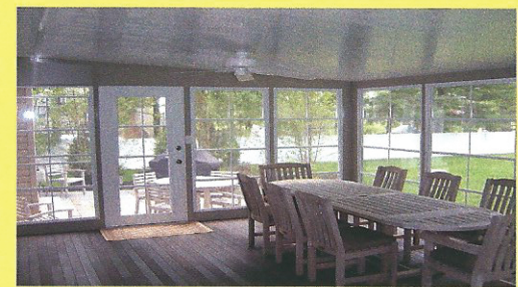
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## HOME

## Cold weather doesn't need to stop outdoor entertaining

Outdoor entertaining has never been more popular. As more and more homeowners turn their homes into their

own personal oases, extending the party outdoors has become a bigger priority.

According to the Ameri-

can Home Furnishings Alliance's 2015 Outdoor Furniture Trend Report, out-of-doors areas on a property are

the favored venues for celebrations with family and friends. While outdoor entertaining was once relegated to the warm weather seasons, advancements in technology have now made it more comfortable and enjoyable to entertain outdoors for much of the year. But hosts who want to extend the outdoor party after summer has come and gone should consider a few important entertaining tips.

- Start the party early.

Summertime backyard barbecues and pool parties benefit from late-evening sunsets that illuminate patios and pool areas well into the evening. In addition, many hosts prefer to start such parties later in the day to avoid the sun during the early afternoon when it is at its most blazing. However, start the party earlier in the day when hosting in fall or early winter. Temperatures can drop considerably once the sun begins to set, so starting early can save hosts and their guests from cold air.

Heat things up. Summertime hosts might employ canopies to protect themselves and their guests from the heat, and it's important



PHOTO COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE

Fire pits can keep hosts and their guests warm during outdoor parties in late fall and early winter.

for hosts to take similar steps when the weather is chillier. The AHFA report found that 38 percent of homeowners intended to purchase fire pits for their outdoor entertaining areas, and such fire pits can keep guests warm as the sun goes down and the night air gets chilly. Fire pits have become must-have items for outdoor entertaining areas, and hosts can surely find one that suits their needs.

- Change the menu. Grill-

ing hot dogs and hamburgers might still work when entertaining outdoors in fall and winter, but hosts may want to stray from other summertime fare like watermelon or pasta salad. Embrace the cold weather by roasting some nuts and making s'mores over an open fire. In lieu of summertime beverages like lemonade and beer, serve hot chocolate or wine to keep guests warm.

Ensure there is adequate lighting. Mother Nature won't offer much lighting when you host a party outdoors in late fall and early winter, so make sure your patios and sidewalks are well lit. Guests will want to see one another and what they're eating, and well-lit walkways will reduce the risk that guests take a tumble or turn their ankles when walking to and from the house.

Outdoor entertaining need not end because summer has come and gone. But hosts must take a different approach to hosting when throwing outdoor gatherings in late fall and early winter.

Article courtesy of Metro Creative



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**HOME SAFETY**

# Employ simple fire prevention measures to maximize safety

Did you know that, according to the National Fire Protection Association, most people have a false sense of security regarding house fires, believing that they would have approximately six minutes to evacuate their home in the event of a fire?

In reality, smoke and fire spread rapidly and can overcome occupants in less than three minutes.

When a fire occurs, there's no question that time is critical.

The good news is there are several important steps you can take to maximize your escape time. With the following measures in place, you'll create critical protection for what matters most — your home and family.

1. Install smoke alarms. You should have one in every bedroom, outside each separate sleeping area

and on every level of the home, including the basement. For the best protection, make sure all smoke alarms are interconnected.

When one sounds, they all sound.

2. Inspect and clean smoke alarms monthly. Replace batteries in spring and fall. To clean the alarm, open the cover and gently vacuum the interior.

3. Prepare and practice a fire escape plan. Draw a floor plan of your home, marking two ways out of every room — especially

sleeping areas. Discuss the escape routes with every member of your household, and agree on a meeting place outside your home in case of emergency. Practice your escape plan at least twice a year.

4. Select building materials that provide passive fire protection. Passive fire protection is part of the core of the building and helps control fire by limiting its spread. One very effective form of passive fire protection is the installation of insulation.

When adding or upgrading insulation, look for

products made from naturally fire-resistant, inorganic materials. A favorite among builders, contractors and homeowners is a stone wool insulation called Roxul Safe 'n' Sound, which offers fire resistance up to 2,150°F. Its melting point is higher than the temperature of a typical house fire, which means it will stay in place longer to provide passive fire protection when every second counts, allowing more time for safe evacuation and for first responders to arrive.

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# Prepare your fireplace or stove for the season

Fireplaces and wood-burning stoves not only can be beautiful focal points within a home, but they also provide an additional source of heat and can be used to keep rooms or entire homes comfortable without the need for additional and potentially costly heating sources.

Just like more modern home heating systems, stoves and fireplaces need to be maintained, and that maintenance includes readying them before winter when they are used more heavily. Ensuring a fireplace or stove is in good working order helps to guarantee efficiency of use and safety during the winter months.

Open-flame heating sources carry with them

**Open-flame heating sources carry with them certain risks. The National Fire Protection Association states that, between 2009 and 2013, American fire departments responded to 56,000 home structure fires that involved heating equipment.**

certain risks. The National Fire Protection Association states that, between 2009 and 2013, American fire departments responded to 56,000 home structure fires that involved heating equipment. The NFPA notes that the leading factor contributing to home-heating fires is a failure to keep things clean, principally from

solid-fueled heating equipment.

The following are a handful of ways to stay safe as you get ready for another cozy season around the fire.

- Start with the chimney. Begin by having your chimney thoroughly cleaned and inspected. Creosote can build up inside of the chimney. Cre-

sote is highly flammable and becomes more difficult and expensive to clean the longer it builds up inside your flue lining. In addition, animals may have created nest inside of the chimney since the last time the fireplace was used. A professional chimney sweep should be hired in this situation. He or she will be able to effectively clean the chimney in a manner that is the least messy and disruptive to residents.

- Install or check smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. Operational alarms are essential to preventing injury or death resulting from smoke or carbon monoxide inhalation. Such detectors are inexpensive safeguards that should be installed on every floor of the house. Bat-

teries should be replaced every six months, and the alarms themselves should be changed every five to 10 years.

- Inspect the chimney from outdoors as well. Inspect the mortar around any bricks in the chimney and surrounding areas for cracks. If left unaddressed, these can cause dangerous fires. If there are serious cracks, a professional may need to make repairs or the chimney may need to be replaced. You also can have the chimney capped with a screen to keep animals and debris from entering.

- Inspect the damper. A damper is a valve or plate that stops or regulates the flow of air inside a chimney. It should be checked prior to the first use of a stove or fireplace so home-

owners can be certain it opens and closes smoothly.

- Clear out flammable items. Move flammable items away from the front of a fireplace or stove. Be sure curtains or other home furnishings are far enough away that they will not catch fire from any errant sparks or flames.

- Order wood now. Be sure there is plenty of wood for the season. Ask a wood supplier to estimate just how much will be needed, and double-check that the wood will arrive in time for the start of the season.

By preparing for fireplace and wood stove use now, homeowners can ensure their winters are comfortable and safe.

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## HOME IMPROVEMENT

# How to avoid the cold of a drafty house

For those who live in older homes, the transition to colder weather can be extra disheartening, as the vision of expensive heating bills, chilly rooms and drafty windows dance in their heads. However, it's easy to change the outlook from cold to cozy with a few simple DIY solutions.

The most effective way to improve the comfort level in your home is to properly insulate. Insulation can be inadequate in older homes. Over time, it can settle and compact, creating gaps. Topping up attic insulation will help keep the warm air in, reducing heating bills and preventing stress on your furnace. For easy installation, homeowners and professionals alike recommend a stone wool batt insulation product called



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Roxul Comfortbatt. For attics, aim for an r-value of R-50 or a depth of 16 inches.

A little preparation can go a long way to keep the cold at bay.

Seal out drafts by replacing worn weatherstripping and caulking along windows, doors,

baseboards and trim. For other ways to beat the cold, consider inexpensive window insulation kits along with thicker drapes, and don't forget to reverse ceiling fans to push warm air back down.

*Article courtesy of Metro Creative*

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It's Time To Schedule Those Fall Projects



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