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APRIL 2016

- Add curb appeal to your property
- Exterior lighting improves safety and appearance of a home
- Renovations for senior safety
- Organize your garage

DAILY NEWS REPUBLICAN Herald-Tribune

Add curb appeal to your property

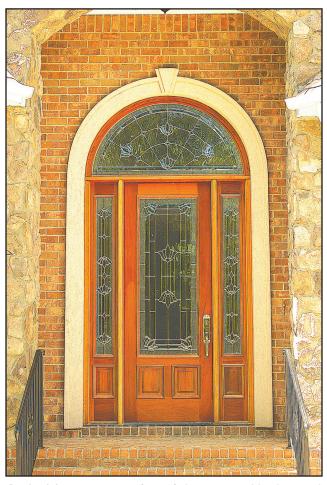
any people are familiar with the idea that a strong first impression can go a long way. While that idea is most often referenced in regard to personal interactions, it's also applicable to real estate.

When selling a home, homeowners who emphasize curb appeal may find it far easier to sell their homes. Curb appeal refers to the impression a home's exterior makes on people seeing the home for the first time.

In 2014, the online real estate database Zillow" surveved real estate agents and found that curb appeal was one of the five most important factors when selling a home.

Projects that improve curb appeal can be vast undertakings or simpler projects, and the following are a handful of projects to improve a home's curb appeal that run the gamut from simple to complex.

Clean up the yard. Cleaning up the yard is among the simpler yet most effective projects to improve a home's curb appeal. When selling their homes, homeowners should clear the yard of any clutter, includ-



An inviting entryway free of clutter can add substantial curb appeal to a property.

ing kids' toys, grass clippings or items that might be scattered throughout not care much about their

the yard. A cluttered yard suggests homeowners do



Cleaning up the yard is among the simpler yet most effective projects to improve a home's curb appeal.

home's appearance, and that may lead buyers to think that indifference extended to maintaining the home's interior as well. Many buyers will ignore properties without any external aesthetic appeal, but cleaning up the yard does not require much effort or expense on the part of sellers.

Make the main entryway more inviting. Creating a more inviting entryway won't be as simple as cleaning up the yard, but it can help create a strong first impression without breaking the bank. To begin, remove plants and furniture from the front porch or area

surrounding the doorway, as such items can create a cluttered feel. If the front door is old, replace it. Custom doors may be expensive, but they might add the wow factor buyers are looking for. If a new door is beyond your means or just unnecessary, repaint the door, ideally in a color that complements the color of your home and the surrounding landscape.

Address pavement problems. Paving problems are not necessarily an expensive fix, but the cost of repairing driveways and walkways can add up if it's been awhile since these areas were refurbished.

Still, one of the first things buyers will notice when getting out of their cars is the ground they're walking on, so patch and repair or even replace driveways and walkways that have fallen into disrepair.

Add or upgrade outdoor living spaces. Outdoor living spaces also can set a property apart from others on the market. A recent study from the National Association of Realtors found that buyers would not hesitate to pay asking price for homes with outdoor living spaces.

When adding or upgrading outdoor living spaces, try to depersonalize the spaces as much as possible, as buyers want to picture themselves, and not the sellers, enjoying these areas.

Include some comfortable furniture, adequate lighting and a dining area in your outdoor living space as well.

Curb appeal can add a lot to a home, while lack of such appeal can make a home difficult to sell. Homeowners who want to sell their properties for asking price or more should address curb appeal before putting their homes on the market





Making renovations to improve senior safety

their golden years, the homes they once thought of as sanctuaries can become unsafe. Families wrestle with the decision to keep parents and grandparents in their homes or move them into assisted living facilities or other senior residences.

Modifying seniors' homes to make them safer is another option. The National Institute on Aging says that families may be able to have a senior stay at home by helping older relatives remain independent but safe. The following are a few ways to do just that. Remove fall hazards.

The NIA reports that six out of 10 falls happen at home, where people spend the most time and fail to think about their safety. Seniors who want to be

s adults approach independent may overestimate their physical abilities. Because falls can be so dangerous, leading to cuts, abrasions, broken bones, and more, seniors and their families must take steps to prevent falls in homes.

- Improve lighting, especially at night when sight may become diminished. Install hand rails and grab bars where possible.
- Pick up clutter and remove tripping hazards, such as slippery rugs or electric cords. Install an electric stair climbing seat to make traversing stairs less risky.
- Improve visibility and ability to communicate. Vision loss may accompany aging, but technology can help mitigate such losses.
- Use big-button phones, remote controls and even keyboards so seniors can

keep in touch. Voice-activated thermostats or smart home technology also can make it easier for seniors to voice their needs.

- Modify fixtures and other features. Dexterity may wane with age, and arthritis can make grasping or turning doorknobs and faucets more challenging.
- Take inventory of areas of the home that present the biggest obstacles to seniors.
- Replace knobs in the shower or on faucets with lever handles, which are easier to maneuver.
- Install new cabinets and doors that freely glide open and self-close.
- Replace toggle light switches with easier paddle-type switches that can be pushed with a hand or even arm. Motion-sensor lights also can be handy.

Push-button oven controls may make cooking easier.

• Prepare for medical emergencies. Invest in medical alert systems. such as necklaces or bracelets, that can be used to

contact police or emergency medical personnel directly. Make phones available in commonly used rooms in the home. such as bedrooms, the living room, bathrooms, and the kitchen.

- Install ramps and nonslip flooring. Ramps can make it easier to reach the front door or cross over elevated doorway thresholds. Nonslip flooring also can prevent falls around the house, offering more traction for feet, walkers or canes.
- Repair cracks in walkways and driveways. Safety should also extend to the outdoors. Be sure to repair cracks or uneven pavement. Replace loose patio blocks or bricks with a more stable design or with concrete or asphalt.
- While outdoors, trim back bushes and make sure there are no tripping hazards outside as well.

A few modifications can make it possible for seniors to live comfortably in their homes for many years.

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Insects that harm your home

omeowners looking to prevent their homes from becoming a meal or nesting site for potentially harmful insects may know to keep watch for termites during the year. But termites aren't the only insects that can damage a home. There are a few other pests that can bore through the wood of homes and structures, potentially causing considerable damage.

• Carpenter ants: These insects get their name because they prefer to nest above ground in wooden structures. Unlike their smaller ant cousins, larger carpenter ants prefer tree stumps, lumber, subfloors, or even roofs. They don't use the wood for food, and can establish residence in just about any solid housing material, including rigid foam insulation.

• Powderpost beetles: Though termites might have the most name recognition, powderpost beetles are potentially more destructive to seasoned wood. Wood boring powderpost beetles spend most of their lives as larvae (woodworms) in wood, where they tunnel in search of starch and other nutrients they need. They can cause all sorts of structural issues if they damage beams and other major components to homes.

• Carpenter bees: These large bees resemble bumblebees, except they have a shiny black abdomen. Carpenter bees bore symmetrical holes in exposed wood, where they lay eggs and in which larvae grow. Although the bees' holes are superficial and rarely cause much damage, birds in search of larvae for food may peck at wood containing the larvae and cause more significant damage.

Fixing driveway cracks

f we know one thing about concrete and asphalt, it's that they easily crack. Despite this fact, they still make for the most durable and popular material choices for driveways.

Weather conditions and overall wear make cracks inevitable. Water can seep into or below the surface, expand and eventually damage the material. This is the most common cause of driveway cracks.

Fortunately, there are plenty of products on the market that enable homeowners to fix these types of cracks themselves, without having to go through the trouble of replacing entire sections of driveway.

Every spring, you should take a look around your driveway for signs of win-

ter damage. This is the perfect time of year to find new cracks, and then take the appropriate action to fix them.

Here are three steps to repairing a driveway crack:

I. Choose your material

The most effective solution is a patch product that comes in both pourable and tubed forms. The pourable option is easier to use only because the tubed form requires a caulk gun for application. Choosing between the two is really a matter of preference, as both have been proven effective.

2. Follow the directions

The first step to a cor-

rect application usually involves clearing the area of dirt, debris and other foreign objects that would compromise the strength of the material. You could even spray out the crack with a garden hose, letting it fully dry before application. It's recommended that you shake the product vigorously prior to applying.

Be sure to use protective eyewear and gloves when handling the products.

3. Smooth the crack

After applying filler to the height of the sur-

rounding pavement, use a putty knife to level out the surface. Sometimes one application isn't enough. Generally, you'll want to wait 24 hours before applying a second coat. Other

instructions can include

avoiding walking or driv-

ing on the surface for up to two days.

Once you have followed the product instructions and waited the recommended amount of time, you should be able to use your driveway as normal for years to come.









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It's possible to cohabitate in the backyard with a dog. Follow some tips to set aside areas for people and pets.

illions of dogs share the homes and hearts of people across the country. Dogs can provide companionship, affection and joy. But when dogs spend time outdoors and cause damage to lawns and gardens, that cute and cuddly appeal might dwindle.

Although dogs are beneficial in numerous ways, their tendency to create unsightly messes in the yard have many homeowners wringing their hands in frustration. Erecting a dog run or using other strategies may help to alleviate any damage the dog causes.

A dog run is essentially a fenced-in part of the yard where dogs can play or be trained to relieve themselves. As most pet owners know, dogs, particularly females because their urine is concentrated to one spot on the lawn, can create unsightly urine burns. Looking at patches of burnt, straw-like grass where a lush lawn used to be can be aggravating. The same can be said for finding dog "presents" all over the yard. All it takes is stepping in or sliding in a pile of joy to raise blood pressure. Plus, there's the extra work of tracking down such presents and having to clean them up. This can be timeconsuming with a big yard, not to mention messy and smelly.

Containing your dog to a run will keep messes all in once place. When the dog cannot be supervised by you, a dog run will be a way to let the dog spend time outside in a way that he or she won't get into trouble. The run can be constructed of any material you desire, whether chain-link fencing, wood slats, lattice material. or tightly spaced shrubbery. Pea gravel is a good material to use on the floor of the dog run. Not only is pea gravel aesthetically appealing, but it also allows urine to run through into the soil below and will be able to keep feces above for easier clean-up. It also can be hosed off and topped off when gravel is depleted.

Avoid landscape fabrics or artificial turf that is not designed for pets. It may collect waste and lead to the proliferation of bacteria, which can create odor and unsanitary conditions for the dog.

Many people like to camouflage dog runs from the rest of the yard. Trailing vines of ivy or other upward growing plants may suffice. Avoid planting any poisonous plants next to the run so they are not accidentally consumed. It is also best to keep sweet nectar plants away to minimize bee and wasps from flying close to the dog.

If you do not want to segregate your dog from the rest of the yard, find ways to prevent him or her from getting into places you'd rather keep off limits. Cobble rock is often difficult for dogs to walk on. Use it to form barriers of 3 to 5 inches in width to prevent access to certain parts of the yard. Border planting beds with thorny bushes or big rocks that don't allow traction.

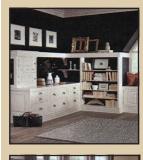
Do make a dog running path by the fence where there is a lot of foot traffic. This way your dog can run back and forth and watch the neighbors go by. Again, pea gravel is a good choice here so that it will mask paw-trodden grass.

Dogs will behave like dogs, so pet owners should learn the best way to enjoy the backyard together. Training the pooch to relieve himself in one spot and creating places that are safe for him to urinate may alleviate destructive behavior.

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Organizing your garage

he garage: the catchall section of our homes that never seems to get as much TLC as it deserves. It's where the overflow of holiday decorations, outgrown clothes and sports equipment converge, often in disarray.

It's time to take back control of this versatile space in your home. The garage has so much to offer if you're willing to regularly maintain it. This may mean hanging new shelving for extra storage space or repainting the floor for a protective, great-looking

shine.

Here are three steps you can take to achieve a more organized garage:

I. Give yourself enough time

Many homeowners think they can power through a garage reorganization in a matter of a couple of hours. Sure, if your garage is already in relatively good shape, that may be possible. But for people looking to complete an organizational overhaul, it is best to devote the bulk of a weekend to the chore.

Not doing so can leave you feeling frustrated by a job half done. Give yourself enough time to not only assess your current garage storage situation, but then also to put together a plan that highlights what goes where and how much you're willing to spend on new storage materials.

2. Be ready to donate

Overflow can be a real problem in the garage. Fishing poles, soccer balls and kids' bikes may as well call the garage their own. Without ample space for these materials, the garage's walls may feel like they are caving in on you.

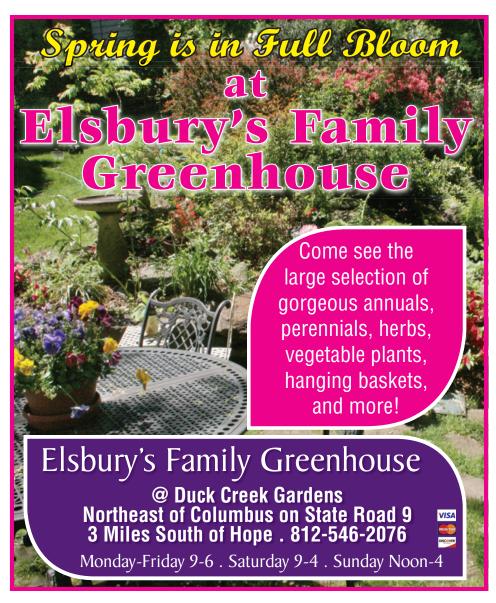
The solution: Give things away. Plenty of organizations offer some sort of item drop-off. Start a donate pile outside of your garage to collect all the extra items for which you have no use.

3. Never organize alone

One of the best tips for organizing your garage is to invite friends and family members over to help. A

major garage overhaul can be time consuming, requiring numerous hands on deck if you're hoping to finish anytime soon.

Call over some friends and family members. Have a list of specific responsibilities for volunteers to maximize their time when they are helping you. And remember to always treat your helpers to hot coffee or lunch, a gesture that will let them know they are appreciated.





Exterior lighting improves the safety, appearance

hen drafting a to-do list for home improvements that can increase home value and appeal, several renovations may be atop homeowners' lists. While kitchen or bathroom remodels may be popular renovations, homeowners also should consider outdoor lighting schemes that can make homes safer and more alluring.

Outdoor lighting serves various purposes. Such lighting can draw attention to more impressive parts of a property. In addition, such lighting can improve security and deter criminals.

To get started, homeowners should first examine the exteriors of their homes and make note of existing lighting and where improvements can be made. If you're not sure where to begin, speak with an electrician or a land-scape designer, each of whom can offer suggestions on lighting and which



Beauty

thetics, think about the

appeal of an accented land-

scape. Include lights to

When addressing aes-

options are the best fit for your particular property.

Next, you'll want to consider efficiency and function. The United States Department of Energy suggests incorporating energy-efficient lighting, including energy-saving LED bulbs or fluorescent lights, into your plans. Timers and other automatic controls can prevent waste by turning lights on only when they are needed. Solar lights can be used as accent lights, further saving energy.

frame the front door and call attention to certain elements, such as decorative trees or water features. Use lights to light up deck stairways or to accent planters. Speak with a lighting professional about how to position lights to cover the most territory in the most attractive way possible.

Safety

Safety is an important consideration when improving a home. Lighting can help illuminate potential hazards or draw attention to borders or property boundaries. Navigating in

the dark can be treacherous, so put lights along pathways and near pools or spas. Be sure that lights will clearly mark other walkways around your home, such as those leading from doors to the yard or from the garage to where trash and recycling pails are kept. If a design element such as a bridge over a water feature or a particular ornamental tree or shrub is difficult to navigate in the dark, use lights to improve visibility.

Security

Added security is another reason to install more

exterior lighting. Dark homes are attractive to burglars. Eliminate dark corners by lighting up areas where thieves may be able to gain access to your home. This includes areas near doorways and ground-level windows. Install motion-sensor lights in such areas so you are not wasting energy.

Lighting may not only deter human intruders, but also it can scare away animals. A raccoon, skunk or opossum may think twice about hanging around your home when your property is bathed in a spotlight.



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Freshen up your home

fter a few months of chilly temperatures. come spring, many homeowners are eager to throw open their windows and doors and breathe new life into their homes. Simple changes made now even before the weather begins to warm up — can improve interior spaces and brighten the atmosphere of a home.

• Go plant shopping. Research from NASA suggests adding at least one plant in your home per 100 square feet is efficient enough to clean air. Fresh foliage also makes a home feel warm and inviting. Watering and misting plants introduces moisture into indoor air, which can make rooms overcome with dry air from heating systems feel comfortable. Just be sure to avoid overwatering plants, which can lead to mold growth.

• Swap out throw pillows. Accent pillows on beds and sofas are quick and inexpensive ways to add new bursts of color to rooms. You may be able to make over a room's entire color scheme with new pillows. Invest in pillows that you can switch with each season so your decor will

Spring is in



Fresh flowers, new throw pillows and lightweight draperies are some easy ways to transform a home in time for spring's arrival.

never look tired or dull.

• Clean existing light **fixtures.** Another way to brighten the mood in a home is to periodically clean light fixtures to make sure they are working effectively. Spend time dusting them and cleaning off any accumulated debris. If need be, switch out old lamp shades for newer ones that let more light shine through.

• Give rugs and floors a deep cleaning. Recirculated air may be full of dust and other microscopic particles that end up blowing throughout your home. Also, it's easy to track in dirt and other materials on

your shoes that become imbedded in carpeting. At least once a year, rent or enlist the surfaces of carpet and upholstery cleaners to give floors a thorough cleaning.

Color-coordinate bookshelves. Group all books with similarly colored covers together for an instant and eye-appealing look.

• Simmer some homemade home deodorizer. In a large pot, boil water and some scented herbs, such as rosemary, citrus rinds, vanilla, or lavender. The aroma will waft through the home, creating a pleasing scent.



ardening is a rewarding hobby that can pay a host of dividends, both for the planet and the people doing the gardening. Healthy plant life can help clean the air by absorbing carbon dioxide and various air pollutants, while the act of gardening can help gardeners combat stress.

Published in 2011 in the Journal of Health Psychology, a study from researchers in the Netherlands found that gardening promotes relief from acute stress. In the study, two groups of participants were asked to complete a stressful task and then instructed to either read indoors or garden outdoors for 30 minutes. After 30 minutes. the latter group had lower levels of the stress hormone cortisol and even reported being in a better mood than the group instructed to read indoors.

But gardening does more than just provide gardeners with a reason to spend some time relaxing outdoors in an effort to relieve stress. Gardeners who raise certain plants may be able to bring those benefits with them when going inside as well. According to an article published in the journal Environmental Health Perspectives in October 2011,

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Avoid Grilling Mistakes

he smell of the barbecue grill is one of the hallmarks of the springtime. The sizzle of the hot grate and the crackling of the charcoal let you know the winter season has officially ended.

As you being inviting friends over for a spring and summer filled with great food and better company, now is a good time to refresh your common grilling practices.

By now you probably have a grilling routine that you follow with every cooking session. True grilling experts are meticulous about the cleanliness of their grills, as well as the quality of their tools.

But there are several common grilling mistakes that even the most grizzled grilling professionals commit from time to time.



Check out our list below to see if you've ever been guilty.

Low-Quality Tools

You can't grill effectively without the right tools — plain and simple. Are your

spatulas rusty and warped? Is your grill brush caked in residue? If so, it's time for an equipment overhaul. Choose spatulas, tongs and grill cleaning tools that

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PLANTS

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houseplants can work wonders when it comes to improving overall health, removing toxins from air, soil and water by metabolizing some toxic chemicals and releasing harmless byproducts while sequestering such toxins by incorporating them into plant tissues.

Clean indoor air is important for everyone, but especially so for those people who suffer from respiratory ailments like asthma. In fact, the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology considers indoor air filtration an essential part of any strategy to improve respiratory health. But filtration systems and air purifiers are often not enough, and those who want the air in their homes to be as clean as possible may benefit from introducing certain houseplants into their homes. The following are a handful of plants that can help to improve indoor air quality.

Aloe vera

Aloe vera might be most often associated with hand creams and hand soaps, but the aloe vera plant, a succulent that even novice gardeners should have no problem growing, can clear indoor air of formal-dehyde and benzene, two common byproducts of chemical-based cleaners many people use in their homes.

Spider plant

Spider plants are resilient, and that makes them great houseplants for busy men and women who tend to be forgetful when caring for their plants. In addition, spider plants are pet-friendly and can be used to combat benzene, carbon dioxide, formaldehyde and xylene.

English ivy

NASA researchers exploring the possibilities of long-term space habitation found that certain houseplants were more effective at cleaning air inside energy-efficient, nonventilated buildings than others. One such plant was English ivy, which can effectively combat the formaldehyde found in certain household cleaning products.

Bamboo palm

Bamboo palms also found their way onto NASA's list. Bamboo palm plants thrive indoors, where they are especially effective at filtering out the chemicals benzene and trichloroethylene.

Gardening has been proven to be a soothing hobby that can help gardeners reduce stress. But the health benefits of gardening can extend indoors as well.





Prepare cooling systems for heat

ne springtime task on homeowners' to-do lists is checking cooling systems to ensure they are ready for summer.

Proper maintenance of cooling systems is essential to saving energy and keeping utility costs down. Fortunately, homeowners need not be certified HVAC technicians to maintain their cooling units.

• Clean filters. Whether a home is kept cool by a whole-house central air conditioning system or window units, clean filters are necessary to keep the units working efficiently. Routinely replacing or cleaning filters is one of the most important maintenance tasks to improve airflow and increase efficiency.

The U.S. Office of Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy says replacing a dirty, clogged filter with a clean one can lower an air conditioner's energy consumption by anywhere from 5 to 15 per- ter air flow.

• Know the square **footage.** When replacing a cooling system, have an understanding of the size of your home (or room if installing an window unit). Determine the area of the home so you buy a unit that suits your needs. Air conditioners use BTUs (British Thermal Units) to define cooling power. The more BTUs, the larger the space that can be cooled. However, homeowners do not want to exceed the necessary cooling power. This leads to energy waste. EnergyStar.gov can help homeowners find the right cooling system for their needs.

• Inspect system coils. The evaporator and condenser coils on air conditioners can collect dirt, even when filters are maintained. Dirty coils are less efficient at absorbing heat, so periodically remove the dirt. Outdoor coils can be kept cleaner by cutting back foliage from the unit to allow bet-

• Inspect condensate drains. Energy.gov also suggests making sure condensate drains, which take moisture pulled from the air away, are functioning properly. If they're clogged, they may not be effective at reducing humidity in a home, and they may even leak.

Clear debris. Remove fallen leaves or other plant material from condenser units and fan blades. Obstructed components can cause the system to retain heat, compromising its ability to work effectively. Some homeowners prefer to cover their condensers at the end of the cooling season to keep leaves and dirt out of the unit.

• Check window unit seals. When installing

window units, make sure all seals around the air conditioner are in place to prevent cool-air loss.

• Hire a technician. Air conditioner technicians can be very helpful and will know how to prepare a system for hot weather.

Technicians typically conduct multipoint inspections and measure such things as refrigerant levels and duct leakage. Airflow through the evaporator coil also may be checked. If a homeowner suspects the thermostat is not working properly, a technician can verify if that is true and even install a new one if necessary.

As summer approaches, homeowners should prepare their air conditioning units for the busy months ahead.

GRILLING

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are made of durable materials, such as stainless steel.

Choose durable, heavyduty tools with long handles for maximum safety when you're reaching across the coals. Find tools that are dishwasher-safe to make cleaning up a breeze.

Dirty Grill

When was the last time vou cranked vour burners to high after a cook to burn off some of the grill residue? This is good practice to maintain your grill and enhance the taste of your food. Make sure you clean your grill before and after each cook.

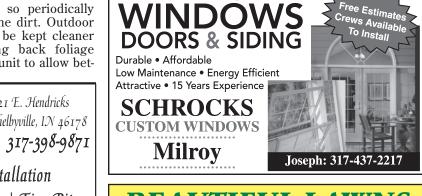
Scrape out any excess ash or grease under the grate. This will keep your flames flowing strongly instead of being snuffed

out by blockages. Consider deep-cleaning your grill a couple of times per year. This entails scrubbing the stainless steel and scraping all food scraps off the sides and bottom of the grill.

Forgetting to Preheat

A common grilling mistake is not being patient enough before adding food to the grill. Just like an oven, you must give your grill about 15 minutes to warm up. Use the temperature gauge to decide when to put on the meat. Experts recommend most foods be cooked in the 300- to 400-degree range.

Depending on what you're cooking, it's generally a good idea to immediately turn your burners down to low after you add the meat. This low-and-slow approach will result in juicier meats.



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Save money and stay cool as temperatures rise

xcessive energy bills can be a concern in spring and summer, just as much as they are in the winter. So how can you save money while keeping your home cool? The solution is simple: Top up your attic insulation.

A poorly insulated attic is

a primary source of energy loss, forcing your AC unit to work harder than necessary over the warmer months. Most attics are insulated, but oftentimes the amount of insulation present is inadequate — especially in older homes. Over time, insulation can settle and compact, allowing heat to escape through gaps.

Topping it up is easy. Ideally, you want to aim for a depth of 16 inches of insulation for an overall R-value of 50. When existing insulation is present, simply level existing insulation to the top of the joist. Lay a fire- and moisture-resistant batt insulation, like Roxul Comfortbatt, on

top of joists, running perpendicular to the first layer. Ensure batts are butted against each other tightly. Fit batts closely to cross joists; cut batt if necessary and leave no space between layers. Don't forget to insulate the attic hatch to the same level as the rest of the attic. Apply weather-stripping to

the edge of the hatch to reduce air leakage. Keep in mind that only IC-rated electrical fixtures can have insulation placed with zero clearance. Follow the manufacturer's instructions and local building code to insulate around the chimney.

When a house is insulated properly, energy savings can add up over time. Remember, insulation starts working the moment it is installed and can last for the life of the building. Tips on this easy, low-cost DIY project that will reduce your home's energy loss and save you money are available at www.diywithroxul.

Let a professional organize your home

any people routinely themselves confronted with situations that could be made simpler if they were just a little more organized. Whether it's lost keys, cramped cabinets or misplaced documents, minor yet inconvenient situations can be mitigated if not eliminated if men and women simply commit to being more organized.

Men and women who struggle with organization may be surprised to learn just how much time and productivity they lose to disorganization. For example, a survey from Ikea found that men and women routinely spend six minutes just looking for their keys. When added up, that's a substantial amount of time that can be put to better use.

Becoming more organized is a popular resolution come New Year's Day, and many people benefit from hiring professional



Professional organizers can help get your home or office in order.

organizers to make their resolutions a reality.

Professional organizers can help men and women reduce clutter in their homes and offices and regain control over their surroundings. Such professionals also can help solve organization problems, and that can help men and women reduce stress.

Professional organizers know which strategies work, but men and women should know that not all organizers are the same. Some organizers may work as a hobby or be part of a larger cleaning company, while others are certified in organization. When searching for an organizer, determine if he or she belongs to the National Association of Professional Organizers and/or if an organizer has been certified by the Board

of Certification for Professional Organizers". While certification may not be necessary to help you organize your home or business, certified organizers may have more experience.

Organizers may specialize in certain areas. Some deal with corporate and business organization, while others help with real estate staging. Look for one who has experience working with people of your ilk.

Organizers will want to examine clients' situations before they develop a plan of action. Therefore, do not feel the need to prepare for the organizer's arrival by cleaning up, as doing so may only mask the problems you're having. The organizer will walk through your home or business and assess your needs. Many organizers will suggest you work with them to learn organizational strategies that you can implement on your own so you remain organized for years to come.



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Design tips for baby boomers

StatePoint

here are about 76.4 million Baby Boomers in the US, according to the Population Reference Bureau. As this population ages, it will become important that features on their houses promote safety, are easy-to-maintain, and last a long time.

Whether building from the ground up or remodeling a current home, take "aging-in-place" into consideration every step of the way. Here are some great projects to consider with strong payback.

A better basement

When building a new home, choose your foundation carefully. Not only is an uninsulated basement a major source of heat loss, but it's throwing away potential space that can enhance your life. A "liveable basement" can be designated as a "grandkid zone," an at-home office or crafting workshop.



A walk-in tub, pedestal sink, and raised-height toilet are key bathroom safety features.

You can use a pre-cast insulated concrete foundation system, such those from Superior Walls, to create an energy-efficient damp-proof basement. This foundation will help reduce utility bills for long-term savings. Reinforced concrete walls create a permanent barrier against water, and pre-engineered access for wiring or plumbing features are a key element to whatever vision you have for this subterranean space.

First floor privacy

Many seniors opt to spend more of their time at home on the easy-to-navigate ground floor. But don't compromise privacy in pursuit of accessibility.

Privacy windows can alleviate concerns you have about neighbors seeing you go about your business. For example, those from Hy-Lite are offered in numerous styles and designs, including opaque decorative glass, acrylic block and true glass block windows. Silkscreen glass designs can complement the overall style of the home. From your master suite to your bathroom to the main rooms of your home, avoid prying eyes with this crucial component of stylish first floor living.

Safe, comfortable bathrooms

As mobility and coordination decline, slips and falls can make bathrooms a hazardous place. Think of the years ahead by seeking out bathroom features that are ADA compliant.

"Taller toilets that are easier to rise from, pedestal sinks that allow wheelchairs and walkers access, and walk-in tubs that promote easy entries and exits, are all bathroom features people may need as they age," says Jean Dimeo, a Certified Aging in Place Specialist.

Brands like Mansfield Plumbing are accommodating the boomer population by offering selections of SmartHeight toilets, pedestal and sinks.

Add your personal style to your home

StatePoint

ou may feel locked into the style you inherited when vou purchased your house. But you have more power than you think to transform your reality home into your dream home.

To make a big style impact, consider these upgrades and projects:

Stunning curb appeal

Don't settle for a drab or standard home exterior, particularly when it comes to your roof. A beautiful, colorful update will enhance your home's exterior design and boost curb appeal.

For long-term durability, consider a polymer slate or shake roofing product, like those from DaVinci Roofscapes, which are offered in 50 standard colors and a variety of striking color blends.

However, picking the

right exterior color scheme and style can be daunting without guidance, say experts.

"Many homeowners are afraid to shake things up with color because they don't want to make a mistake," says Kate Smith, a color trend forecaster with Sensational Color.

Luckily, free resources can provide guidance and tips on understanding your home's exterior features and how to play off them with color accents. For example, Smith has written a free 36-page guide, "FRESH Color Schemes for Your Home Exterior." The guide explores color options for seven different home styles and eases the process of choosing color palettes to complement your home exterior. To download the free guide, visit davinciroofscapes.

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Why hire a landscaper?

he majority of homeowners want their properties to appear as appealing as possible. While many homeowners want to be proud of their properties and come home to a welcoming home each night, the benefits to maintaining landscaping go beyond the notion that well-cared for lawns make for more comforting retreats.

Because numerous variables, including landscaping, influence property values, it's difficult to assess just how much the property values of homes with impressive landscapes are influenced by those very landscapes. Indeed, studies have produced varying results regarding the effect of well-landscaped homes on property values. But what many studies have shown and what many realtors indicate is that impressive landscaping adds a significant amount to property values, with estimates suggesting landscaping increases home values by anywhere from 5 to 20 percent.

Such estimates are good news for homeowners, and they also highlight the stakes involved when making landscaping decisions. Homeowners with green thumbs may embrace the challenge of revitalizing their lawns and gardens, but many, especially those pressed for time, can benefit greatly from working with professional landscapers.

Why hire a professional landscaper?

Maintaining a property requires more than just mowing the lawn every couple of weeks. Even homeowners committed to making their properties as pristine as possible can run into problems when adverse weather conditions pose a threat to lawns and gardens. The following are just a handful of reasons why homeowners may find

working with landscaping professionals is the best thing for their properties and their bank accounts.

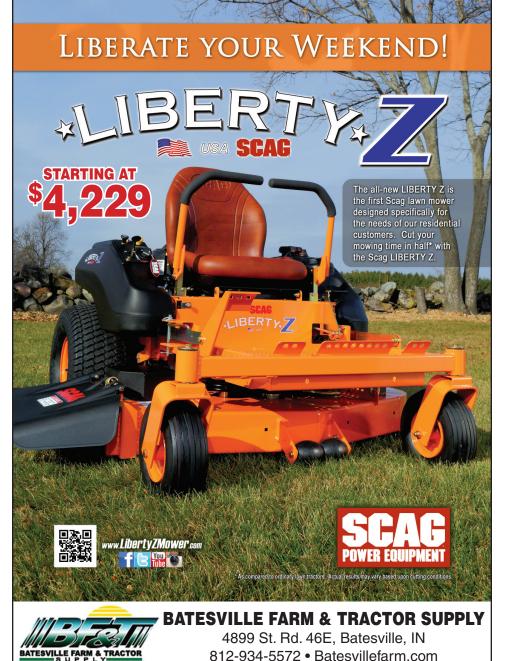
• Professionals understand the local climate. Experienced professional landscapers will understand the local climate and the challenges it presents to your lawn. Experience can prove invaluable as lawns battle adverse conditions that threaten its survival. While homeowners going it alone may struggle through a trial and error period as they try to address problems threatening their lawns, experienced professionals are more likely to identify the problem immediately, providing a ready solution that can prevent potentially costly repairs down the road.

• Professionals can provide inspiration. In addition to maintaining properties, many landscaping professionals have vast experience improving properties through landscape design. Professional landscapers may have a host of ideas for your property that you would never think of. Homeowners with little to no lawn and garden experience may not realize all the things they can do with their properties, and those who go it alone may end up with unappealing landscapes that do not attract buyers' attention when the home hits the market. Professionals typically have a wealth of ideas and, perhaps more importantly, they understand which ideas will and won't work on a given property.

 Professionals can remove some of the stress of managing landscaping projects. Homeowners know that home improvement projects, whether they are addressing home interiors or exteriors, can be stressful. Professional landscapers typically have a network of professionals, including contractors, who they have worked with in the past. Such connections can ensure more complex projects that require both tion contractors go as smoothly as possible. In addition, homeowners who receive contractor recommendations from their experienced landscapers tend to rest easier knowing the people working on their properties have already developed a rapport and established a successful track record working together.







Reclaimed wood adds instant appeal

epurposing salvaged wood is a popular trend in the home improvement industry. Not only can using salvaged wood give a home a one-of-a-kind look, but it's a handy way to incorporate the three Rs of green living into your lifestyle: reduce, reuse and recycle.

Reclaimed wood is often used in flooring, beams, wall treatments, and doors, but it also can be turned into furniture or home accent items. Reclaimed wood adds warmth and historical interest to a home's decor that newer materials may lack. Although finding wood that can be salvaged takes time and some legwork, such efforts can quickly pay off. Many businesses are now devoted to reclaimed timber, which can help make the process



of finding and using salvaged wood even easier.

Homeowners considering reclaimed wood may be interested to learn that such wood can serve various functions aside from benefitting the planet.

 Match old-growth wood. New regulations may prevent certain spe-

cies of trees from being cut down. That means it can be challenging to match old wood in a home, particularly if you're looking to maintain historical value and authenticity. Relying on salvaged wood items can alleviate this concern, ensuring that you can find rare woods that are no longer available brand new.

- Salvaged wood has character. It's difficult to mimic the natural age marks and character that older wood may have. Instead of being raised on farms, wood harvested decades ago probably grew in natural environments, making the wood both durable and strong. The color and grain of salvaged wood may also be unique.
- Look at objects in a new wav. Doors are versatile pieces of reclaimed lumber because they're already flat and rather large. Doors can be turned into headboards, tables or benches. Staircase or porch posts can be turned into candlestick holders, and wood shutters can dress up walls and provide a place to hang artwork and other wall items.

STYLE

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An interior oasis

An ancient tub, a leaky toilet – these are bathroom features to bid farewell to forever. Your bathroom should be more than just a functional space; it should be an oasis from busy, stressful days.

Whether you are looking for customary bathroom elements or a spalike whirlpool system, seek out a collection, rather than a la carte replacements, to achieve a coordinated look. For example, the Affordable Style Designer Series suites from Mansfield Plumbing, come in a variety of unified traditional and modern designs.

If you want a bit more from your bathroom, consider new products, such as the MicroDerm Thera-

peutic Bath, which silently infuses millions of oxygenrich microbubbles into bathwater to relax, clean and exfoliate skin.

A Touch of Elegance

Give your interior spaces privacy and elegance by rethinking windows. In key rooms, consider replacing standard windows with privacy windows.

Decorative glass windows add character to a space because they become the view. They serve as their own artwork for the room with the added benefit of providing privacy in the home.

Those from Hy-Lite include square, geometric and oval shaped windows in both fixed and operable styles and in various sizes, so they can be used as a focal point in a room or to create a striking accent wall of windows.

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A new remodeling trend adds resale value

StatePoint

hether you're looking to sell your house or just want to make a smart update that's worth your time and monev, consider a design trend that is both attractive and proven to add value to your home: manufactured stone.

"Manufactured stone is exploding in popularity, in both exteriors and interiors," says Phil Wengerd, vice president of Market Strategies for ProVia, a leading manufacturer of home building products.

The numbers agree. Manufactured stone veneer projects offer a 92.9 percent cost recovery, according to Remodeling Magazine's Cost vs. Value Report, a detailed comparison of the average cost of remodeling projects with the value those projects retain at resale in 100 US markets.

If you're looking to make a home upgrade using manufactured stone, Wengerd says to consider the following trends:

Popular style

While homeowners once attempted to emulate materials available in the local natural environment, the elegant look of dry stack stone now dominates nationwide.

The material features the look of smaller stones, providing an elegant natural look that's versatile in both exterior and interior applications.

Exotic colors

Color blends continue to feature earth shades, however, more reds, purples and burgundies are being mixed in to complement colors in carpet, walls or window treatments. To respond to the demand, brands like ProVia's manufactured stone are adding new stone color options.

Versatile project ideas

As technology has made manufactured stone more accessible to the masses,

SIDING DOORS MORE

today it's showing up on more than just a home's exterior.

In interior applications, stone adds a dramatic frame for kitchen stoves and islands, and is used around bathtubs to create a spa-like retreat. It's also a popular choice for masonry surface application in finished basements or for stone fireplac-

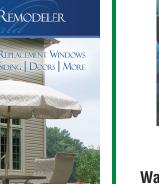
Exterior stone accents, like an outdoor kitchen, deliver plenty of wow-factor without the wallet cringe that a traditional stone-laving job would entail.

For style and color inspiration, as well as free resources, such as a visualizer design tool and videos on installing manufactured stone veneer, visit provia. com/stone.

Recapture home equity by seeking out projects and upgrades like manufactured stone, with a proven ability to add value.



Seneca Dry Stack manufactured stone, by ProVia.



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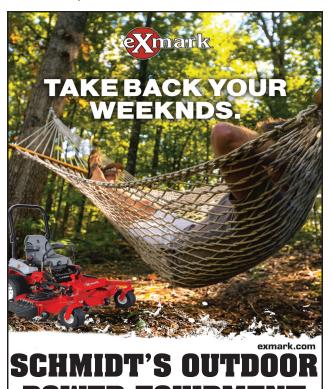
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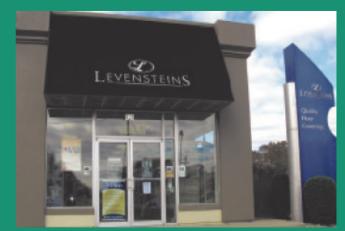




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