



HOME & GARDEN



INSIDE

A GUIDE TO VARIOUS TYPES OF HOME AWNINGS | HOW SELLERS CAN GET TOP DOLLAR FOR THEIR HOMES | HOW TO HANDLE A LENGTHY RENOVATION | RENOVATIONS THAT HELPS SELL HOMES | MAINTAINING A LAWN ROUTINELY ROAMED BY PETS | SPRING CLEANING TIPS AND TRICKS | SIGNS A HOME EXTERIOR NEEDS UPDATING | THE BASICS OF FERTILIZING A LAWN | TIPS TO MAKE A YARD LESS ATTRACTIVE TO TICKS | TIPS FOR BUDGET-FRIENDLY HOME DECOR | TIPS TO REVITALIZE A GARDEN THIS SPRING | WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT LANDSCAPE LIGHTING | WOOD FLOOR CLEANING GUIDE | WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT INSTALLING A POOL AT HOME

A guide to various types of home awnings

Homeowners recognize that upgrades can improve the functionality and comfort of their homes. Improving outdoor spaces has proven particularly popular of late. The National Association of Home Builders reports that outdoor living has been propelled to the top of homeowner wish lists. Plus, a recent survey conducted by the New Home Trends Institute found connection to the outdoors/nature and outdoor entertaining ranked

high among desired home designs. One way to make outdoor spaces more accommodating is through the installation of awnings. Many homeowners would like to enhance their homes with awnings but do not know where to begin. Learning about the various types of awnings can help homeowners determine which option best suits their needs.

FIXED AWNINGS

Fixed awnings are stationary on a building's exterior.

While the awnings are generally stable, they can be damaged by snow or wind. It's key to find an installation expert to make sure the awning is installed correctly so that it can withstand weather and other issues. It's also important to know that fixed awnings remain in the same position and orientation, so it's best to know exactly where to place it beforehand.

RETRACTABLE AWNING

Retractable awnings are the most popular type of awnings because they can

be extended when necessary to keep a space cool or protected, then rolled or folded up when not in use. These awnings are advantageous because they can be retracted when bad weather hits to prevent damage.

MOTORIZED RETRACTABLE AWNING

Motorized retractable awnings offer the utmost convenience. Standard retractable offerings require a handle or hand crank to manually extend or fold up the awning. Motorized aw-

nings can be operated with a sensor, remote or even motion trigger. Even though they cost more, they're a favorite among homeowners.

AREAS OF USE

Awnings can be installed in various locations. Patio awnings are much preferred because of their large coverage area, which typically spans entire patios. Door awnings are installed above the exterior door of an entryway to protect visitors and occupants from precipitation and to improve the home's look. Window awnings can

add additional shade and privacy. There also are side awnings, which are essentially wall-like structures that run across a patio, garden or balcony for wind or sun protection. They're also utilized to improve privacy.

Homeowners can choose from various types of awning materials, including fabric, metal, glass, and others. Working with a reputable awning company is the best way for homeowners to peruse possible products and find awnings that will suit their needs.

How sellers can get top dollar for their homes

The process of buying and selling a home includes many movable parts. North America has experienced historic trends in the housing market in recent years. Most notably, record-high prices have dominated the real estate market over the last several years.

High prices are good news for sellers, who can probably anticipate receiving offers above listing price. In New Jersey, inventory is so low that 12.5 percent of homes in the Garden State sold above list price, according to data from RedFin. This is good news for sellers currently looking to make an excellent profit on their properties. Sellers who don't want to rely on the market alone to earn more for their homes can take various steps to get top dollar.

STAGE YOUR HOME

According to the 2023 Profile of Home Staging conducted by the National Association of Realtors®, 81 percent of buyers' agents

said staging a home made it easier for the buyer to visualize the property as a future home. Focus your attention on the living room, owner's suite and kitchen. Hiring a staging professional can be an investment that turns a sizable profit.

KNOW YOUR LOCAL MARKET

A good way to price your home and gauge if it will sell quickly is to look at the average "days on the market" for similar homes nearby. If homes are selling faster than the average DOM, that suggests high demand, which can work in your favor.

MAKE ADDED-VALUE IMPROVEMENTS

Focus renovation dollars on the types of projects that will reap the highest return on investment. Remodeling magazine annually reports the projects that offer the best ROI. In 2023, the project that reaped the highest ROI was an HVAC Conversion/Electrification, which involved converting a fossil-

fuel-burning furnace into an electric heat pump. The cost recouped was 103.5 percent.

SELL AT THE RIGHT TIME

Fewer people are shopping for homes in the dead of winter or during the middle of the school year, so putting your home on the market in spring typically brings out the largest number of interested parties, according to Opendoor. But this isn't the only time-related factor to consider. To sell for the most money, you want to list your home when you have enough equity to pay off your current mortgage, the costs of selling, and the costs of moving, says Bankrate.

GIVE CURB APPEAL A BOOST

Make sure that buyers see your home in a positive light from the first moment they pull up for a walk-through showing. According to Home & Garden, improving the landscaping can result in a value increase of up to 12 percent. Additional projects can include investing in a

new front door and garage doors. Be sure that hedges are trimmed, there are fresh flowers growing, and that walkways and the driveway are clean and tidy.

A few simple strategies can help sellers get more money for their homes.



COURTESY PHOTO
Make sure that buyers see your home in a positive light from the first moment they pull up for a walk-through.

How to handle a lengthy renovation

The global pandemic reignited people's passions for home renovations, as they directed dollars that would normally have been spent elsewhere into the places where they were now spending the most time - their homes. According to the 10th annual Houzz & Home survey of more than 70,000 respondents in the United States, higher-budget projects cost around \$85,000 or more in 2020, compared with \$80,000 in the two years prior. Kitchen projects were the most popular among renovating homeowners.

Even though many COVID-19-related restrictions have lifted and life has largely returned to regular programming, renovations remain a popular investment. Homeowners embarking on home renovation projects understand that a certain measure of upheaval is to be expected, but some may not fully anticipate the impact that renovations have on daily life. The following are some tips for making it through a lengthy renovation.

DISCUSS THE TIMELINE WITH CONTRACTORS

It may be easier to make a plan for how much life will be disrupted if you have an idea of how long the renovation will be (if everything goes according to plan). Sit down with contractors and have them spell out the minutiae of the project so you'll be able to anticipate what's going on day-to-day.

START AT THE RIGHT TIME

Some contractors may say they can fit your project into their schedules in between other jobs. While this may seem convenient and timely, your work may be put on hold if there are delays with the other job or jobs. Instead, it may be better to hold off until the contractors can devote the bulk of their



COURTESY PHOTO
Sit down with contractors and have them spell out the minutiae of the project. A kitchen or a bathroom remodel often requires giving up spaces that are used throughout a typical day.

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Renovations that helps sell homes

The adage “there’s a lid for every pot” suggests that, even in relation to the real estate market, there’s bound to be a buyer for every home on the market. Price is a significant variable in the minds of potential buyers, but there are additional factors that can affect the impression people get of a given home.

Certain home features can tip the scales in favor of sellers. In fact, various renovations can help sell homes more readily. And these renovations need not cost a fortune. Putting a home on the market can be stressful, but these renovations may help it sell fast.

A FRESH COAT OF PAINT

Although painting is relatively inexpensive and a job that some do-it-yourselfers can tackle, it’s not a task relished by many. Painting is messy, it takes time, and requires moving furniture. In fact, prepping a room for painting often is the toughest component of any painting job. But fresh coats of

paint can create a strong first impression. Choose a neutral color and get painting. Jennie Norris, chairwoman for the International Association of Home Staging Professionals, says gray is a “safe” color that has been trending in recent years.

MINOR BATHROOM REMODEL

Remove dated wall coverings, replace fixtures, consider re-glazing or replacing an old tub, and swap old shower doors for fast fixes in a bathroom. If there’s more room in the budget, replacing a tub, tile surround, floor, toilet, sink, vanity, and fixtures can cost roughly \$10,500, says HGTV. You’ll recoup an average of \$10,700 at resale, making a minor bathroom remodel a potentially worthy investment.

REDONE KITCHEN

The kitchen tends to be the hub of a home. This room gets the most usage and attention of any space, and it’s a great

place to focus your remodeling attention. The National Association of the Remodeling Industry estimates that homeowners can recover up to 52 percent of the cost of a kitchen upgrade upon selling a home. Buyers want a functional and updated kitchen. Trending features include drawer-style microwaves and dishwashers, commercial ranges, hidden outlets, and even wine refrigerators.

UPDATED HEATING AND COOLING SYSTEM

Better Homes and Gardens reports that homeowners may be able to recoup 85 percent of the cost of new HVAC systems when they sell their homes. Heating, cooling and ventilation components are vital to maintain. You don’t want buyers to be taken aback by an older system, and many millennial buyers are not willing to overlook old mechanical systems.

FRESH LANDSCAPING

A home’s exterior is the



COURTESY PHOTO

Certain home features can tip the scales in favor of sellers. In fact, various renovations can help sell homes more readily.

first thing buyers will see. If they pull up to a home with eye-catching landscaping and outdoor areas that are attractive yet functional, they’re more likely to be intrigued. Often buyers will

equate a home that features an impressive exterior with upkeep inside as well. The American Nursery Landscape Association says the average homeowner may spend \$3,500 for

landscaping. Improving a home’s chances to sell quickly and at a higher price often comes down to making smart improvements that catch the eyes of buyers.

Maintaining a lawn routinely roamed by pets

Vibrant, green lawns can draw attention to any landscape. Many homeowners toil for hours each week to ensure their lawns are pristine, or invest in lawn care services to help maintain a yard if they do not have the time to do so themselves.

While many treatments can be applied to lawns to help them thrive, animal waste is not among them. Pet owners who aspire to have beautiful lawns will have to take a few extra steps to ensure lawns can persevere despite the presence of furry companions.

RESEED WITH A DAMAGE-RESISTANT GRASS

There are many different types of grass, and some are more resilient than others. Tall fescue, Kentucky bluegrass, perennial ryegrass, and Bermuda grass are just some of the grass varieties that can capably handle pet traffic. If replacing the entire lawn is not possible, consider reseeding or addressing the areas that pets frequent.

STRENGTHEN THE ROOT SYSTEM

It may be tempting to cut

the lawn short, particularly if dogs or cats like to nibble on longer blades of grass. But that approach could be doing the lawn a disservice. According to The Home Depot, letting the lawn grow to at least three inches will help keep moisture in the soil and prevent evaporation. That moisture will strengthen the roots, creating a healthier lawn for pets and people.

CREATE PET PATHS

Various materials can be used in these high-traffic areas to minimize the sights

and signs of pet traffic. Mulch or crushed stone can establish these pet highways and look like intended features.

SET BOUNDARIES

Pet urine contains high levels of nitrogen, which can burn grass and turn it brown. It’s not possible to water down urine or pick up solid waste immediately every time a pet goes outdoors, so designate a pet-friendly spot for potty time. Use fencing or a dog run to separate this area and help mitigate “land mines” all over the lawn.

Fencing also can keep pets out of vegetable gardens and away from potentially toxic plants.

AVOID CHEMICAL LAWN TREATMENTS

When pets use the yard and rest on the lawn, you’ll need to eliminate products that can be harmful to them. Choose all-natural fertilizers and weed and pest preventatives.

LOOK FOR ALTERNATIVES

If maintaining a lawn with pets seems like an uphill

battle, consider swapping out your landscape with a variety of materials. Scale back on grass, and incorporate groundcover, hardscape materials like pea gravel, or extend the patio. Artificial turf also is an option, as it won’t brown and wither. Some turf products can even be quickly and thoroughly cleaned with water.

It can take some trial and error for pet parents to protect their lawns from the effects of having furry friends playing in the yard.

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Spring cleaning tips and tricks

Spring is a time of year when change is in the air. Trees are budding, plants are flowering, and homes laden with dark or heavy fabrics and clutter could use some lightening up.

Spring cleaning projects are popular this time of year as residents take inventory of their living spaces and aim to declutter, clean and increase efficiency. Some people find the prospect of getting organized overwhelming. Here are some tips that can help anyone master spring cleaning.

CREATE A PLAN

Make a checklist and establish a cleaning plan of attack. Focus on areas that are not regularly cleaned, as they probably need a little attention.

ASSEMBLE YOUR CLEANING KIT

Spring cleaning can be slowed down considerably if you don't have all of your equipment at the ready. Items to have on hand include an all-purpose cleaner, concentrated cleaner, micro-fiber cloths, paper towels, mop, vacuum, dusters, and a squeegee. Adjust your equipment based on the task at hand.

CURATE YOUR CLEANING PLAYLIST

Create a playlist with songs that will get you moving and motivated to clean.

WORK FROM TOP TO BOTTOM

Work efficiently by cleaning shelves, ceiling fans and other elevated items first, as

dust and debris will trickle down and need to be cleaned next.

PURCHASE OR RENT A CARPET CLEANER

According to the experts at Clean That Up, carpets help filter indoor air by trapping debris and allergens. By deep cleaning carpets, homeowners can improve the indoor air quality of their homes. Use a carpet cleaner on a warm, dry day so that windows can be opened and cross breezes will help dry the damp rug.

CLEAN WINDOWS

Wash windows inside and out and utilize their screens to help brighten indoors spaces.

DEEP CLEAN THE KITCHEN

Clean out and disinfect the refrigerator by wiping it down with warm water and baking soda or a vinegar-and-water solution. While in the kitchen, set the oven to the self-clean function so it becomes cleaner as well.

Homeowners also can focus on cleaning curtains (including shower curtains), steam-cleaning upholstery, removing clutter from closets, cleaning out the dryer vent and duct tubing, wiping inside kitchen drawers, and vacuuming under beds and other furniture.

Spring cleaning can bring the revitalizing nature of this beloved time of year into your home.



COURTESY PHOTO

Spring cleaning projects are popular this time of year as residents take inventory of their living spaces and aim to declutter, clean and increase efficiency.

Signs a home exterior needs updating



COURTESY PHOTO

Curb appeal is often discussed in regard to the effects it can have when selling a home. But curb appeal is equally important for homeowners who aren't putting their homes on the market.

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

Curb appeal is often discussed in regard to the effects it can have when selling a home. But curb appeal is equally important for homeowners who aren't putting their homes on the market. A well-maintained, aesthetically appealing home is a source of pride, while a home with fading curb appeal can make homeowners

feel a little sheepish. Homeowners who want their homes to maintain their curb appeal can look for signs that it's time to update their home exteriors.

CURLING SHINGLES

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

DATED ENTRY DOOR

Many home improvement

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

UNSIGHTLY LANDSCAPING

It's not only the physical components of the home that may suggest an update is necessary. Homeowners without a green thumb may have exterior landscaping that has seen better days. If a spring or summer day spent tending to your landscaping

is not your ideal weekend pastime, then consider replacing unsightly landscaping with low-maintenance plants or hardscaping. These alternatives to more needy plants can create curb appeal without requiring any extra work for homeowners.

CRACKED DRIVEWAYS/WALKWAYS

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

Updating a home's exterior can restore curb appeal and help homeowners feel better about their properties.



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The basics of fertilizing a lawn

Spring marks the return of lawn and garden season. Lawns often bear the brunt of winter's wrath, so spring is a great time to nurse them back to health, and fertilizing can be an essential component of that process.

Fertilizing a lawn can be intimidating. An array of fertilizers, with each seemingly designed to address a different issue, can make homeowners' heads spin when visiting their local lawn and garden center. However, fertilizing is a very simple task that any homeowner can tackle. In fact, fears about fertilizing are often unfounded and can be overcome with some basic knowledge of the process.

IDENTIFY WHICH TYPE OF GRASS IS IN THE YARD

The home improvement experts at HGTV note that turfgrass is divided into two categories: cool-season grass and warm-season grass. A local lawn and garden center can help homeowners identify which type of grass

is in the yard, and this often depends on location. Fescue, bluegrass and perennial ryegrass are some examples of cool-season grasses, while Bermuda, bahia, St. Augustine, and zoysia are considered warm-season grasses. Identifying which type of grass is in the lawn is important because that will indicate when to fertilize. Cool-season grasses are typically best fertilized in early spring, while warm-season lawns can benefit from an application just before especially warm temperatures arrive.

SURVEY THE LAWN TO IDENTIFY WHICH SPREADER TO USE

A small yard or a thriving lawn with only a few bald or unsightly patches may not need a full application of fertilizer. In such instances, a hand spreader can suffice. For larger lawns and areas, a broadcast spreader is the ideal option. Spreaders have multiple settings, and the

fertilizer package will indicate which setting to utilize when using the product.

TEST THE SOIL PRIOR TO PURCHASING FERTILIZER

The lawn experts at Pennington® note that a simple soil test can reveal soil pH and phosphorous and potassium levels. Soil tests can be purchased at most home improvement stores and lawn and garden centers, and they can help homeowners determine which fertilizer will most benefit their lawns.

WATER THE LAWN PRIOR TO FERTILIZING

The experts at Scotts® recommend a good watering a few days prior to fertilizing a lawn. Such an approach ensures the soil is ready to accept the fertilizer once it's applied.

FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY

Detailed instructions are typically provided on fertiliz-



COURTESY PHOTO

Identifying which type of grass is in the lawn is important because that will indicate when to fertilize. Cool-season grasses are typically best fertilized in early spring.

er product packaging. Once homeowners have identified and purchased the product they need, they can simply follow the instructions on

the packaging, including how and when to water after application, which can make fertilizing less intimidating. Fertilizing in spring can

help a lawn recover from the previous summer and winter, ensuring it's lush and green when summer entertaining season arrives.

Tips to make a yard less attractive to ticks

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

Ticks can be found throughout the world, but the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes that only a select few types of ticks transmit bacteria, viruses and parasites, or patho-

gens, that cause diseases in people. But even if the number of tick species that transmit diseases to humans is relatively low, ticks that can infect humans are a notable threat. Such ticks carry pathogens that the CDC notes can cause a number of diseases, including Bourbon virus, Ehrlichiosis and, of course, Lyme disease, among others.

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

Cut your grass short and keep it that way. Black-legged ticks are transmitters of Lyme disease, which the CDC notes is the most common vector-borne disease in the United States. Lyme disease also poses a growing threat in Canada, where data from the Public Health Agency indicates human-reported Lyme disease cases increased from 144 in 2009 to more than 2,100 in 2022. Black-legged ticks do not like environments that are dry and hot, so short grass makes lawns less attractive

to this type of tick. Consumer Reports advises homeowners who have let their grass grow a little too high (around five or six inches) to bag their clippings when cutting the grass. Lots of clippings on the grass can provide a respite from the heat for black-legged ticks.

Create a tick barrier if your property abuts woods. Woods provide a cover from summer heat that black-legged ticks crave. So properties that abut the woods may be more vulnerable to these unwanted guests than yards that do not border woodlands. A barrier

of dry mulch made of wood chips between a property and a bordering wooded area can help repel ticks, who won't want to settle in often dry, hot mulch beds.

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

for advice on tick-repellant plants that can thrive in their particular climate and on their properties.

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

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

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Tips for budget-friendly home decor

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

Material and product costs remain high across the board, so individuals interested in

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

CREATE THE ILLUSION OF MORE SPACE

Light, bright and white are key attributes to remember when selecting design elements for rooms where you want to create the illusion of

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

REPLACE THE ACCESSORIES

Replacing curtains, area rugs, throw pillows, and chair cushions is an easy way to change a room without a big investment. Consider updating some wall art and tying color schemes together with

all of the newly introduced elements.

SPLURGE ON STATEMENT PIECES THAT WILL BE USED FREQUENTLY

These may include chandeliers, unique rugs or an eye-catching piece of furniture.

SHOP 'DISCOUNT' STORES FOR FURNITURE AND ACCENTS

Traditional design centers can be great places to

find plenty of high-quality merchandise. However, don't overlook local discount or close-out centers that may have items at very reasonable costs. Stores like Home Goods, At Home and Big Lots routinely get new merchandise that changes with the season, helping homeowners to refresh their spaces without having to dig deep into their pockets. Shop the high-end stores for inspiration, then try to find "dupes" in the discount stores that will mimic the looks for less.

CUT OUT THE CLUTTER

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

There are many budget-friendly ways to make interior spaces more inviting.

Tips to revitalize a garden this spring

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

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

DISCARD THE DEAD WEIGHT

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

removed at this point if they have not previously been discarded.

TEST THE SOIL

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

MULCH GARDEN BEDS

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

INSPECT YOUR IRRIGATION SYSTEM

Homeowners with in-ground irrigation systems or

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

TUNE UP YOUR TOOLS

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

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



COURTESY PHOTO

Discard dead plants that have lingered into spring and prune any perennials that need it.

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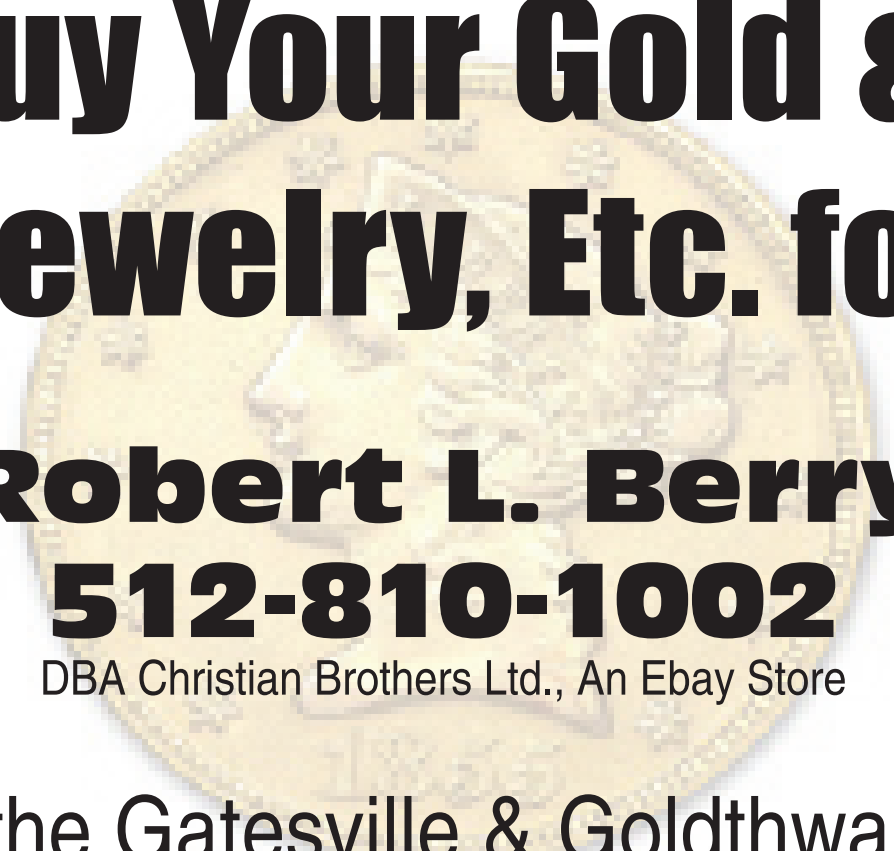
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What to know about landscape lighting

Home improvement trends come and go, and one trend that has become wildly popular in recent years is recognizable in yards every night. Landscape lighting has transformed how people see and enjoy their properties at night, making it one of the more sought-after upgrades among modern homeowners.

Curb appeal is often seen through the lens of how homes appear during daylight hours, but landscape lighting can make homes look better and more modern, and potentially safer, after the sun goes down. With such potential, landscape lighting is worth exploring for homeowners looking to upgrade their properties.

ARE THERE DIFFERENT TYPES OF LANDSCAPE LIGHTING?

When considering landscape lighting, homeowners should know that there are various options to consider. According to the lighting experts at Lumens, spotlights project a concentrated and narrow beam of light that's usually around 45 degrees. Spotlights are often chosen to highlight specific features on a property, like a component of the landscaping. Individuals who want to cast light over wider, more general areas may consider floodlights, which Lumens



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notes spread light up to 120 degrees.

Inground lighting is among the more sophisticated landscape lighting options. Lumens notes that inground lighting illuminates the whole of a tree or structure, often creating a dramatic look. These circle-shaped lights also are great at illuminating walkways and driveways.

Post lights are another outdoor lighting option, and these are often used to light up long walkways and pathways so it's easier and safer to navigate dark areas at night.

IS LANDSCAPE LIGHTING A JOB A DIY-ER CAN HANDLE?

Many homeowners consid-

er a do-it-yourself approach when pondering a potential home renovation, and a landscape lighting project is likely to inspire such curiosity as well. The home experts at HGTV note that the feasibility of DIY in regard to a landscape lighting project depends on the type of lighting homeowners want

to install and where they want to install it. Replacing an existing electrical fixture may be well within the skill of a seasoned DIYer, but installing a new fixture is a job best left to the professionals. Homeowners whose homes currently have no or very little landscape lighting are almost certainly better off

working with a professional. Solar lighting that does not require any electrical work can be installed quickly and easily by anyone, but such options may not provide the look homeowners are aiming for.

HOW MUCH LIGHTING IS NECESSARY?

The amount of lighting homeowners want to install is up to them. If the home currently has little or no landscape lighting, a consultation with a professional can help to determine how much lighting to install and where to install it. When discussing landscape lighting, homeowners may want to inquire about dimmers. Dimmers can increase or decrease lighting depending on the situation. For example, homeowners may want a little extra light during a party, but less when relaxing alone outside at night. Dimmers allow homeowners to adjust as necessary.

Landscape lighting is a popular home renovation trend. Homeowners considering adding landscape lighting to their property are urged to work with a skilled professional to devise and install a set-up that makes their homes more appealing at night.

RENOVATION

FROM PAGE C2

attention to your renovation.

RECREATE COMMONLY USED SPACES ELSEWHERE

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

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

PACK UP AND COVER
Remodeling one room

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

ADJUST YOUR SCHEDULE
Sleeping in will be a thing of the past for the duration

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

EASE UP ON CLEANING STANDARDS

It's challenging to keep a home clean during a renovation. Relax standards and expect a mess for some time. Explain to guests what they'll

find if they drop by.

Renovations can disrupt life, but often are well worth

the sacrifices homeowners must make to see them through to completion.



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Wood floor cleaning guide

Wood floors are coveted for a number of reasons, not the least of which is their aesthetic appeal. Many people prefer wood flooring because dust and dirt do not become trapped as they would in carpet fibers, seemingly making wood flooring easy to clean.

Most floors endure a lot of wear and tear. However, with care, wood flooring may last for decades. Part of that care includes understanding how to properly clean and maintain wood floors so they look their best. The following are some steps for keeping wood floors as pristine as possible.

REMOVE SHOES

It's a good idea to remove shoes, particularly heels, when walking on wood floors. Sharp heels, cleats and other shoes can scratch or dent wood flooring. All shoes can track in excess dirt, which can contribute to a lack of luster as well.

SWEEP OR VACUUM FREQUENTLY

The experts at The Spruce suggest sweeping, vacuuming or dust mopping wood floors daily. Dirt and dust make floors more slippery, and dirt

or sand particles can lead to scratches on the floor.

LEARN YOUR FLOORING TYPE

Wood flooring is broken down into three main categories: solid hardwood flooring, engineered hardwood flooring and laminate wood flooring. Traditional hardwood is made of planks or strips of any hardwood covered in a wood stain. Engineered flooring is manufactured by gluing together several thin piles of hardwood. Laminate flooring looks like wood but generally is a veneer or a photographic image of wood covered by a thick layer of melamine resin over fiberboard.

SKIP HARSH CLEANSERS

Regardless of flooring type, most are covered by a sealant that can become streaky or dull if the wrong cleanser is used. Avoid chlorine bleach, ammonia, pine oil, or undiluted vinegar. Instead, choose a cleanser that is specifically recommended for the flooring type. Do not allow water or solutions to sit on the floor, as that can contribute to staining and warping. With laminate flooring, avoid wet mopping unless the floor-

ing is specifically marked as being able to be wet. The underlayers of laminate flooring can warp if it gets wet.

DAMP IS BETTER THAN WET

When cleaning wood flooring, use a damp rather than a soaking wet mop. Better Homes & Gardens says standing water can damage wood surfaces.

USE THE HARD FLOOR SETTING

When vacuuming, adjust the vacuum to a hard flooring setting, which will not engage the brush rollers on the vacuum head. Rollers can scratch wood and laminate flooring, advises The Home Depot.

USE REPAIR PRODUCTS AS NEEDED

Scratch and repair kits can fill in small scratches. Wood floor polish and wood waxes also can revitalize worn floors. Again, check that the product is safe for your particular flooring before use.

Wood floors bring warmth to a home and are very popular. Cleaning them correctly can add to their appeal and longevity.



COURTESY PHOTO

Pools are undeniably fun, but they still require maintenance.

What to know about installing a pool at home

Summer is a season of relaxation when school is not in session, vacation season is in full swing and people everywhere are getting outside and soaking up the summer sun. It's hard to imagine how that can get any better. But it can for people thinking of installing a pool in their backyard.

Pools definitely have a wow factor that's hard to replicate. Homeowners considering pool installation can take note of these factors as they try to decide if a pool is right for them.

COST

The cost to install a pool depends on a host of factors, including which type of pool homeowners are considering and where they live. According to the online home improvement resource Angi (formerly Angie's list), the average cost to install an above ground pool in the United States in 2022 was \$3,322, while the average inground pool installation in the same year was \$55,000. That's quite a disparity in price, and homeowners should know that the average cost of each project is higher in certain regions and under certain circumstances. Potential ancillary costs, such as excavation and plumbing relocation, will add to the final cost of

the project. The erection of fencing around the pool if no fencing currently surrounds the area where the pool will be located also will add to the final cost.

POOL TYPE

As noted, above ground pools, on average, require a considerably smaller financial investment than inground pools. This is an important consideration, but which option may ultimately prove the better investment is worth researching. Homeowners can speak with a local real estate professional to determine if an inground pool or above ground might yield a significantly higher return at resale. If an inground pool is likely to increase property value by a substantial amount, it could be well worth the extra upfront costs.

MAINTENANCE

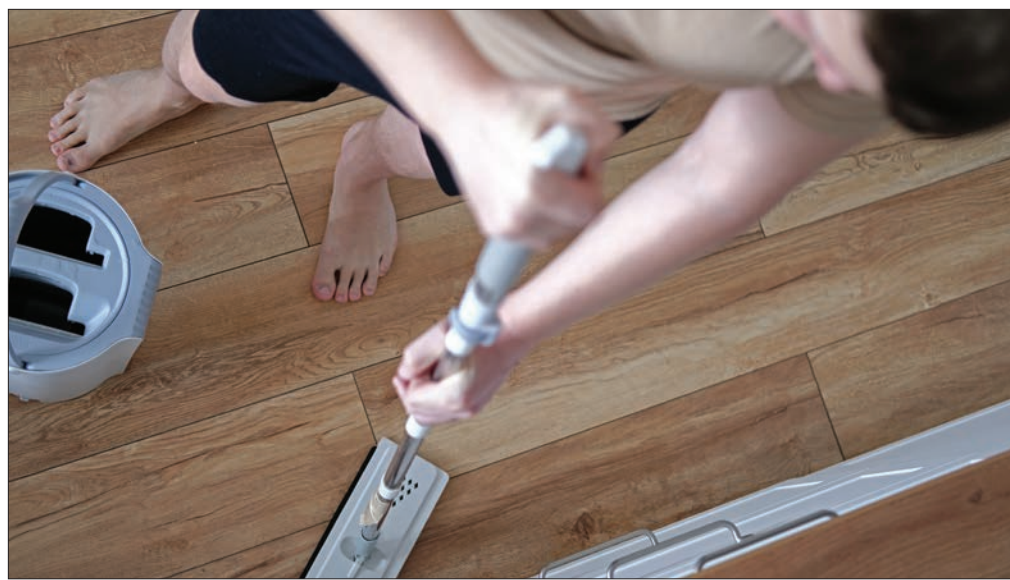
Pools are undeniably fun, but they still require maintenance. The experts at Better Homes & Gardens note that vinyl liners in pools last approximately six to 10 years, while painted concrete may require a fresh coat of paint every five years. Plaster finishes may last as long as 15 years, while cement-coated products can last a lifetime. Pools also need periodic cleaning,

and chemicals to keep the pool operating safely and cleanly will require an additional, if somewhat minimal, financial investment. Homeowners investing in a new pool should be aware of the maintenance required to keep the pool clean and be willing to do that maintenance. And though homeowners typically can open and close pools on their own, it's also possible to hire someone to do it for a relatively small fee each season.

LOCATION

A survey of the land in a yard can reveal how smoothly a pool installation may or may not go. Though it's possible to install a pool in just about any yard, some spaces might require greater preparation and pre-installation effort than others. Sloped backyards, for example, may require the services of a landscape architect to prepare the space, which can extend the time it takes to complete the project and add the overall cost.

These are just some of the factors that merit consideration when mulling a pool installation. A homeowners' best resource might be a local pool company who can visit a home, provide an estimate and point out any challenges that may arise during the install.



COURTESY PHOTO

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