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Small renovations that can make a big impact

(MetroCreative Connection)

Home renovations provide a host of benefits. Such projects can increase resale value and improve on the safety, aesthetics and functionality of a home.

Some homeowners may employ the mantra "go big or go home" when they embark on home improvements, thinking that only the largest renovations produce noticeable change. But that's not the case. Various smaller renovations can provide a lot of bang for homeowners' bucks as well.

COUNTERTOPS AND HARDWARE

A complete kitchen overhaul may stretch some homeowners' budgets. However, changing an older countertop for a new material can provide the facelift a kitchen needs. And while changing the cabinets may be homeowners' ultimate goal, swapping hardware in dated finishes for newer handles and pulls can provide low-cost appeal.

PAINT

Painting a space is an inex-

pensive improvement that adds maximum impact. Paint can transform dark and drab rooms into bright and airy oases. Paint also can be used to create an accent wall or cozy nooks. Homeowners also can showcase their personalities with their choice of paint colors.

LIGHTING

Homeowners should not underestimate what a change in lighting can do. When rooms or exterior spaces are illuminated, they take on entirely new looks. It's worth it to invest in new lighting,

whether it's a dramatic hanging light over the dining room table or task lighting in dim spaces.

WEATHERPROOFING

Improving windows, doors, weatherstripping, and insulation in a home can offer visual appeal and help homeowners save money. The initial investment may be significant, but those costs will pay off in energy savings. According to One Main Financial, space heating is the largest energy expense the average American homeowner has, accounting for

around 45 percent of all energy costs.

MUDROOM

Turn an entryway into a more functional space with the addition of cabinets, benches or custom-designed storage options that perfectly fit the area. Cubbies and cabinets can corral shoes, umbrellas, hats, bags, and much more.

ACCENT UPDATES

Any space, whether it's inside or outside a home,

can get a fresh look with new decorative accents. Invest in new throw pillows and even slipcovers for living room sofas. Use new tile or paint the brick on a fireplace in a den, then update the mantel with decorative displays. Purchase wall art that can bring different colors into a room. Change the cushions on deck furniture and buy color-coordinated planters.

These subtle changes will not cost as much as full-scale renovations, but they can still help homeowners transform their homes.

Customer service is top priority for Whitt Building Supplies



COURTESY PHOTO

Since opening in 2015, Whitt Building Supplies has focused on strong customer service, a philosophy that has helped the business thrive and expand.

BY JEFF OSBORNE
Senior Writer & Editor

Since 2015, Whitt Building Supplies has made customer service its priority, and that commitment has led to expansion and to helping people not only in Coryell County and Central Texas, but throughout the state.

Owned by Brandon Latham, Doug Young and Jimmie Cummings, the business, located at 1411 Texas

Highway 36 in Gatesville, has thrived in helping people to meet needs with metal buildings and all types of farm and ranch supplies.

"We have two 18-wheelers that deliver all over Texas and three dualies (pickup trucks) that pull trailers (with supplies) all day, every day," said Whitt employee Chase Cole.

He said Whitt is working on a new and improved website that will have 3D building designs for customers

to view.

Billy Latham has worked for Whitt since 2017 and has seen the business grow significantly.

"We've multiplied by quadruple I'd imagine," Latham said. "We are also getting our other store up and running in Marlin."

He added that Jacque Hobgood has been with the business "from the start, and she's been (Brandon Latham's) right hand in everything."

The store owners and employees have a strong depth of experience in serving customers, and a personal touch has helped attract and keep customers.

Asked what has allowed the business to be successful, Latham said it's a commitment to doing things right and catering to what customers need.

"I'd say the efficiency of how everything is run," Latham said. "Customer service is the number one

thing we pride ourselves on. We take care of things right away and you don't have to wait for a response from corporate somewhere. People can call us and deal with a person on the phone right away. We treat people right and that's what keeps them coming back."

From the Texas coast to the Panhandle and all places in between, Whitt has a presence.

"We have trucks running all over the place," Latham

said. "It's really good small-town service. Anything people need they can give us a call. We have 14 or 15 people and it's a multimillion-dollar business. Because we just have a handful of people, we have to keep our head on a swivel and stay busy. Everyone who works here is important to helping our customers."

"Give us a call at any time. There's nothing too big or too small for us. We'll get it done."

Safety upgrades to consider for seniors who are living at home

(MetroCreative Connection)

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

Retirement Living reports that an older person is treated in an emergency room for a fall-related injury nearly once every 10 sec-

onds. Falls cause millions of injuries and 32,000 deaths a year, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Seniors may be affected by low vision, mobility limitations, cognitive decline, balance issues, and loss of muscle strength. Certain adaptations may be necessary if seniors want to stay in their homes, particularly in older homes that have not recently been renovated.

CHANGE KNOBS TO LEVERS

This is an easy modification. Levers are much easier for individuals with arthritis or persons who lack

dexterity in their hands. Everything from doorknobs to faucet knobs can be replaced with levers.

CREATE ZERO-THRESHOLD ENTRYWAYS

Zero-threshold entryways, also known as flush entries, do not require crossing a lip or any raised barrier. They can appear on doorways and showers and make it easy for people who have mobility issues, as well as those using scooters, walkers and wheelchairs, to move about unencumbered.

CLEAR CLUTTER/ MOVE OBSTRUCTIONS

One inexpensive modification is to remove extraneous furniture and accessories. Such a change widens walking spaces in a room and accommodates walkers and wheelchairs. In addition, furniture can be pushed to the room's perimeter to make moving around easier. It's also important to remove area rugs, as they're often tripping hazards.

INSTALL GRAB RAILS AND SUPPORTS

Minimizing falls could

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

CONSIDER SMART LIGHTING

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

INVEST IN A STAIRLIFT

Single-story homes are preferable for growing older gracefully, but many seniors live in multi-story homes. A stairlift makes a multi-floor home more accessible, according to Elder, an eldercare service provider. Stairlifts make it easier to traverse staircases and reduce the risk for falls.

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

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Do I want to DIY?

Three questions to determine if it's best to renovate on your own

(MetroCreative Connection)

do-it-yourself mentality has taken hold in millions of households across the globe. Popular television channels like HGTV and DIY Network as well as accessible home improvement content on apps like YouTube has inspired many homeowners to tackle renovation projects around their homes. Taking such initiative is admirable, though it also can prove costly if homeowners end up biting off more than they can chew.

Home improvement videos and television shows have a tendency to oversimplify renovation projects, potentially giving homeowners a false sense of confidence in their DIY abilities. A concerted effort on the part of homeowners to determine if it's best to renovate on their own or hire a professional should always be the first step of any renovation project. No two homeowners are the same, but the follow-

ing three questions can help homeowners determine if DIY is their best option.

CAN I AFFORD TO DIY?

Professional home improvement projects are costly for a variety of reasons. Materials can be costly, but so are the tools and labor necessary to do the job right. Homeowners may not have the tools necessary to complete complicated projects. Specialty tools can be expensive to purchase or even rent, and the cost of acquiring such tools should be included in any DIY project cost estimates. Labor also factors heavily into professional projects, and for good reason. Talented contractors have unique skills that have been developed and perfected over many years. Those skills can ensure projects are completed quickly and correctly. Labor may seem costly, but such costs may ultimately prove to be a bargain compared to the cost of fixing DIY mistakes.

Projects that are minor in scope and don't require the use of potentially costly specialty tools may be better suited for weekend warriors than more complicated renovations.

DO I HAVE THE TIME?

Homeowners must determine how much time they have to complete a project before deciding to do it themselves. No one wants to spend months staring at an unfinished renovation project. Homeowners who are already pressed for time may not be able to complete projects in a timely fashion, which can make homes less comfortable and even less safe.

CAN I PULL THIS OFF?

DIY projects can instill homeowners with a sense of pride in their homes, but it's imperative that homeowners considering the DIY option conduct an honest assessment of their skills. A lack

of renovation experience does not necessarily mean a homeowner cannot successfully complete a DIY project. But in such instances, it may be best to start with small, straightforward projects and then gradually move up to bigger, more complicated projects as skills are fine tuned. And homeowners who have never been at their best with a hammer in hand should not be ashamed to leave the work to the professionals.

Television shows and online tutorials can make renovations appear easier than they actually are. Homeowners considering DIY renovations can ask themselves a handful of questions to determine if they're ready for the challenge of renovating their homes on their own.

COURTESY PHOTO
No two homeowners are the same, but there are three questions that can help homeowners determine if DIY is their best option.



Budget-friendly ways to freshen up the exterior of your home

(MetroCreative Connection)

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.




There are many budget-friendly ways homeowners can tend to the exterior of their properties.

COURTESY PHOTO



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Learn the basics of container gardening

(MetroCreative Connection)

Gardening is a rewarding hobby that has been linked to health benefits like reduced stress and improved mental well-being. Gardening also can lead to an inviting home landscape full of attractive blooms and/or delicious foods.

Backyard gardens have long been planted after clearing a plot of land, tilling and amending the soil, and planting rows of favorite crops. However, gardening can be less labor-intensive and even more successful when people consider the many benefits of container gardening.

WHAT IS CONTAINER GARDENING?

As its name implies, container gardening is growing plants inside of containers. These containers can be flower pots, rectangular deck boxes or even large raised

garden beds.

PROS TO CONTAINER GARDENING

One of the advantages of container gardening is that plants can be moved in and out of sunlight to ensure the right growing conditions. This isn't as easily achieved when gardens are stationary. Also, beginner gardeners may be more able to control soil conditions inside of a small container rather than a vast ground-based garden, which will require a good deal of manual labor. Pots and boxes also can be grouped together to create eye-popping displays, usually at lower costs than the sheer volume of plants that would be needed to fill out an expansive landscape.

CONS TO CONTAINER GARDENING

Container garden plants

will not have direct access to the ground, so they need gardeners to create the ideal growing conditions. Developing the right care formula can be challenging. The home and garden resource The Spruce says that drainage is an important factor in container gardening, and most containers do not offer enough drainage holes. If water cannot escape the soil, the roots of the plants can rot and die. It's not enough to add stones or gravel to the bottom of containers. Drill additional holes in the bottom (1/2-inch in diameter for small or medium-sized pots; one inch in diameter for larger pots). Also, be sure to check on soil moisture so that watering can be adjusted. During hot stretches, plants may need to be watered more frequently.



COURTESY PHOTO

Gardening can be less labor-intensive and even more successful when people consider the many benefits of container gardening.

PLAN FOR PLANTS THAT PLAY WELL

Grouping plants together can create visually stunning combinations. However, it is important to choose plants that require the same amount of light and moisture. Look at plant tags when visiting the garden center and select complementary plants, or ask a store employee. Mixing different

plant shapes, colors and leaf textures, as well as plants of various heights, can help containers look filled out.

FEED PLANTS ACCORDINGLY

Plants need nutrition to thrive in containers. Quality potting mixes will contain fertilizers, but nutrition will wane over time. Every couple of weeks, container plants will need either fresh potting mix or granular fertilizer

added to feed them. Oregon State University Extension Services suggests using a slow-release fertilizer or worm castings several times throughout the season.

Container gardening is a great way to add plants to smaller patios, reduce the workload involved in maintaining expansive gardens, and customize conditions for optimal growth.

Four tips to pick the right plants for your landscape

(MetroCreative Connection)

Each year, gardening enthusiasts anxiously await the arrival of spring. Spring is a great season to plant new flowers, plants, grasses, and trees, making it a popular time of year to spend sunny days out in the yard.

Veteran gardeners may know their landscapes well and be able to pick the right plants on their own. Novices may need a little help as they look to give their landscapes a whole new look. The following are some tips to help homeowners pick the right plants for their landscapes.

CONDUCT A SITE EVALUATION

A colorful landscape featuring an array of plants and flowers can be eye-catching and add curb appeal to a property. However, where plants will be planted is a significant variable that must be considered before homeowners choose what to plant. The Center for Agriculture, Food, and the Environment at the University of Massachusetts Amherst notes that site evaluation is the first step when picking plants. A number of factors must be evaluated, including light availability; water availability; exposure to the elements, including wind and extreme temperatures; and competition from existing vegetation, among other things. Document these variables prior to picking plants. For example, take note of the area you plan to plant to see if it is full sun or partial shade, and then pick plants whose growing conditions align with those you observe.



COURTESY PHOTO

The maintenance required to keep a plant healthy and looking good is a key consideration when designing a landscape.

LOOK AT MORE THAN LOOKS

Aesthetic appeal might be what homeowners most desire from their landscapes, but that appeal is only achieved when the right plants are chosen for a space. If the wrong plants are chosen, they're unlikely to thrive or they could threaten existing vegetation, thus compromising the overall appeal of the property. Native plants can often handle local weather conditions,

so prioritize natives over more exotic plants whose key attribute is aesthetic appeal. If jaw-dropping aesthetic appeal is your top priority, speak with a local landscaping professional about which natives can provide that without compromising surrounding vegetation.

CONSIDER MAINTENANCE PRIOR TO PLANTING

Maintenance is another

variable gardeners must consider. Newly planted trees may require substantial watering until they've fully established their roots, and some homeowners may not have time for that. In addition, certain plants may require a considerable amount of pruning in order to create and maintain the look homeowners desire. Individuals must be willing to invest the time and effort necessary to maintain new plantings that

require such diligence. If not, look for plants that don't require much maintenance while keeping in mind that even low-maintenance plants still require some effort and attention.

CONSIDER LOCAL WILDLIFE

If your lawn is routinely visited by local wildlife, then look for plants that won't look like a meal to these welcome, if uninvited, guests. For example, if you routinely

see deer lounging around in your backyard, look for deer-resistant plants. This is a good way to protect your investment, of both time and money, and ensure minimal wildlife traffic through your newly landscaped yard.

Spring gardens are awe-inspiring, especially when homeowners embrace various strategies for successful planting.

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The many benefits of houseplants

(MetroCreative Connection)

The lines between the outdoors and indoors are being blurred. Homeowners build extensive outdoor living spaces so they can relax on weather-resistant furniture and even cook in lavish kitchens in their backyards. In addition, indoor three-season rooms full of bright, open windows that showcase outdoor vistas challenge the boundaries between outside and inside.

For those working with limited budgets, there are some inexpensive ways to enjoy the majesty of natural landscapes indoors. Houseplants can be used to improve indoor spaces, and they also provide various health benefits.

HELP WITH ALLERGIES

According to WebMD, rooms with houseplants tend to have less dust and mold in them than those without. Leaves and other parts of the plants serve as natural filters, catching airborne particles and allergens. Plants with textured leaves might be especially effective at trapping particles.

PUT MORE OXYGEN INTO THE AIR

The human respiratory system works by bringing in oxygen and releasing carbon dioxide. Plants do the opposite during photosynthesis. They absorb carbon dioxide and then release oxygen. Plants can put much more oxygen into the air, improving indoor conditions.

INCREASE INDOOR HUMIDITY AND REDUCE ILLNESS

Studies from the Agricultural University of Norway found that indoor plants can increase humid-

ity in indoor spaces, which decreases the incidences of sore throats, dry coughs, dry skin, and the common cold. Higher absolute humidity can decrease the chances of survival and transmission of the flu virus.

FILTER THE AIR

Researchers who presented their work at the 252nd National Meeting & Exposition of the American Chemical Society found certain houseplants can combat the potentially harmful effects of volatile organic compounds. Plants may help filter out VOCs like benzene, acetone and formaldehyde, which can enter indoor air via cleaning supplies, dry-cleaned clothes, furniture, printers, and paints.

IMPROVE INTERIOR ATMOSPHERE

Prevention magazine says plants can be used to screen unattractive areas, moderate room temperature by shading spots from the sun and

even reduce noise. Plants also can improve ambiance and create a pleasing atmosphere in a room.

CAN IMPROVE MOOD

Growing and caring for plants can alleviate everyday stress. A nationwide study from UK Magazine Gardeners World found 80 percent of gardeners declared themselves satisfied with life compared to 67 percent among non-gardeners. Gardeners were more positive mentally. Greenery can help people feel more at home and improve mental health. A rehab center in Norway found patients reported a greater increase in well-being four weeks after having greenery added to their surroundings.

Houseplants can improve indoor areas and positively affect personal health.



Houseplants can be used to improve indoor spaces, and they also provide various health benefits.

COURTESY PHOTO

Poisonous plants to avoid around the house

(MetroCreative Connection)

Homeowners must consider various factors when choosing plants to display in and around their homes. That's because, despite their beauty, various plants are toxic to humans and animals.

Avoiding potentially poisonous plants can prevent injuries and even deaths. Here's a list of some plants homeowners may want to avoid.

RHODODENDRON

Rhododendrons produce flower clusters that bloom in the spring. They also pro-

duce thick, glossy leaves that thrive in the fall and winter in many areas. If any part of the plant is swallowed it can cause vomiting and potentially slow the pulse.

LILY-OF-THE-VALLEY

This popular plant grows close to the ground, blooming bell-shaped, sweet-smelling flowers. If large doses of the toxin in this plant are ingested, it can gradually slow the heart down and potentially prove fatal.

DUMB CANE

The houseplant dieffenbachia, commonly known as Dumb cane, adds tropical

appeal indoors. The sap of the plant causes the tongue to burn and swell, enough to block off air to the throat. It can be fatal if ingested by both pets and humans.

ENGLISH IVY

This go-to draping vine looks lovely cascading down from planters or shelving. While its toxins need to be ingested in large amounts to cause problems, English ivy can cause skin irritation, rash and fever, particularly after eating the berries.

BITTERSWEET NIGHTSHADE

Bittersweet nightshade grows as a weed on some

properties. It's particularly problematic for those who have pets or young kids because of the brightly colored berries it produces. The highest level of toxicity comes from these berries.

FOXGLOVE

According to The Spruce: Decor, foxgloves are among the most toxic specimens commonly grown on landscapes. They are widely coveted for their pink, purple and white bell-shaped flowers that grow in tall spires. They're also deer- and rabbit-resistant, making them especially popular. However, foxgloves contain potent car-

diac glycosides that can be lethal in high doses.

PHILODENDRON

Philodendron are easy to care for and hearty. While not fatal, a bite of philodendron can irritate the skin and cause nausea and swelling of the mouth, throat and tongue. Similar effects occur with Pothos, another common and hearty houseplant.

YEW SHRUBS

The needlelike leaves of this shrub are toxic to humans and animals, as are the fleshy, bright red berries that grow toxic seeds. Kids may be tempted to pick and con-

sume these bright berries.

PALMS

Several different palm trees are poisonous to people and pets. Palms are an overlooked source of poisoning tragedies in warmer climates. Formosa palm, Sago palm, Queen Sago, and Cardboard palm are some of the varieties that can cause issues if ingested or allergic skin reactions if touched.

When planning a landscape, work with a skilled garden expert to choose plants that will not be hazardous to family and pets.

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Progressive FARMER READER INSIGHTS

How to throw a last-minute dinner party

(MetroCreative Connection)

Do you feel like having a party? A spur-of-the-moment desire to host friends or family is not uncommon. Though it may be ideal to give yourself a few days to plan a dinner party and assemble what's needed to be your best host, sometimes inspiration strikes and compels people to throw last-minute dinner parties.

In such instances, these tips for putting together a feast on the fly can be especially valuable.

KEEP IT SIMPLE

Build your menu around your own specialty, ideally one that is easy to prepare. Don't try out that fancy new cookbook recipe right now. Single-pot casseroles or pasta dishes whip up in a flash and can feed a crowd.

STOCK ESSENTIALS AT HOME

It's easier to invite people over at the last minute if you don't have to shop for supplies. Keep a running in-



These tips for putting together a feast on the fly can be especially valuable.

COURTESY PHOTO

There likely won't be time to clean your entire home before an impromptu party. Therefore, focus on the kitchen, dining area and guest bathroom. Gather errant items from around the house and store in a bedroom behind closed doors. Close doors on other spaces that are off-limits during the party.

GET THE KIDS INVOLVED

If you have children, give them jobs to help out. They can set tables, fill ice cube trays or run the vacuum over high-traffic areas. Removing some tasks from your to-do list can free your time for other needs.

SCOUR YOUR HOME

Create interesting place settings or a festive table with items you already have on hand. Consider using food as functional decor on a table. A bowl of lemons makes an eye-catching centerpiece.

Make last-minute dinner parties happen with a few tricks of the trade.

ventory of foods that can be brought out at a moment's notice, such as items that may go on a charcuterie platter. Olives, block cheeses, crackers, salad fixings, cured

meats, and fresh vegetables can be arranged in a heart-beat. With a can of chick peas, some garlic, lemon juice, and parsley at the ready, you can quickly create

a homemade hummus, too. **CONSIDER A POTLUCK**

Guests may want to help out if they are invited over on short notice. A potluck is

a perfect way to fill a table with food with minimal effort, as everyone contributes a little something.

CLEAN THE VISIBLE ROOMS

Tips for organizing your cluttered kitchen

(MetroCreative Connection)

Kitchens serve as the heart of many homes. Thanks to the popularity of open floor plans, kitchens also tend to be highly visible from nearby spaces, such as family rooms and even main entryways. A messy, cluttered kitchen can be an inefficient eyesore that's visible from various locations in a home. That makes getting organized in the kitchen a worthwhile goal.

The following are some tips

to help homeowners organize their kitchens.

START WITH THE UTENSILS

Utensils come in all shapes and sizes. Take inventory of your utensils, discarding or donating items you don't use. Next, designate drawers or countertop storage solutions for the utensils you use most often. Place them within easy reach, and take into account your dominant hand for placement.

CATEGORIZE YOUR PANTRY

Empty the pantry, paying attention to staples you regularly use. Then figure out a system for categorization that works for your household. Perhaps place all baking essentials together, such as flour, oil, baking soda, and cocoa powder. Maybe you need to designate a "kids corner" in the pantry where you keep fruit snacks, granola bars and breakfast cereals. Use uniformly shaped containers to store packaged foods so you're not contending with

oddly shaped boxes and bags.

USE EXTRA WALL OR CEILING SPACE

Large pots and pans can eat up cabinet space or clutter the inside of an oven for those who don't have any other space. While your decorative enamel Dutch oven might fit nicely on a shelf or counter, cast-iron pans and skillets can be hung from durable hooks over an island or near the stove.

ORGANIZE UNDER THE SINK

It can be difficult to keep cleaning products tidy and within reach. Try installing a short tension rod inside the cabinet and use it to hang spray bottles, rubber gloves and cleaning cloths.

TAME YOUR CONTAINER COLLECTION

It's tempting to save all of those take-out containers or empty margarine tubs for leftovers. But if there's an avalanche every time you open

up a cabinet to reach for a container, you probably have too many. Invest in one type of storage container so you can nest the containers and lids for ultimate organization.

An organized kitchen is more attainable than it may seem. Some simple strategies can help homeowners make these home hubs less cluttered and more calming.

Candle crafts tap creativity

(MetroCreative Connection)

Crafting is enjoyed by children and adults. Even the most ardent arts and crafts enthusiasts might be surprised to learn that their favorite hobby can offer a number of benefits related to their health and well-being.

Research shows that regularly engaging in crafts can have tangible health benefits. The rhythmic and repetitive movements of certain crafts, as well as the need to focus one's attention, can produce a calm that helps anyone, including those who may experience anxiety, according to health and self-care resource Berkeley Wellness. In an online study published in the British Journal of Occupational Therapy that surveyed more than 3,500 knitters, researchers found knitting was "soothing" and "restful" and had meditative or zen-like qualities.

The sense of accomplish-

ment after completing a project is another great reason to engage in arts and crafts, which also may boost cognitive health by protecting certain neurological pathways in the brain.

There are many ways to engage with arts and crafts. Woodcrafting, painting, mosaic work, and metal arts are some popular activities.

One time-honed craft activity that is good for beginners or advanced crafters alike is candlemaking. Today's craft stores sell many different types of waxes and products that can produce beautiful scented candles.

TEACUP CANDLES

Candles can be housed in various vessels, but a clever turn is to use teacups or mugs to mimic the look of popular beverages. There's also the reassurance that such beverage holders can withstand hot wax.

Start by visiting a craft store and choosing a type of

wax. Gel waxes are versatile and can boil, pour and set up easily. They'll also be mostly translucent, which is great for replicating the look of various drinks. Follow the instructions on the packages for usage and invest in coordinating wicks, colorants, and appropriate scents.

It's also necessary to choose a style of candle. In a teacup, a tea-colored hue wax paired with a lemon scent can be reminiscent of a hot cup of lemon tea. Use other glasses or mugs to replicate the looks and scents of hot chocolate, mimosas, cappuccino, and much more.

As you become more comfortable, experiment with incorporating molded wax embellishments, such as lemon slices, ice cubes, berries, or even cinnamon sticks. This will help drive home the realism and whimsy.

Treasure these candles for use around the house, or gift them to others on special occasions.



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