



# Home & Garden

March 2021  
A Special Supplement to **The Clinton Chronicle**



## Save time and money on spring home and personal essentials

(StatePoint) Keeping your household well-stocked of items you need to run things smoothly is essential, particularly during the spring cleaning season. But whether it's home improvement supplies or laundry necessities, selecting the best products may be a bit more challenging these days. Not only are new products introduced to store shelves all the time, if you're like many consumers, you're staying home more with fewer opportunities to compare products in-person.

While researching product reviews can help you discover what other consumers have already tried and loved, it can be a fairly time-consuming process. For quicker insights, consult crowd-sourcing resources like Product of the Year USA, the largest consumer-voted award for product innovation. With product winners determined by a national study conducted by Kantar, a global leader in consumer research, 40,000 consumers have voted on the best products for 2021.

"When shopping online or in-store, look for the Product of the Year red seal of approval to quickly spot the best new products," says Mike Nolan, Global CEO, Product of the Year. "Our process of polling 40,000 independent voters means you can genuinely trust the seal, saving you time and money while you shop."

As you stock up on spring household essentials and personal items, consider trying these 20 Product of the Year winners, which stood out in their respective categories:

- Car Care: Rain-X Glass Water-Repellent
- Cat Care: Pro Plan LiveClear
- CBD Pet: Paw CBD 300 mg Peanut-But-

ter Hard Chews

- Dish Care: Dawn Powerwash Dish Spray
- Dryer Sheet: Bounce Pet Hair and Lint Guard Mega Dryer Sheets
- Electric Toothbrush: hum by Colgate Smart Rechargeable Electric Toothbrush
- Green Laundry: all free clear Pure
- Hair Color: Schwarzkopf Color Boost
- Hair Styling: Remington Pro 1" Multi-Styler with Twist & Curl Technology
- Hard Surface Cleaning: Microban 24 Sanitizing Spray
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- Laundry Enhancer: Snuggle SuperCare Scent Booster
- Laundry Pacs: Tide Hygienic Clean Heavy Duty 10X Power PODS
- Liquid Fabric Conditioner: Downy Intense Scent + Freshness, Spring Rush
- Liquid Laundry: Tide Hygienic Clean Free & Gentle Liquid Heavy Duty
- Natural Cleaning System: H2O e3 Cleaning System
- Oral Care: Crest Whitening Emulsions with Wand Applicator
- Oral Hygiene: Colgate Keep Replaceable Head Manual Toothbrush
- Outdoor Cleaning: Carbona Pro Care Oxy Powered Outdoor Cleaner
- Tableware: Hefty ECOSAVE

Navigating store aisles for the best and most effective products can be overwhelming, particularly when you're not physically in the store. To feel more sure of your choices, lean on the wisdom of thousands of other consumers.

## 3 hacks to make spring cleaning a breeze

(StatePoint) Time for your annual spring clean? Make sure you're equipped with the right tools and strategies. Here are a few cleaning hacks to help ensure a smooth and easy process.

### De-Clutter First

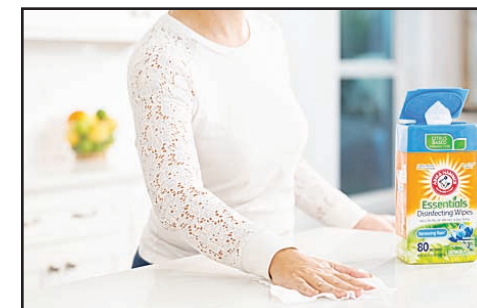
Reducing clutter in your home means fewer objects to launder, dust and wipe down, and should be the first step of your spring clean. Start with dressers and closets. As the seasons change, you'll likely be reorganizing them anyway in order to stow winter items away while making spring and summer garments readily accessible.

As you do your seasonal swap, have bags and labels on-hand to sort items by what you are keeping, what you plan to donate, and what needs to be recycled or discarded. Use the same organizational method to pare down knickknacks, books and other odds and ends as you tackle pantries, shelving and more. Take this opportunity to wipe down shelving, particularly surface areas with food, dust and other residue build-up.

### Streamline Your Clean

These days, disinfecting high-traffic areas of the home should be top of mind. However, it doesn't have to be complicated. Streamline the task by selecting cleaning products that are safe for use on a wide variety of household surfaces, and can be used around kids and pets.

Consider stocking your cleaning arsenal



with an easy-to-use product such as ARM & HAMMER Essentials Disinfecting Wipes, which kills cold and flu viruses, along with MRSA, strep, staph, E. coli, salmonella and kleb. Available in Lemon Orchard and Renewing Rain scents, these wipes provide citrus-based disinfection that clean without harsh chemicals, and are safe for use on stainless steel, sealed granite, finished hardwood, tubs, shower walls, toilet exteriors and hard non-porous surfaces of car interiors. To learn more, visit [armandhammercleans.com](http://armandhammercleans.com).

### Use Household Items

A true deep clean is not just about what meets the eye, it's also about what meets the nose. Unfortunately, certain nooks and crannies of the home have a sneaky habit of odor build-up. Squash problem areas with a versatile, essential item you probably already have

**Hacks, Page 7**

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## How to prepare your home for any emergency

(StatePoint) While no one wants to dwell on worst-case scenarios, the last year has in many ways illustrated that there are no certainties in life. Preparing your home to handle a wide range of emergency scenarios will offer you peace of mind now and keep your family safe in the future.

To get prepped, start with the essentials. With sufficient fuel, water, food and other necessities, you can ride out potential emergency scenarios. Here's how to collect and store these items safely and securely:

### Water

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends storing at least one gallon of water per person per day for 14 days so that in the event of an emergency that affects water supply, you'll have enough for both drinking and sanitation.

When it comes to long-term storage though, standard plastic bottles are not ideal as they degrade over time, compromising water quality and safety. Instead, consider taking a cue from the military. Standard issue to U.S. and Canadian Armed Forces, Scepter Military Water Cans hold 5 gallons and are made from rugged, high-density polyethylene. BPA-free, they keep chemicals, odors and tastes out of your water; corrosion- and fungus-resistant, water also stays clean and safe. And because they are virtually indestructible and can withstand extreme weather conditions, they can pull double-duty and come with you on camping trips, sports expeditions and other adventures. Millions of these containers have been used around the world by U.S. Armed Forces and are now available to consumers, making them a must-have for any emergency supply kit.

### Fuel

Homeowners should have a fresh supply

of gasoline, diesel and kerosene so they can operate generators, chainsaws and other tools often needed during and after emergencies. Fuel containers should be stored in secure, dry locations away from heat sources, pets and easy access to children. You should also be sure to select containers that exceed ASTM and CPSC minimum standards, such as the SmartControl fuel containers from Scepter, available in 1-, 2- and 5-gallon sizes. These high-density polyethylene containers feature an innovative spout design that helps save fuel when it's needed most by eliminating messy spills. For high-capacity needs, the 14-gallon wheeled Scepter Duramax offers a safe and convenient refueling choice.

### Food

The CDC recommends storing at least a three-day supply of food for emergency scenarios. Be sure these are items with a very long shelf life that don't require refrigeration or cooking. They should also meet the dietary needs of all household members. Periodically check your supply to ensure expiration dates have not passed and refresh items as needed. To avoid spoilage and odors, store food in airtight containers away from petroleum products and heat.

Of course, other important essentials should also be in your emergency kit, such as batteries, flashlights, first aid supplies and prescription medications. For a comprehensive emergency supply list, visit [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov).

Don't wait until there's a problem to get your ducks in a row. By that time it's often too late, with essentials gone from store shelves. Preparing your home today can offer you peace of mind now, and comfort and safety in an emergency.

## 5 reasons agrihoods will keep growing in 2021

Amid all the 2020 changes we would like to put in the rear-view mirror are a few trends that will bring long-term benefits. Agrihoods such as Olivette are designed to optimize these.

**Olivette** is Western North Carolina's first and only agrihood. The 346-acre community also features gardens, an extensive trail system, a dog park, an island park, and riverfront access. Here are five reasons more people will choose agrihoods:

**Community:** The pandemic has boosted interest in more sustainable, self-sufficient lifestyles in communities that share values and an atmosphere of trust and connection. "We've designed our community to foster connections between neighbors," Allison Smith says. "People sit on their front porches and visit with neighbors as they are out walking by. It's an old-school approach, but it really works well now."

**Food Security:** More than ever, people want to know exactly where their food comes from. Agrihoods such as Olivette provide locally sourced produce to residents and surrounding communities through Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs.

**Work and Play From Home:** More people are seeking to live in natural outdoor settings where they enjoy healthy recreation in their backyards. With easy access to a beautiful natural environment, along with high-speed internet, Olivette residents can work from home while using time they might otherwise spend commuting enjoying nature and their families.

**Empowered Living:** By intentionally choosing communities that deliver for their health and well-being, agrihood residents enjoy a sense of control over their lives and increased quality of life.

**Sustainability:** Every home in Olivette is required to use a geothermal heat pump and meet guidelines for energy-efficient construction to achieve a Home Energy Rating Score of 55 or lower. Some homeowners have gone a step further to build "net zero" homes that use solar cells to generate enough energy to offset what they consume.

"We're inspired to create a new model for living that creates food security, reduces our consumption of natural resources, and lightens our impact on the planet — and within that, create opportunities for people to be connected through their passions," Allison says.



## 8 tips for a successful home renovation

(StatePoint) Thinking of remodeling your home? From safety and security to product and contractor selection, there are many factors to consider.

Follow these eight remodeling tips to help minimize hassles during a renovation:

1. Create a budget. Create a project budget and set a spending limit. Whether you plan to utilize savings, home equity loan, line of credit or free up funds through refinancing, now is the time to identify how you will finance the project, and how much you want to spend.

2. Prepare the house. Before work starts, clear all spaces where professionals will be working, as well as walkways they will use to access these areas. Remove valuables and breakables to avoid damage and cover furniture in areas where paint or dust could harm upholstery. Keep other considerations in mind. For example, if you're renovating the kitchen, you may need to create a temporary food prep area.

3. Work with reputable professionals. When selecting a contractor, be sure they have references, certification and an understanding of the project. For example, when tackling window and door projects, Andersen Windows, Inc. recommends hiring an Andersen Certified Contractor to do the job. These contractors receive product training, installation resources, offer an exclusive 2-year limited installation warranty, and their expertise and experience in an extensive range of residential projects means they're able to capture your vision for your home and work with you to provide the right products.

Bottom line: working with reputable professionals makes all the difference in the qual-

ity of the work and the materials used to complete the project.

4. Schedule wisely. Choose a timeframe for your home renovation that best fits your busy schedule. Keep in mind that unforeseen circumstances can sometimes cause delays. Build this into the timeline so you're not taken by surprise.

5. Address safety. Talk to your contractor about what COVID-19 measures they practice to help keep customers and employees safe. Find out whether they're following CDC guidelines for businesses, including always wearing a mask, social distancing whenever possible and frequent hand washing. Also, ask if they offer virtual consultations that allow you to start the process contact-free.

6. Add or update your security system. With professionals frequently coming in and out of your home, a home renovation may be a good time to add or update your security system with reprogrammable smart locks. Offering more convenience and greater control, the Yale Assure Lock for Andersen patio and entry doors for example, is a sleek, key-free entry lock that makes it easy to grant access to contractors for limited periods of time, lock and unlock doors from anywhere and monitor from afar.

7. Communicate openly and effectively. If a renovation is done correctly, you may never need to repeat the process. This makes open and honest communication with your home renovation team essential. Be sure to share your vision and to ask questions as they arise. At the same time, expect the professionals working with you to communicate regularly

# Spring maintenance checklist for homeowners

(StatePoint) As the weather warms, there are a few maintenance tasks every homeowner should consider completing. Use this checklist as your guide:

## Outdoor Upkeep

- Wash window exteriors for a better view.
- Clean gutters and downspouts to ensure proper water flow. Neglecting this task for too long can cause rot, mold and damage to your foundation.
- Get your patio or deck in tip-top shape for outdoor living. Sweep and hose it down. Remove patio furnishings from storage. Wipe down surfaces and vacuum cushions (or launder them if they're machine washable).
- Inspect lawn equipment and tools for needed maintenance, repair and fuel refills.
- Mow the lawn. Trim the edges.
- After the next rainfall, inspect your yard for standing water, which can damage your home and invite mosquitoes. Consider hiring a landscaper to level out an uneven lawn.

## HVAC Maintenance

- Change HVAC filters at least once each season (ideally monthly). Dirty filters make equipment work harder and cause more wear and tear on equipment. They also increase your energy bill and lessen indoor air quality.



ity.

- According to Energy Star, 20-30 percent of the air that moves through the duct system of a typical home is lost due to leaks, holes and poorly connected ducts. Consider professional duct sealing for improved energy efficiency and lower bills.
- Check to see whether your furnaces and air conditioners bear the ENERGY STAR logo. If not, consider a new unit. A properly sized and installed ENERGY STAR air conditioner uses up to 20 percent less electricity

than older models, and doing so may make you eligible for a Federal Tax Credit.

- Have a technician give your home's cooling system a pre-season tune-up so that everything is running efficiently by the time warmer weather arrives. You know the "personality" of your heating or cooling unit best, so be prepared to provide the technician with important information. No fact is insignificant, as it may help them diagnose and fix a problem.

- Be sure that all HVACR installation and

maintenance is performed only by a qualified professional. Read company reviews and ask the contractor if they have technicians certified by North American Technician Excellence (NATE). NATE-certified technicians have demonstrated knowledge of today's increasingly sophisticated heating and cooling systems. To find a NATE-certified technician in your area, visit Natex.org.

## Safety

- Carbon monoxide, often referred to as the "silent killer," is odorless, colorless and tasteless. Protect your family by changing the batteries on your carbon monoxide detectors and ensuring you have a detector on each level of your home. When changing a furnace filter, make sure the new filter is correctly positioned and the access panel is securely fastened. Have your home's furnace inspected and serviced annually by a NATE-certified technician.

- Likewise, test all the smoke alarms in your home and replace batteries as needed. The National Fire Protection Association recommends smoke alarms on every level of the home, including every sleeping room and outside each separate sleeping area.

A little seasonal maintenance can go a long way to a safer, more beautiful and more eco-friendly home.

## Affordable tips for spring decorations and celebrations

(StatePoint) The arrival of spring brings with it warming temperatures, blooming flowers and endless springtime celebrations. It is also an opportunity to try something new, whether it is in the garden, kitchen or around the home.

To help find the fun this season, the experts at Dollar General are offering some affordable spring tips and tricks for celebrating and decorating.

### Decorations to Spring into the Season

Celebrate spring holidays with extra flair around the home. From adding a colorful vase of flowers to the coffee table, a new wreath on the front door or new pastel-colored pillows for the couch, seasonal decorative touches can help provide a fresh look and pops of color to any home. Consider adding festive holiday-themed decorations too, like a centerpiece filled with plastic eggs on the dining room table.

### The Season of New Beginnings

As they say, April showers bring May flowers. To celebrate the season of new beginnings, set some time aside to plan out this season's garden with fresh flowers, as well as fruits and vegetables to enjoy all summer long. Spruce up your home's outdoor spaces by painting flowerpots bright new colors and by adding new outdoor or solar lights. With longer days



approaching, having the perfect outdoor oasis may invite everyone to spend more time outside.

### Try out a Seasonal Spring Recipe

Spring can also be the perfect time to try out a new recipe, whether it is a new side, main dish or a sweet seasonal dessert. Get some inspiration from DG Easy Meals, which provides meal ideas that anyone in the family can try out, including "Better For You" recipes that offer healthier food choices using ingredients readily found at DG stores. Featured recipes include a BBQ chicken salad perfect for a spring cookout, an apple slaw with honey mustard vinaigrette to complement any week-night dinner and pink bunny cupcakes that can be assembled as a tasty activity for kids.

By freshening up home decor, creating a dreamy outdoor space or trying out the latest spring recipes, everyone can affordably find something to be excited for this spring.

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## Should you buy or sell a home in 2021? Here's what to know

(StatePoint) While the roll-out of the COVID-19 vaccine has left a lot of question marks about the future of the U.S. economy at-large, analysts expect the housing market to remain strong and stable in the coming year.

“Despite the uncertainties of the pandemic, the housing market performed well in the second half of 2020,” says Sam Khater, Freddie Mac’s chief economist. “Low mortgage rates and the ability to work remotely continued to propel demand for housing, which is reflected in home sales reaching levels not seen in 15 years.”

Whether you’re a potential homebuyer, a current homeowner or considering selling, here are some of the biggest takeaways of Freddie Mac’s Quarterly Forecast:

- Interest rates are likely to remain low. The average 30-year fixed-rate mortgage (FRM) hit a record low over a dozen times in 2020. The low interest rate environment is projected to continue through 2021, with the 30-year FRM expected to average below 3 percent. Low rates are good news for buyers looking to purchase a home, and homeowners looking to reduce their mortgage payment through refinancing.

- Home sales to remain high. The demand for housing is expected to remain strong in 2021, creating a favorable market for sellers. Last year, low mortgage rates and the ability to work remotely drove up

home sales (the measure of the number of homes sold every month). This year, home sales are expected to ride that wave, averaging 6.5 million for the year.

- House prices to grow moderately. In the second half of 2020, the high volume of home sales and low supply of housing drove up house prices. In 2021, house price growth is expected to moderate for the full year.

- Refinances to start declining. Low mortgage rates spurred refinance activity in 2020, boosting mortgage originations (the process in which borrowers apply for a home loan) to historic highs. As mortgage rates rise modestly in 2021, refinance activity should start to slow. “While many homeowners took advantage of these low rates in last year, evidence suggests that many lower income homeowners still have the opportunity to strengthen their financial position by refinancing,” says Khater.

For more insights on housing, visit [freddiemac.com/research](http://freddiemac.com/research). For homebuying and homeownership resources, visit My Home by Freddie Mac.

Many of the trends that shaped the market last year, especially historically low mortgage rates, will continue to drive housing activity in 2021. As you embark on your journey towards your home goals, be sure to have a firm understanding of today’s market conditions.

## Hacks

### From 2

on hand -- baking soda. Place an opened box in your fridge to absorb unwanted odors, swapping it out every month or so. Do the same in pantries where food items like onions and garlic are stored in order to neutralize their strong smells. You might also try using ARM & HAMMER Garbage Disposal Cleaner,

which are capsules containing baking soda. Leaving behind a citrus scent, they are a useful tool in combatting kitchen sink odors.

A few essentials and some smart cleaning strategies is all you need to give your home some TLC this spring.

## Amp up your spring cleaning routine with these hacks

(StatePoint) Spring is a great time to refresh your home. Whether you’re planning a major clean sweep or just giving problem areas a little extra TLC, experts say that a few simple strategies will make the job easier and the fruits of your labor last longer.

“When tackling your spring cleaning, checklists are key. The best thing you can do is to plan ahead and make sure you have everything you need to get the job done, which will save loads of time. Second, work room by room until each area is clean. Jumping place to place makes accomplishments take longer and it’s harder to see big results,” says Erin Chase, founder of 5DollarDinners.com, mom of four and “Cleanflu-

encer” for AIEn USA.

To make larger spring cleaning tasks easier and keep your house smelling fresh every day, Chase is sharing her top hacks to get the best results from those larger cleaning tasks:

1. Create cleaning caddies for every bathroom, the kitchen and garage. Having all of your supplies ready for quick touchups and cleaning saves tons of time.

“For super fast touchups, I keep a canister of cleaning wipes handy. I prefer naturally-derived Art of Green wipes because they seriously cut through scum, and the scents are amazing. Best of all, they’re safe for use

Cleaning, Page 10

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## How and why to build a raised garden bed this season

(StatePoint) Fairly easy to construct and even easier to maintain, raised garden beds are a great way to raise plants and vegetables in the comfort and convenience of your backyard.

In a recent episode of the Exmark Original Series, “Done-in-A-Weekend-Extreme,” landscape designer and show host, Doug Scott, spoke to organic gardener Joe Lamp’l of “Growing a Greener World” about the ins and outs of raised garden beds.

Here are some of the top insights and tips Lamp’l shared.

- Why use raised garden beds? A raised garden bed can help facilitate the ideal growing environment, as most people don’t have that perfect soil naturally in their yard. Their accessibility makes them easier to work in and maintain. Plus, they’re a nice architectural design element in any landscape.

- What’s the ideal size? The main rule of the thumb applies to width. The bed should be no wider than 4 feet, as you never want to compact the soil when working. Length however, is based on personal preference and needs. As far as height is concerned, you want the roots to be able to grow out and down as much as possible -- 6-inches at minimum. While 12-inches is common, anything higher is a bonus.

- What materials work best? Treated lumber is the most readily available and economical material and will likely last the longest, however, being an organic gardener Lamp’l prefers untreated hardwood, as it lasts almost as long and doesn’t contain chemicals. Other materials you have around the home and yard, such as rocks, old tubs, etc., can work too.

- Where’s the best location? Build your raised garden bed on level ground, in full sun exposure near a water supply.

### DIY Instructions:

To build a 10-foot x 4-foot x 18-inch raised bed, you’ll need:

- Nine 6-inch x 6-inch x 12-foot cedar timbers

- Tape measure, t-square and marking pencil

- A saw and extension cord
- One box of 10-inch heavy-duty exterior wood screws

- Ten 24-inch x 1/2-inch rebar stakes
- Twenty 10-inch galvanized timber spikes
- Sledgehammer
- Impact drill and long drill bit
- Level
- Hammer
- Shovels
- Hardware cloth, wire cutters and fence staples

- Work gloves, safety glasses and ear plugs
- Wheelbarrow (to transport soil)

1. Begin by cutting six, 6 x 6 timbers, each measuring 10-feet 6-inches in length. And six, 6 x 6 timbers, each measuring 4-feet 6-inches in length. Drill rebar holes in each timber.

2. Once the first layer of bed has been placed, leveled and squared in your desired location, fasten the corners using 10-inch wood screws. Secure the entire layer to the ground with 10 pieces of rebar.

3. Place the second layer of timbers, staggering the corners and fastening them with wood screws. Secure this layer to the first with ten 10-inch galvanized spikes.

4. Install galvanized cloth to prevent burrowing pests from eating earthworms and destroying plants.

5. Place the third layer of timbers (following above directions.)

6. Fill with soil and plants.

For more tips and complete build instructions, check out “How to Build Raised Garden Beds” by visiting [Exmark.com/backyard](http://Exmark.com/backyard). Exmark’s Backyard Life is part of a unique multimedia destination with a focus on helping homeowners make the most of their backyard. There you can also access other series, including “Prime Cuts” and “Dream Yards.”

For an amazing crop this season, take a cue from the professionals and build a raised garden bed for best results.

# Home

## From 4

and address all your concerns.

8. Get a return on your investment. Prioritize projects that will potentially raise the resale value of your home. According to FortuneBuilders, the top 10 greatest returns on investment for home renovations include

bathroom and kitchen remodels, landscaping, replacing entry doors and replacing windows. It also helps to select products that come with transferrable warranties. This will give your property a tangible leg-up on the market when it’s time to sell.



## Birds attacking your windows? Here’s how you can stop it

(StatePoint) If you’ve ever noticed a bird attack your windows, you may wonder why this strange behavior is occurring. Beyond the potential disruption it might cause your family, repeated attacks can be harmful to birds. Understanding the problem however, can help you put a stop to it, and better protect the birds nesting on your property.

### The Problem

Many birds will stake out a territory, perhaps by your home, and vigorously defend it. If a territorial bird discovers its reflection in your window, it may perceive this reflection to be another bird competing for its territory and mate, compelling the bird to attack. This attack of its own reflection can take the form of pecking or scratching at your window, as well as flying up and banging into your window. When repeated, these actions deplete a bird’s energy and put its health and the health of its nesting young at risk. Though this can occur at any time of year, it happens most often in spring, with males.

### A Solution

You can help stop this problem from occurring. One good solution designed to do

so is Stop Bird Attack, a removable, white coating that may be sprayed on any window. It eliminates the bird’s window reflection, calms the bird and stops the attack. Effective for Northern Cardinals, American Robins, California Towhees and other territorial birds, Stop Bird Attack is made by WindowAlert, a brand that also makes bird window decals and UV Liquid products that help prevent bird strikes (another common hazard to birds). More information can be found by visiting [windowalert.com](http://windowalert.com).

### Take it a Step Further

While you are at it, consider other dangers to birds that you can eliminate on your property. For example, by swapping out conventional pesticides with essential oils, you can ward off pests in your garden without putting birds at risk. You might also try keeping pet cats indoors or in an enclosure to prevent them from attacking birds.

“While your home’s windows can be an unexpected hazard to birds, it’s important to be aware of the easy solutions that can help keep them safe this spring nesting season and beyond,” says Spencer Schock, founder of WindowAlert.





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## 3 easy design tips to deep clean and organize your kitchen

(StatePoint) Over the last year, our kitchens have become a place where we prep for an important presentation, help with schoolwork, cook meals together and laugh with friends at a virtual party.

All this time in the kitchen can also mean it becomes the catch-all room for everything and everyone, making now the perfect time to create a functional space where items are easily accessible and organized with your routine in mind. From your refrigerator to that messy junk drawer, follow these DIY kitchen organization tips to revamp and refresh this part of your home.

Design an easy-to-use (and clean) layout. Cooking at home more? You'll want to clean and organize your fridge to make snack time and meal prep easier. Start by removing every item from shelves and drawers and toss any items that have expired. Once it's completely empty, give your fridge a deep clean, especially in those sticky back corners.

Before you return the items, place a water-resistant liner like Clear Classic EasyLiner on the shelves to add an extra layer of protection. Its smooth surface makes cleaning up a breeze when there are leaks and spills. Think about your most-used items, like snacks and veggies, and place them toward the front so they are easy to see and grab. Storing these foods using clear, labeled containers will help you track inventory and keep food neatly in order.

Upgrade your backsplash. Tired of white walls in the background of your virtual work call? One easy and affordable way to instantly elevate the look of your kitchen is to decorate with removable wallpaper or DIY

peel-and-stick vinyl.

From polka dot to vinyl wood, choose a pattern that speaks to you. Then, stick the adhesive vinyl to a kitchen surface—the side of a kitchen island, the wall behind the sink or cabinet panels. Once you're ready to switch things up, they peel off easily, so you'll be ready to go for a different look! Another tried and true option to brighten walls is paint. Use a quality painter's tape to tape off a design you love, then paint over it. Peel back the tape to reveal a DIY design you'll adore.

Create a clutter-less junk drawer. Everyone has that one, or even two, drawers in their kitchen that house random items that accumulate over time. Master unwanted mess and add functionality and style to your junk drawer with a little organization.

First, pull everything out of the drawer and toss anything that's broken or you simply no longer need. Next, line the area with Original Grip EasyLiner to keep your mail, important notes and utensils in the right place while protecting the surface from scratches. Once you've purged, add small compartments and drawer organizers to give the misfits of the kitchen a proper home.

If you have limited space, use a wall-mount storage rack or over-the-cabinet organizer to free up drawer space and keep items within easy reach.

For additional tips or to find the right organizational solutions, try the EasyLiner Guide or visit DuckBrand.com.

Once you've completed these simple tips and tricks in the kitchen, you'll feel refreshed and organized to take on the day.



## Cleaning

### From 7

around kids and pets and protect sensitive skin," says Chase.

2. "Clean" your cleaning supplies. Deodorize your mop by adding 3/4 cups Pinalen Original to a gallon of water, soak your mop for an hour, scrub and rinse.

"I switched to Pinalen Original because it is made with real pine oil, which makes it a powerful multipurpose cleaner. Plus, I love the scent," adds Chase.

3. To really disinfect and deep clean non-porous floors, add 1/3 cup of CLORALEN Disinfectant Bleach to 1.5 gallons of water and mop or scrub and let dry. You'll be surprised what comes off and how much they'll sparkle.

4. To sanitize countertops, kitchen sinks

and the outside of appliances, mix 1 tablespoon of bleach with 1 gallon of water and apply. Let stand for at least two minutes and dry.

5. To clean baseboards without bending and crawling, rubber band a microfiber cloth over the bristles of a broom. Spray the cloth with your favorite cleaner and scrub. No aching back!

6. To make an easy shower door scum remover: mix four parts water to one part fabric softener like Ensueño Max, spray onto scum, wipe off with a sponge and rinse with warm water.

With a plan of attack and the right tools and strategies, your spring clean can be fast, efficient and painless.



## Renovating your home? How to protect your investment

(StatePoint) The increased time spent at home during the pandemic has resulted in many people deciding to tackle home renovation projects. From creating a new office space or virtual learning area, to larger projects like bathroom renovations, many homeowners are rolling up their sleeves to do the improvements themselves.

And the trend doesn't seem to be slowing down. In fact, the Leading Indicator of Remodeling Activity (LIRA) projects the remodeling industry will be even stronger in 2021, up 3.8% compared to 2020. During the pandemic, homeowners have fixed up or added on decks, updated landscaping and installed new roofs, among other projects. According to HomeAdvisor's latest annual State of Home Spending report, the number one completed project was interior painting – 35% of households painted in 2020, making a visual

impact with a low investment.

What's on your to-do list? If you're considering an upgrade but not sure where to start, check out the results of a national survey by Erie Insurance, conducted prior to the pandemic, which revealed what homeowners don't have, but wish they did. Here are the top five:

1. Walk-in pantry: This topped the list with just under a third of respondents (30%) saying they wish they had one. Kitchen renovations are typically on wish lists, and Houzz reported that demand for kitchen remodelers was up 40% in June 2020 compared to the year prior.

2. Granite countertops: 17.8%
3. Kitchen island: 16.8%
4. Tankless water heater: 16.4%
5. Finished basement: 16.2%

**Protect, Page 11**



## Ready, set...refresh! Quick tips to revitalize your most-used spaces

(StatePoint) Have the cold winter months left your home feeling a bit dirty, drab or disorganized? Are you feeling the urge to purge? Then it's time for some spring cleaning. With a few simple tips and tricks, your home—and mood—can be refreshed and revitalized.

For the biggest payoff for your efforts, focus spring cleaning in the areas of the home that are used most: the kitchen and bathroom.

**Clear kitchen clutter:** According to research from the Mayo Clinic, de-cluttering can have a significant positive effect on your mental health and well-being.

To start your refresh, toss anything that's expired or no longer being used. Use a wall-mount spice rack to free up shelf space and keep ingredients within easy reach. Add sanity to the silverware drawer by giving all gadgets their own spaces with Spectrum HEXA In-Drawer Organizers. HEXA organizers feature a unique, six-sided honeycomb base design that offers a sturdy foundation while allowing crumbs to fall through its base away from clean utensils. Simply, "lift and sift" to clean drawers.

**Labels & liners:** Add a new level of organization and personalization to cabinets, drawers and even wire racks with shelf liners. Available in a variety of colors and patterns, they offer a smooth top and grip bottom for easy sliding of items. Plus, the smooth surface catches messes and spills, making clean-up a breeze. Next, create custom labels for organizer bins with chalkboard or dry erase adhesives from Duck brand. For wire racks, add shelf liner to the bottom to hold items in place.

**Get savvy at the sink:** Next, move to one of the germiest areas of the kitchen: the sink.

To keep this area neat and clean, add an organizer (such as Spectrum HEXA Sink Organizer, which has a built-in soap pump) to keep all cleaning essentials—sponges and brushes—upright and dry and help resist the growth of bacteria. Excess water is captured in the base, which can be easily removed and wiped clean. Finally, place a raised mat in your sink basin to encourage air and water flow for faster drying, and to provide extra cushion for fragile glassware.

**Banish bathroom battles:** From towels to toiletries, bathrooms collect a lot of "stuff." Keep the daily-use items and purge the rest. If you have limited shower space, use a suction shower basket or shower caddy to hold shampoo and soaps. Add an over-the-tank toilet paper holder to store extra bath tissue and keep it out of the way. Just like the kitchen, utilize small baskets or HEXA in-drawer organizers to keep everything from makeup to medicine easily accessible and in the right place.

**Conquer clutter cords:** Conquer cords and countertop clutter by utilizing vertical spaces. Add shelves to walls to hold towels or smaller items, and add over-the-cabinet accessory baskets to the insides of cabinet doors. These easy-to-install organizers keep items like your blow dryer, straightener and curling iron out of sight, but within arm's reach, for a faster morning routine.

For more unique organizational products, visit [www.spectrumdiversified.com](http://www.spectrumdiversified.com) and follow the conversation at #LiveLifeOrganized.

Soon, with a bit of cleaning and organization focused in key areas of your home, you'll be feeling refreshed and revitalized this spring.

## Protect

### From 10

Regardless of the new features or upgrades you choose, it's important to let your insurance agent know so you can make sure you have enough homeowners insurance coverage.

"We understand how important the home is; that's why we provide coverage to suit every home and budget," says Bob Buckel, vice president and product manager at Erie Insurance. "Our variety of optional endorsements helps you customize your policy without breaking the bank."

Consider expanding your coverage beyond the standard homeowners policy with endorsements – like equipment breakdown to

cover that new tankless water heater. They can also cover stolen or misplaced jewelry, sewer or drain backups, cyber-crimes, identity theft and underground service lines. Adding these extra coverages to your home policy can provide you with the comfort knowing all the extra work you put into sprucing up your home will be protected. To make sure you have what you need for your home and everything in it, talk to an insurance agent or visit [ErieInsurance.com](http://ErieInsurance.com).

Making home updates can be as big or small an endeavor as you like. If you do take the plunge, be sure you protect your investment.



## Own a home in SC? Here are tax tips for SC homeowners

If you're a South Carolina homeowner and want to save money on your tax bill, the South Carolina Department of Revenue (SCDOR) wants you to know about tax credits that may be available.

All South Carolina tax credits related to home ownership are nonrefundable, meaning they cannot reduce your tax liability below zero. Each of the credits applies to specific circumstances. Review the facts in your situation to see if any of the credits detailed below apply.

**Certified Historic Residential Structure Credit:** Taxpayers who rehabilitate a certified historic residential structure in SC are eligible for the credit, which is limited to 25% of restoration expenses, which must exceed \$15,000 within 36 months. The credit must be taken over a three-year period and has a five-year carryforward. Use form TC-22 to claim the credit.

**Residential Retrofit Credit:** This credit is for individuals who retrofit their legal residence to be more resistant to hurricanes, floods, or catastrophic wind damage. Taxpayers can claim the lesser of 25% of the costs or \$1,000. Also, taxpayers can claim up to \$1,500 in Sales and Use Tax paid on purchases of qualifying tangible personal property. Use form TC-43 to claim the credit.

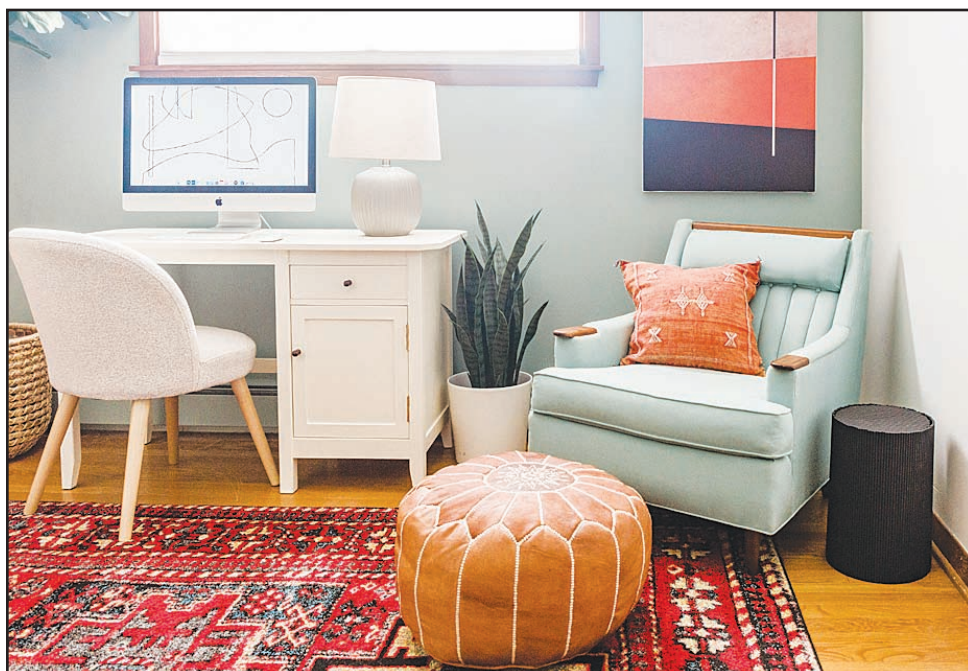
**Excess Insurance Premium Credit:** Individ-

uals who pay residential property and casualty insurance premiums in excess of 5% of their adjusted gross income qualify for this credit. The credit is limited to \$1,250 and has a five-year carryforward. Use form TC-44 to claim the credit.

**Energy Efficient Manufactured Home Credit:** Taxpayers who buy a manufactured home that meets or exceeds the energy-saving efficiency requirements or Energy Star program requirements of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency or U.S. Department of Energy may claim this credit. The credit is limited to \$750 and requires a certification letter from the South Carolina Energy Office. Use form TC-53 to claim the credit.

**Solar energy, small hydropower system, or geothermal machinery and equipment credit:** This credit is for those who own and install a solar energy system, small hydropower system, or geothermal machinery and equipment. The system must be used for heating water, air cooling, energy generation, space heating, heat reclamation or energy demand response. The credit is limited to 25% of the cost of purchasing and installing the system. The credit can't exceed \$3,500 for each facility or 50% of tax liability. It has a carryforward of 10 years. Use form TC-38 to claim the credit.

Individual Income Tax returns are due April 15.



## Design do's & don'ts: Embrace the year's top interior design trends

(StatePoint) The COVID-19 pandemic permanently evolved our definition of “home,” inspiring us to reconsider how we use and live in our spaces. For many, it’s no longer just the place where we relax and regroup at the end of the day – it’s also an office, daycare, eatery, gym or classroom.

Whether you’re looking to create balance and boundaries between work and play or simply want to turn over a new leaf, there’s never been a more perfect time to commit to switching things up with major home design updates and DIY projects.

The thought of overhauling your home’s décor can be overwhelming, but finding inspiration in the year’s top trends – like the annual 2021 Design Trends developed by FrogTape in collaboration with celebrity interior designer Taniya Nayak – can help take the pressure off.

Follow these do’s and don’ts to achieve professional results while embracing 2021’s top interior design trends.

1. Do: Create a personal sanctuary. We could all use an in-home sanctuary where we can retreat, rest and ease our minds from uncertainty and anxiety. From a dedicated meditation room to a simple, quiet corner, using cozy layers and soothing colors can establish a tranquil environment to ground you on even the most hectic days.

2. Don’t: Shy away from colors. Don’t be afraid to incorporate colors in your home décor – especially in spaces designated for happy activities like after-work cocktails or fun with kids and pets. Vivid greens, pinks and blues, inspired by the outdoors, fruity drinks and blue skies, evoke joyful emotions. Create a sense of fun in your playroom, backyard or patio by incorporating cheerful hues, playful accessories and bright textiles. Use a high-quality painter’s tape

like FrogTape to bring this trend to life with custom hand-painted planters or bold geometric accent walls.

3. Do: Use contrast to establish focal points. From adding a pop of bright color against a neutral tone to pairing light, airy textures against deep leathers, there are countless ways to create focal points using contrast throughout the home. This trend works especially well in kitchens, dining rooms and breakfast nooks. Embrace stunning, nature-inspired hues in eating areas by painting cabinets or an accent wall in a rich tone and displaying other colorful touches to catch your eye while you enjoy your meals.

4. Don’t: Settle for a dull work-from-home space. For those working from home into 2021 and beyond, establishing boundaries between work and play is critical. Whether you have a sprawling office or a small nook under a staircase, create a space that makes you excited to “go into work.” Combine neutral tones with punches of color to ignite your creativity while keeping you alert and focused throughout the day.

5. Do: Add your own personal twist. While design trends can serve as a great starting point to spark your inspiration, they’re meant to serve as more of a mood board than a rule book. Whether it’s a unique painting or an over-the-top accent wall, be sure to incorporate elements of your own style, interests and flair as you plan out your projects and designs.

To learn more about this year’s top interior design trends and how you can incorporate them in your upcoming home design updates, visit [FrogTape.com/Trends](https://www.frogtape.com/Trends).

With the right tools and inspiration, you can achieve professional results in your home redesign.

## 5 tips to get your garage organized – and keep it that way

(StatePoint) Is your garage in disarray? While you dream of a perfectly organized workbench or garage, your reality probably looks more like a sea of random toys, boxes and exercise equipment.

Every do-it-yourselfer knows a clean, organized garage is the key to efficient project planning and repairs around the home. As we head into warmer months, set aside the time to take charge of the space and finally create a sense of tidiness that will last year-round.

Follow these five tips to tame the mess and get your garage back in shape:

1. Invest in shelving that accommodates clear storage bins. When it comes to organizing and storing the assortment of cords, car care items, paint supplies and kid’s toys littering your garage, nothing does the job better than clear storage bins. Not only can you categorize items by project or activity type, you can also easily stack them to save space without sacrificing the ability to easily find what you need, when you need it. Invest in taller, wider shelving for the perimeter of the garage to accommodate your chosen bins.

2. Fix or dispose of anything broken or past its prime. There’s nothing worse than scrambling to find a specific tool or product in an urgent situation, only to realize it’s broken, damaged or dried out. As you organize, pay attention to textures, consistencies and expiration dates. Toss and replace any items that

have seen better days. For broken tools that seem salvageable, like cracked hoses or broken handles, reach for a professional grade, heavy-duty duct tape like T-Rex Tape to tackle the repair.

3. Utilize ceiling and wall space with hanging storage. From bicycles and skis to rakes and shovels, some equipment is better off stored up and out of your way. Install hanging racks or shelving above the area where you park your vehicles to store larger, heavier equipment, and use a double-sided mounting tape to attach hooks along the sides of your garage for lighter-weight items.

4. Stock up on the essentials so you can make repairs on the fly. While it’s great to have a wide assortment of tools and supplies, for many projects and repairs you really just need the basics – think max-strength waterproof tape, bungee cords, a hammer, nails and similar essentials. Use these items as the foundation of your garage workstation and stock up on extras to keep on-hand for emergencies, camping and other on-the-go uses.

5. Give everything a home. Aim to group supplies for similar activities, tasks and repairs together, giving each category a “home.” In addition to helping keep things organized in dedicated spaces, hanging frequently used tools and supplies on hooks or pegboard can

**Garage, Page 13**

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## 4 tips for reducing your plastic footprint at home

(StatePoint) Plastic contributes to climate change and is a major pollutant, harming wildlife and people. With Earth Day around the corner, here are a few tips for reducing your plastic footprint at home that will also contribute to a healthier planet.

### Start a Garden

From cartons of berries and tomatoes to individually-wrapped cucumbers, it can be difficult to avoid plastic in the produce aisle of your supermarket. By growing your favorite fruits, vegetables and herbs at home, you may avoid some of this waste and reduce your carbon footprint at the same time, as foods found in the store are often shipped from distant places.

### Keep Your Produce Green

When you do have to grab a staple that's not in your garden, bring some reusable produce bags with you. Check out this cute set from Food52's shop: [food52.com](http://food52.com). Then, stick to the loose fruits and veggies not already wrapped in plastic.

### Green Your Hydration

In the pursuit of having a constant source of great-tasting, healthy water at home, you may be stocking your fridge with bottled

water. However, bottled water contains microplastics and is a significant part of the global plastic waste problem. To stay hydrated healthfully and sustainably, use a water filter pitcher. One great option is the LifeStraw Home Glass Water Filter Pitcher, which protects against over 30 contaminants, including bacteria, parasites, microplastics, lead, mercury and chemicals, including PFAS and chlorine. To shop or learn more, visit [LifeStraw.com](http://LifeStraw.com), [Target.com](http://Target.com), or [Crate-andBarrel.com](http://Crate-andBarrel.com).

### Rethink Garbage Collection

Plastic garbage bags may seem necessary, but there are reusable alternatives available today that can help to drastically reduce your plastic waste. For example, Bagito makes durable, washable, water-resistant garbage can liners from 100 percent post-consumer recycled plastics. They are available in three sizes that are ideal for bathroom wastebaskets, kitchen-sized trash cans and outdoor debris bins.

By doing your part to find sustainable alternatives to single-use plastic, you can reduce your contribution to a global environmental crisis right at home.

## Garage

### From 12

make it easier to quickly scan the garage and find exactly what you need. Use your mounting tape to safely and securely create a space to store and display all your go-to items.

Interested in more solutions for all your home and DIY needs? Visit [www.trextape.com](http://www.trextape.com) for a wide variety of project and repair ideas.

Whether you're working on your car or tackling a weekend DIY project, having all your tools and supplies in order will make all the difference.



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# How to make smart grocery store purchases

(StatePoint) If you are like many consumers, it's important to you that you are stocking your pantry and refrigerator with foods, beverages and wellness products your family will love. However, being a careful shopper is particularly tricky these days, as you are likely getting in and out of the supermarket in a hurry or even staying home and ordering items online.

Whether shopping in-store or online, buying items that other consumers have already tested can save you time and money. For an inside look at what other shoppers love, check out resources like Product of the Year USA, the largest consumer-voted award for product innovation. All winning products are determined by a national study of 40,000 consumers conducted by Kantar, a global leader in consumer research.

"Being a savvy shopper doesn't require hours of research. It can be as simple as scanning shelves or online product listings for Product of the Year's red seal of approval," says Mike Nolan, Global CEO of Product of the Year Management. "The red seal can give you confidence in your purchase, because it means that the product is backed by the votes of over 40,000 shoppers."

Simplify grocery shopping by checking out the 19 Product of the Year food and beverage winners of 2021, listed by category:

- Alcohol: Uptown Cocktails
- Breakfast: ALDI-exclusive Aunt Maple's Protein Pancake Mix

- CBD Ingestible: cbdMD CBD Gummie
- CBD Personal Care: Medterra Pain Cream + CBD
- Cheese: ALDI-exclusive Emporium Selection 1,000 Day Gouda & 4 Year Cheddar
- Children's Wellness: Mucinex Children's FreeFrom
- Chips: ALDI-exclusive Simply Nature Bean Chips
- Coffee: ALDI-exclusive Friendly Farms Almondmilk Coffee Creamer
- Condiment: ALDI-exclusive Stonemill Everything Bagel Seasoning
- Convenience Meal: Del Monte Veggieful Pocket Pies
- Cookie: Keebler Chips Deluxe Original
- Eye Care: Systane Hydration PF
- Foot Care: Lotrimin Daily Prevention
- Fruit: Del Monte Deluxe Gold Pineapple
- Functional Beverage: Live Better Apple Cider Vinegar with Ginger & Turmeric
- Health & Wellness: Claritin Cool Mint Chewables
- Healthy Snack: ALDI-exclusive Clancy's White Cheddar Cheese Popcorn
- Sports Nutrition: POWERADE ULTRA
- VMS: Patchology Little Helpers
- Yogurt: ALDI-exclusive Specially Selected Indulgent Greek Yogurt

Feeling like a savvy shopper is harder than ever these days. To load your physical or virtual cart with confidence, let the recommendations of thousands of other consumers nationwide serve as your guide.



## Tips to stretch your dollar when household shopping

(StatePoint) Running a household on a budget? Smart shopping strategies can help your family save on favorite foods, wellness essentials and more.

To help make your next shopping excursion a success, check out these tips from the experts at Dollar General.

- Cleaning Supplies: Streamline spring cleaning -- and save money and space -- by opting for a multi-purpose cleaner that can be used throughout the home. Enjoy additional savings by purchasing extra of your favorite cleaning supplies when they're on sale.

- Groceries: At the beginning of each week, create a meal plan for your family. Mapping out your meals can help you avoid purchasing more than you need or items you don't want. Discount retailers, like Dollar General, are a great place for all the essentials, including spices, dairy, grains, bread, eggs, frozen and canned vegetables and proteins. Consider shopping with brands like Clover Valley that provide a 100 percent guarantee. Organize your visit to the store in advance by

checking out [DG.com/easymeals](https://www.dg.com/easymeals) to discover affordable recipe ideas and to create your shopping list on the brand's mobile app.

- Wellness Items: Self-care doesn't need to be costly. Before heading to a grocery store or pharmacy for wellness products, visit a general retailer first. From remedies for combating spring allergies to over-the-counter medications, vitamins, skincare and hair care products, the items you restock most frequently can be found for less at a general retailer than you might expect at a pharmacy or grocery store.

- Digital Savings: While physically clipping coupons may no longer be as common as it once was, additional ways to save are here to stay in the form of digital coupons. Take advantage of the savings opportunities digital coupons provide by visiting [coupons.dollargeneral.com](https://coupons.dollargeneral.com) to enroll or digitally clip coupons.

To stay organized and within budget during the spring cleaning season, adopt savvy shopping strategies.

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# Celebrating 41 years, Wicker's Greenhouse & Nursery's roots are still strong in 2021

By Kelly Duncan

Staff Writer

Judy and Larry Wicker started Wicker's Greenhouse and Nursery with a single greenhouse 41 years ago. Since starting in 1980, after gaining support from her father, Wicker and her husband embarked on the journey of being one of the go-to spots for all things gardening in the Clinton, Laurens and Newberry counties.

"We started with one little greenhouse and we both worked full time. We did that for six or seven years. Then I came home – Larry's mama and daddy were still working. We had a small child so I had come home. Larry worked in Joanna/Greenwood mills and when the mills shut down he went to Greenwood. It just got really, really aggravating so he quit and came home in 1991. We kept adding a greenhouse here, a greenhouse there as our business expanded. At first we did all of our planting at night and we just opened late at night when we got off work. It's just kind of grown from there," Wicker said.

Over the years, according to Wicker, she and her husband continue to refine how they grow their products.

"We grow ginormous ferns. We've always been known for them and our geranium bas-

kets. Now I do a lot of mixed baskets and I plant 90 percent of these mixed baskets myself. It's very, very time consuming. You don't have a life, but you love what you do. This is our heart and soul," she said. "We try different plants and items (2-3 new things a year). We don't do landscaping anymore – used to do a lot of landscaping, but health just want let me do that. I still do design. I work really well from cell phone photos and photos folks bring."

Wicker's Greenhouse and Nursery has also expanded in the last couple of years, offering fish, Koi and Goldfish, to their customers along with the necessary supplies to care for them.

"I can order the liners to make ponds. We don't make the ponds ourselves anymore. We have potting soil and all of your soil amendments – what we sale is what we use in the greenhouses," Wicker said.

And while Wicker said there will no more expansions in the future, customers are more than welcome to come out and browse through the assortment of azaleas, evergreen shrubs, ornamentals, vegetable plants and more.

"We consider the customers our friends. We love the folks and love the plants. I hope to give this business another 10 years," she said.



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