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which signals the start of...

Fall, Home, Lawn & Garden Improvement



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Fall is the time to prepare lawns and gardens for the cold months ahead

BY TONI MILBOURNE

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As summer draws to a close, many homeowners are turning their attention to preparing yards and gardens for the months ahead. Lawn and landscape experts agree that fall offers the ideal conditions to tackle projects that set the stage for a healthier, greener lawn come spring.

Rick Jenkins, with Rick's Total Landscape Care in Summit Point, said fall is the best time to establish new grass or overseed existing lawns.

"The soil is still warm enough for seeds to germinate, but you don't have the stress of summer heat," Jenkins explained. "There's also less competition with weeds, which gives grass the advantage."

Jenkins noted that pairing seeding with core aeration provides even better results. By removing small plugs of soil, water and nutrients can penetrate deeper, roots have room to expand, and the plugs left on the surface naturally break down to improve the topsoil. Mowing the lawn short before overseeding, he added, gives new seed better contact with the soil.

Another piece of advice Jenkins offered is to resist the urge to bag grass clippings.

"Those clippings break down and return nutrients back to the soil, acting as a natural fertilizer," he said. Regular mowing that constitutes removing only about a quarter of an inch of growth at a time, helps prevent thatch buildup and keeps the lawn looking healthy.

Beyond the grass itself, fall is also a key time for general garden and home maintenance. Applying mulch around trees and flower beds insulates roots and conserves moisture as temperatures drop. Leaves should be cleared regularly to prevent smothering the grass, though they can be shredded and used as mulch or compost rather than hauled away. Gardeners are also encouraged to trim back perennials, remove diseased plant material, and get spring bulbs such as tulips and daffodils into the ground before the first hard frost.

Homeowners can save themselves costly repairs later by checking the rest of their property now. Outdoor faucets and irrigation systems should be drained and protected to prevent freezing, while gutters and downspouts need to be cleared so water can flow freely. Inspecting caulking and seals around windows and doors can also help keep out cold drafts and lower heating bills once winter sets in.

With a little extra effort in the fall, lawns and gardens can be better protected from the stresses of winter, setting the stage for a healthy rebound when spring returns. As Jenkins summed up, preparing now "gives your lawn the best possible chance to thrive all year long."



Photo courtesy of Rick's Total Landscape Care

Mulching around plants and trees is a perfect preparation for the upcoming fall and winter months.



Submitted photo

New gutters can help to prevent roof damage and make properties safer by ensuring rain water is directed away from walkways.

Signs it's time to replace gutters

BY METRO CREATIVE

Home improvement projects run the gamut from complex undertakings like room additions to simpler renovations like a new front door. Some home renovations excite homeowners more than others, but all improvements are a way to make a home safer, more comfortable and/or more functional.

A gutter replacement might not inspire the same level of excitement as a room addition or an overhaul of an outdoor living space, but new gutters can help to prevent roof damage and make properties safer by ensuring rain water is directed away from walkways. Homeowners who suspect it might be time for a gutter replacement can look for these signs of fading gutters.

- **Cracks or splits:** Cracks or splits at the seams of the gutters where two pieces connect is a telltale sign they need to be replaced. Cracks or splits are can slowly lead to separation of gutter pieces, which will lead to leaks. But not all cracks or splits are found at the seams. In fact, some homes feature seamless gutters, which also can crack or split. Regardless of where they're found, cracks or splits are a warning signs of fading gutters.

- **Rust:** Rust is rarely a good sign whether you're looking at a vehicle or even garden tools. Rust also is a bad sign in relation to gutters. Gutters are painted, and not only for aesthetic purposes. Paint on gutter also serves to protect them from water. When paint begins to flake, gutters will be-

gin to rust and may even produce noticeable rust flakes on the ground below. Rust on gutters and rust flakes beneath them are indicative of gutters that need to be replaced.

- **Gutters pulling away from the home:** Gutters that appear to be pulling away from the home is a sign that they need to be replaced. Gutters are fastened to a home during installation, which ensures they can withstand rain and water. Over time, those fasteners can wear down, ultimately leading to gutters that appear to be pulling away from the home. Though gutters can be refastened, eventually they will need to be replaced.

- **Pooling water:** Pooling water in a gutter may just be a sign that gutters need to be cleaned. However, pooling water on the

ground directly beneath gutters indicates they're not effectively directing water away from the home.

- **Water damage inside:** A home's interior might not be the first place homeowners look when inspecting for damaged gutters, but a flooded basement or crawl space could indicate a gutter problem. Gutters and downspouts are designed to direct water away from a home when functioning properly. When that isn't happening, water can pool beneath the foundation, leading to pooling water and other water damage in basements and crawl spaces.

Gutter replacement projects may not be exciting, but new gutters can make a home safer and prolong the life of a roof and other features on a property.

What to expect of a room addition project

BY METRO CREATIVE

There are many reasons homeowners consider adding a room to their current homes. Some outgrow an existing space, while others take up new hobbies or have different needs that were not apparent when purchasing the home. Indeed, a room addition can remedy a host of issues affecting a home.

Those considering adding a room may wonder what is involved in this type of project. According to The Spruce, no home improvement project is more complicated or expensive than building an addition. The National Association of Realtors says building an addition can cost between \$90,000 and \$270,000, depending on the size and intended purpose of the room. An addition structurally changes a home, which requires the work of professionals whether homeowners plan to build upwards or outwards.

With so much to ponder when considering a home addition, here's a look at what homeowners can expect of the process.

- **Design and planning:** Homeowners must determine the purpose behind the addition and how it will integrate with the existing home. A bedroom design likely will be different from a garage addition or family game room.

- **Hire an engineer and contractor:** An

addition changes the footprint of a home. Homeowners will require professional contractors and structural engineers/architects to properly design the addition and ensure that it will not compromise the existing structure. Detailed architectural plans will be drawn up considering the layout, size and integration with the existing structure. The home may require a new property survey as well.

- **Comply with building codes:** The project will have to meet with local zoning regulations, building codes and homeowners association rules.

- **Timing involved:** Adding a room is a major overhaul of a space. It may require months of a home being in upheaval. If the renovations are particularly extensive, homeowners may need to temporarily move out of the space. Electrical, plumbing and HVAC must be considered, and drywall and finishing the interior are some of the last steps to make the room habitable.

- **Demolition:** Adding a room may involve taking down walls or modifying existing spaces, necessitating hiring a dumpster to remove debris. This is an added consideration and expense.

Putting an addition on a home is a complex process that will take time and money. Such a project requires careful planning and consultation with an array of experts.



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Homeowners considering adding a room should be prepared for a project that is complicated and expensive.

Tips for doing renovations on a budget



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Homeowners who are conserving funds can rest assured that it is possible to make meaningful changes both inside and outside a home without breaking the bank.

BY METRO CREATIVE

Renovations around the house require an investment of time and often considerable amounts of money. Findings from the 2024 U.S. Houzz & Home Study show that home renovations are becoming more expensive. The median renovation spending for homeowners has gone up 60 percent since 2020. Angi, a home services website, reports the average renovation cost for homes between 1,250 and 1,600 square feet is \$51,772, but the final cost of home renovations depends on the scope of the project.

Homeowners who are conserving funds can rest assured that it is possible to make meaningful changes both inside and outside a home without breaking the bank. Here are some ways to renovate a home on a budget.

- **Create a budget and don't waver.** Figure out exactly what you can afford for a renovation and then make that your maximum dollars spent. Research comparable projects in your area and be honest about whether you can afford the renovation as-is or if you must adapt ideas to fit your price.

Make sure to build in a cushion of around 15 to 20 percent for any unforeseen expenses that may arise once a renovation is underway.

- **Maximize an existing floor plan.**

This Old House suggests looking for ways to maximize your current layout before you invest in major renovations like an expansion. Bring in a designer with an eye for utilizing space. For example, see how you might be able to replace shelves with pull-out drawers in the kitchen. Moving furniture around or rethinking floor plans also can help to lower costs.

- **Balance DIY with hiring contractors.** You can save money by tackling some projects yourself, but only if you are confident in your renovation skills. Rather than risk making costly mistakes and having to redo things, hire well-vetted professionals but ask if there's any DIY work you can do to cut costs.

- **Check clearance and resale stores.** Shop discount stores for building materials to save money. For example, if a builder ordered too many cabinets they may offer them to Habitat for Humanity ReStores,

which are nonprofit home improvement stores and donation centers. Checking the clearance and markdown sections of other stores may yield considerable savings on items needed for a renovation. Warehouse retailers like Costco or Sam's Club also can be great places to find certain home improvement materials and furnishings.

- **Take advantage of free services.** Certain stores may offer things like free consultations with designers who can show you what a renovation can look like. This is advantageous to the stores because once you see the potential you're more likely to buy the products, even if it's not mandatory.

- **Resurface instead of redo.** Certain items can be made to look new with minimal effort. Paint is a relatively inexpensive tool that can transform walls and more. A good hardwood flooring company can buff out a floor and put a new coating instead of an entirely new floor. Kitchen cabinets can be resurfaced instead of replaced as well.

Finding ways to perform home renovations on a budget may require some creative thinking, but it's possible to get results at the right price point.

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Tips to maximize closet space

BY METRO CREATIVE

Who couldn't use a little more closet space at home? As individuals accumulate more belongings, they need places to store all of these items. While modern homes may be built with extra storage in mind, older homes often place a premium on closet space. Homes built earlier than the 1980s may have small closets in bedrooms and only one or two additional closets around the home for linens and other items.

The most obvious solution to a lack of closet space is to build more closets. But too often home floor plans cannot accommodate new closets. Therefore, homeowners may have to get creative to maximize their space.

Sort and discard: Individuals can take some time to empty closets and assess what is in them. Sometimes more space can come from simply thinning out belongings that are no longer used. Take off the plastic coverings on dry cleaning and discard bulky shoe boxes.

Invest in thinner hangers: Clothes hangers come in all types, but the thinnest and most durable ones tend to be the no-slip velvet variety. Such hangers keep garments from slipping off and feature an ultra-thin design, says Real Simple magazine.

Use storage containers: Grouping

items together and condensing them can free up space. Tuck belts, handbags and other items into storage bins that can be labeled and stacked. Loose items can look more cluttered and even take up more space when spread out.

Pair shelves with rods: For those with enough space, hanging a few shelves in unused areas in the closet can provide more storage space. If there is sufficient space above the rod, install a shelf and place seldom-used items up high.

Get a closet system: A customized closet system will certainly provide the best chances to maximize closet space. These companies will measure the closet and assess the contents to draw up a design that will give homeowners what they need. Closet systems also can adjust and grow with lifestyle changes.

Choose other storage solutions: In addition to closets, people can identify other spaces to store items. This can include bins under beds, storage benches or ottomans, the back sides of doors, or in furniture with built-in drawers. Individuals also can purchase free-standing closets or armoires that can fill in when rooms do not have enough closet space or no closet at all.

Maximizing closet space comes down to some creativity, de-cluttering and utilizing additional furniture to meet needs.



Photo by Metro Creative

Reap the rewards of a Florida room in your home

BY METRO CREATIVE

When the sun is shining and the weather is warm, who doesn't want to be outside enjoying all Mother Nature has to offer? The great outdoors often beckons, but it also has bugs. Insects, particularly nuisance bugs like mosquitoes or biting flies, are unwanted visitors when enjoying the great outdoors.

Weather also can put a damper on outdoor plans. It's challenging to get fresh air and enjoy the yard when it's raining or conditions are especially humid. Instead of limiting time spent outdoors to those occasions when conditions are favorable, homeowners can install Florida rooms to maximize their outdoor living potential.

The term "Florida room" calls to mind different things. Some define it as a walled extension of a home that features a roof — such as a covered patio, or lanai. According to Tripod Aluminum, Inc., a manufacturer of aluminum building products, a Florida room also may be a screened-in enclosure that surrounds a pool area and is designed to keep bugs and wildlife out of the water. People also may consider a Florida room a sunroom, and it may be screened or feature actual windows that can be opened,



Photo by Metro Creative

according to the resource from Farmhouse to Florida.

Those thinking about renovating to include Florida rooms can consider the following details.

- You don't need to live in Florida. Florida rooms may be most associated with the Sunshine State, but you don't need to live there to have one. Consider your climate and

build a Florida room that will meet your needs. Do you want to enjoy the space year-round? If so, you might need some sort of heating or cooling to keep things comfortable.

- Decide on the right location. While Florida rooms traditionally are in the backyard, select a spot that works for you. If you want to maximize morning sunrises, for example, locate the room on the side of the home that faces east. If a view from another side of the house is particularly striking, place the Florida room there.

- Determine your needs. Will you be cooking or entertaining in the Florida room? If so, design a space that will feature cooking and eating areas. Ensure plenty of ventilation for a grill, and consider other appliances to reduce the need to make trips into the house. Although the Florida room creates some measure of weather protection, choose furniture and fixtures that can stand up to outdoor conditions.

- Add privacy as needed. Curtains, greenery, shades, and other details can create privacy when you don't want to be visible to neighbors.

Florida rooms add useful space to a home and can help residents connect with nature even when conditions out



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Get ready for a furnace checkup

BY METRO CREATIVE

Turning on the heat may be the furthest thing from homeowners' minds come the end of summer or early fall. After all, there are plenty more days of comfortable temperatures to expect over the weeks to come. However, failing to inspect a furnace prior to when it is needed could lay a foundation for cold evenings.

Many HVAC experts recommend that homeowners get their furnaces tuned up before the first cold spell arrives. When the heat is needed for the first time, it will be guaranteed to work if it's been examined and any underlying issues have been addressed.

HVAC technicians are busy at the start of summer and winter. If a furnace is not working correctly, it could take some time before a professional can make a service call. Having the furnace and related equipment checked prior to when it's time to

turn on the furnace means homeowners will not be left in the lurch or potentially spending premium prices for repairs.

It is important to get a furnace checkup for a variety of reasons. Doing so can make the HVAC system run more efficiently, which could result in savings over the winter. Regular maintenance also can help the furnace last longer, delaying the need for a costly replacement. No one wants the furnace to break down in the middle of a frigid night. Annual checkups can help reduce the risk of that happening. In addition, many furnace manufacturers offer warranties on their systems that require annual maintenance from a professional. Failure to have the system inspected could void the warranty.

Even if homeowners are floating in the pool and cranking up the air conditioning, they should give consideration to having their furnaces inspected and serviced soon to prepare for the colder months ahead.



Photo by Metro Creative

FAQ about garage remodels

BY METRO CREATIVE

Homeowners tend to want to maximize all of the space they have in their homes. For some this may involve turning a garage from a utilitarian space into one that serves multiple purposes.

According to The Mortgage Reports, a home-buying and improvement resource, garage renovations can increase the value of a home and add living space. Garage remodels can create additional storage space, provide an area for a home gym or even create room for a home office. Prior to beginning a garage remodel, homeowners may have some common questions about the process.

How much does the renovation cost?

Several factors will ultimately determine the final price of a garage remodel, but HomeAdvisor says the national average for a garage remodel falls between \$6,000 and \$26,000. Most homeowners come in at around \$15,000 for a total garage conversion.

Will I recoup the investment?

A garage conversion adds value to a home if it creates new and usable living space. The firm Cottage, which pulled together a team of builders, architects and technologists, advises the average garage conversion provides an 80 percent return on investment. That ROI varies depending on location.

How can I upgrade the flooring?

Garages traditionally feature concrete floors. Although



Photo by Metro Creative

durable, concrete floors can feel damp, hard and cold underfoot. Both vinyl plank and epoxy flooring options can elevate the design and functionality of the garage.

Can I have the best of both worlds?

Sometimes a garage needs to serve many purposes. Lofting the garage means a homeowner can still park cars or utilize the lower space as a living area, all the while items are stored overhead. Some flip this design scenario and have the loft area as a bedroom or finished living space, while the lower portion remains a traditional garage area. Another thought is to finish only a portion of the ga-

rage. This works well for two- or three-car garages where there will be room to park a car and the remainder will serve another purpose.

What are other ways to improve the garage?

Installing more windows or improving on the lighting in the garage can be important. The garage improvement experts at Danley's say window installation enables people to circulate air in the garage without having to open the garage door. Improving the lighting means the garage can still be enjoyed or utilized after dark. Spread out lighting in the garage, and use a combination of overhead and task lighting just as one would in the home itself.

How do I deter bugs or other pests from entering?

Insects often want to hunker down in garages, and they may find it easy to get inside a garage. Keeping the garage clean and organized is the best way to deter pests and to spot infestations before they become problematic, indicates Mosquito Joe pest control company. Reducing water and humidity in the space, weatherproofing at the base of the garage door and other entry spots and utilizing insect repellents to make the garage less hospitable also can decrease the risk of insect infestation.

Remodeling a garage can add value and plenty of usable space to a home. Whether a garage houses cars or hosts neighborhood game night, a garage renovation can be well worth the investment.

Risk factors for mold infestation in a home

BY METRO CREATIVE

Homeowners know that there's no shortage of work required to maintain a home. Whether it's a renovation project designed to make a home more comfortable or a safety-related remodel, homes require a significant amount of TLC.

Mold remediation falls under the umbrella of safety-related renovations. Various types of mold can grow in a home, and such infestations may develop just about anywhere in a house. According to the Rhode Island Department of Health, exposure to mold can contribute to an array of adverse health consequences, including allergy symptoms such as runny nose, watery eyes, sneezing, difficulty breathing, and headache. Prolonged exposure can cause allergic reactions to become more severe.

Various points in a home can be vulnerable to mold infestation. The New York State Department of Health notes that identifying and controlling moisture is the key to preventing mold infestations in a home. Certain points in a home, if left unchecked, are more likely to promote mold growth than others. As homeowners work to maintain their homes so the environment inside their walls is as comfortable and healthy as possible, they can routinely



Photo by Metro Creative

inspect potential mold infestation points and do their best to keep these areas as free from moisture as possible.

- **Roof:** A sturdy, leak-free roof can help prevent a buildup of moisture that can contribute to mold growth.

- **Indoor plumbing:** Check the pipes

beneath sinks throughout the home, including those in the kitchen and bathrooms. Homeowners whose washrooms have a slop sink or utility sink should inspect these areas for leaky plumbing as well.

- **Outdoor drainage:** Maintaining effective outdoor drainage is another way

to prevent mold growth in a home. This typically requires maintaining gutters and drains so they do not become clogged during or after rainstorms. Gutter guards can prevent gutters and drains from clogging. Homeowners also may want to work with a landscaper or landscape architect to ensure soil around the house slopes away from the foundation, which can prevent water from pooling near the walls. When water pools near the walls, this can contribute to foundation problems and make it easier for mold to grow.

- **Basements/crawl spaces:** Basements and crawl spaces are vulnerable to mold infestations because they tend to be dark and cool, which can contribute to dampness that facilitates mold growth. The Rhode Island Department of Health recommends using a dehumidifier in basements and crawl spaces.

- **Bathrooms:** Steam from hot showers also can contribute to mold growth if the bathrooms do not contain exhaust fans. Such fans can remove excess moisture that makes it easy for mold to grow.

Mold can pose a notable health threat in a home. But homeowners can keep an eye on various areas of their home and implement measures to keep such spaces dry and less mold-friendly.

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Tips to winterize your vehicle

BY METRO CREATIVE

The elements pose a unique challenge to motor vehicles, and that's particularly notable when seasons change. Though the shift from spring to summer or even summer to fall may not be too significant, drivers who want to safeguard their vehicles would be wise to take certain measures to prepare their cars or trucks for winter weather.

Winterizing a car can be an important part of vehicle maintenance. That's particularly true for vehicle owners who live in regions where winter is marked by especially cold temperatures and/or significant snowfall. As fall gives way to winter, drivers can take these steps to winterize their vehicles.

- **Address tires and tire pressure.** The experts at Kelley Blue Book note the danger of aging and/or poorly inflated tires, particularly in winter. Icy, wet and/or snow-covered roads can be dangerous to traverse, so it benefits drivers to examine their tires prior to winter. Worn down treads reduce traction and make it more difficult for vehicles to stop, which is already challenging on roads where ice is present. It's equally important to keep tires properly inflated, as KBB reports each 10-degree dip in temperature can lead to a one-pound loss in air pressure. Poorly inflated tires can decrease performance and safety on the road.

- **Check the battery and replace it, if necessary.** Another step to winterize a car involves the battery that helps to keep the vehicle running. The automotive experts at Firestone note that sinking temperatures force the chemical reaction within vehicle batteries to slow, which reduces the amount of power the battery can generate. In fact, Firestone estimates a battery can lose as much as 60 percent of its strength in freezing temperatures. Firestone urges drivers to get a battery assessment test prior to winter to ensure the battery is healthy enough to endure the coming months. If the assessment indicates the battery is weak, replace it prior to winter.

- **Check fluid levels.** Routine vehicle maintenance at an auto body shop or car dealership typically involves checking and topping off fluid levels. Book such an appointment in advance of winter to ensure the vehicle has coolant, which KBB notes is formulated to resist freezing. Without sufficient coolant, a vehicle engine can suffer significant damage. Windshield washer fluid also should be filled to ensure the windshield can be sufficiently cleaned of salt during and after snowstorms. A pre-winter oil change also can help the vehicle run smoothly throughout the colder months.

- **Inspect belts and hoses.** KBB notes cold weather weakens belts and hoses, which can become brittle and fail in low temperatures. Belts and hoses should be checked prior to winter. Engines can overheat, electrical system problems can emerge and power steering may be compromised if belts and hoses are allowed to fall into disrepair.

Winter can be a challenging time of year for cars and trucks. Various strategies to winterize a car before the mercury drops can make it safer to be on the road when the weather turns cold.

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What to know about reseeding or replanting your lawn

BY METRO CREATIVE

Spring marks the return of flowering plants and warm weather. And homeowners know that spring also ushers in the return of home renovation season.

Homeowners undoubtedly have an extensive list of projects on their to-do list this spring, and that may include helping their lawns and gardens recover after a long winter. Unpredictable weather, which can include drought and excessive rainfall and everything in between, can take its toll on a lawn. In certain instances, the best solution may be planting new grass. But homeowners can consider these tips before they begin the process of reseeding or replanting their lawns.

- **Scarify the lawn.** Scarifying a lawn can help to create a clean slate, but the timing must be right. Various lawn and garden experts, including those at BBC Gardeners' World Magazine, recommend scarifying in spring or early autumn. But don't jump the gun when scarifying in spring by scarifying before the lawn has started to grow after a dormant winter. Scarify when the soil is a little wet and the grass is once again actively growing. Scarifying can remove any lingering weeds from last season and also pull up any moss that might have taken hold over the winter. Without weeds and moss to contend with, freshly planted seeds are in better position to thrive.

- **Work with a landscaping professional.** Homeowners with manageable lawns can likely scarify their own lawns with a relatively inexpensive plug-in scarifier. However, scarifying can be a strenuous physical activity, particularly for homeowners with large lawns. In such instances,

homeowners can benefit from working with a qualified landscaping professional. Such a professional can scarify the lawn and subsequently reseed or replant new grass. The latter task is not so simple, as the lawn care experts at Scotts® note that choosing the correct seed is a vital part of reseeding or replanting a lawn. Choosing seed may sound simple, but it's a potentially complex decision that requires knowledge of the existing grass, including when to plant it. Certain grasses are best planted in spring or early fall, while others are best planted in summer. A qualified landscaping professional can identify the existing grass and plan the seeding or planting around this important detail.

- **Prepare to water the lawn.** Watering is vital to the long-term success and health of freshly planted grass seed. Scotts® urges homeowners to keep the top inch of soil consistently moist, but not soggy. That requires a daily commitment, and setting a multi-function hose nozzle or sprinkler to the mist setting once per day or more if it's hot outside can increase the chances grass will grow in thick and strong. Scotts® recommends keeping the top two inches of the soil moist until the new grass reaches a mowing height of roughly three inches. Once that benchmark has been reached, watering frequency can be cut back to about twice per week, but now the soil should be deeply soaked instead of misted. The soaking will help roots grow deep into the soil.

Spring is a great time for homeowners in various regions to reseed or replant their lawns. With the right approach, homeowners can enjoy a full and lush lawn throughout summer.



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Tips for winterizing exterior living areas

BY METRO CREATIVE

When the summer entertaining season draws to a close, homeowners need to ensure their outdoor living areas can handle weather that's right around the corner. Although outdoor furniture and other items tend to be durable, the impact snow, wind and ice can have on them may lead to damage over time. That is why many homeowners take steps to winterize their outdoor spaces and protect their belongings. Here's a look at how to prepare for the winter to come.

- **Furniture:** Cover or store furniture to protect it from the elements. Covering it with weather-proof covers can be adequate if storing items indoors is not possible.

- **Deep clean:** Items that will be covered or stored should be thoroughly cleaned prior to being removed from spaces for the season. Lingering dirt and moisture can cause damage.

- **Insulate and drain:** Don't risk damage to pipes, which can freeze and crack in the cold. Shut off the water supply to exterior faucets and drain water lines to prevent pipes from freezing and bursting. Use foam pipe insulation to prevent freezing and cover any exposed pipes.

- **Apply mulch:** After cleaning up garden debris, think about applying mulch to garden beds and cover tender plants to protect them from the weather.

- **Check gutters:** Be sure that gutters and downspouts are clear of leaves and any additional debris. If gutters and downspouts are not cleaned, ice dams may form on the roof and cause water damage.

- **Inspect and repair:** Inspect walkways and driveways for any damage and make repairs now so water will not seep in and cause further issues with freeze-thaw cycles. Consider applying a sealant to protect surfaces from snow and ice.

- **Pools and spas:** It's essential to follow the industry or manufacturer recommendations for closing down swimming pools and spas for the season. While covers may not be essential in all climates, covering can help prevent leaves and other debris from getting in the water. Water should be expelled from pipes and tubing to prevent freezing and bursting. If space allows, consider moving the pool pump indoors to prolong its longevity. Turn off the electricity to the outlet where the filter is plugged in.

There may be additional, region-specific steps to winterize a property, but these pointers are a good starting point to protect outdoor spaces.



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Although outdoor furniture and other items tend to be durable, the impact snow, wind and ice can have on them may lead to damage over time.



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Home trends typically benefit from a longer shelf life than viral videos and other fads that originate on the internet, and that's something renovation-minded homeowners should consider when improving their homes.

Home interior trends on the rise

BY METRO CREATIVE

Trends that seem ubiquitous one day can seemingly vanish before the sun rises again just 24 hours later. That's especially true in the digital age, when overnight celebrities and viral videos can be on the tips of everyone's tongue before being forgotten entirely when the next online sensation emerges in an increasingly rapid news cycle.

Home trends typically benefit from a longer shelf life than viral videos and other fads that originate on the internet, and that's something renovation-minded homeowners should consider when improving their homes. Homeowners preparing to do just that can consider these notable trends, which the online renovation experts at Houzz suggest will be particularly popular in the year ahead.

- **Rounded furnishings:** Houzz noted that gentle curves and rounded edges embody the organic modern styles that many current homeowners love. Rounded dining tables and similarly circular coffee tables may merit consideration among homeowners who want to embrace popular trends.

- **Arches:** Houzz cites arches among the more popular modern trends, and the experts at Better Homes & Gardens note this unique,

eye-catching style has been gaining popularity for several years. Better Homes & Gardens suggests that part of the appeal of arched doorways could be their deviation from a more traditional door shape. That uniqueness draws the attention of residents and visitors alike, and Houzz notes that arched windows, cabinets and even millwork details are part of the pivot toward arches.

- **Stove alcoves:** If it's a touch of history homeowners want, kitchen range alcoves might be just the project for them. Range alcoves call an earlier time to mind when wood burning stoves were commonplace. The report from Houzz notes range alcoves immediately draw attention, which undoubtedly adds to their appeal.

- **Wood for warmth:** Homeowners who hear "wood and warmth" might think fireplaces, but Houzz reports that wood elements are being incorporated into interior designs as a means to giving homes a more cozy vibe. Ceiling beams, trim, wall paneling, and cabinetry are utilizing wood to add warmth to a home.

Trends come and go, but home trends typically have more staying power than styles that emerge in other arenas. Homeowners who want to upgrade their home interiors can consider the latest trends and choose those that align with their own personal tastes.



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