



Fall Home & Garden

August 2017

A Special Supplement to

Record Herald The Times-Gazette News Journal

*Keeping Up
Your Kitchen*

Must-have kitchen
remodel features

Surviving Small

How to make the most of limited space

Roof Recon

Potential indicators of roof trouble



Corral entryway clutter

The entryway to a home is the first thing guests experience when coming inside. It also can be the first place residents drop their belongings after long days at school or work. As a result, entryways can quickly be consumed by clutter. Taming such messes takes a mixture of ingenuity and planning. Homeowners hoping to clear their entryways of clutter must first decide what they want to get out of the space. Will it simply be a decorative spot with photos and other home decor on display? Or is functionality the primary goal?

Once that decision has been made, take inventory of which items, such as shoes, keys, umbrellas or coats, need to be in the area, which don't (i.e., old mail). To make things more organized, rearrange the former while removing the latter.

Next it is time to assess storage needs and what's already available. User-friendly storage items may need to be purchased to make the room as functional as possible. The following ideas also can help bring order to the space.

Create a command center. Create a central location where items are

neat, orderly and within reach. Use a bulletin board, dry-erase calendar or something that can house schedules and important notices. Hooks can hold keys, chargers and more.

Keep it covered. Covered bins can serve as a seating area and also a place to store shoes, hats and scarves.

Create cabinet space. Store items in cabinets so they are organized but out of sight. This way belongings are not just left on an entryway table.

Create another drop zone. If the entryway is too small to serve its

purpose, outfit another room or area that also can do the job. This can be a laundry room or mudroom area. Install shelves, a bench, cabinets and hooks. Just be sure this space is close enough to the entryway to make it useful.

Go vertical. An easy way to keep things neater is to remove items from the floor and embrace vertical storage. Shoe racks, hooks for purses and a cabinet for coats may do the trick. Clutter can accumulate in entryways. But some simple adjustments can quickly revamp the space to make it neater and much more functional.

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Air leaks around doorways can waste energy and cost homeowners substantial amounts of money.

Address air leaks to save energy and money

Rising energy costs coupled with the continued adoption of eco-friendly lifestyles are two factors driving homeowners to seek ways to reduce energy consumption in their homes. Reducing energy consumption is reason enough for many homeowners to make changes around the house, but saving energy sometimes means saving substantial amounts of money as well. Energy-efficient appliances and eco-friendly building materials can help homeowners reduce energy consumption. But homeowners looking for additional ways to cut cooling and heating costs can address air leaks around the house to make their homes more energy efficient.

Identify air leaks around windows and doorways. Autumn is a great time of year to identify air leaks. Fall, and particularly late fall, tends to be characterized by cold air that makes it easy to detect air leaks. Feel for leaks around windows and doorways, ideally conducting such tests on cold, windy days when you can quickly detect if air is flowing in from the outside.

Leaks around windows and doors waste energy because the interior of the home is either colder (in the winter) or warmer (in the summer) than it needs to be, prompting homeowners to turn up their thermostats or rely more heavily on air conditioning units.

Look for leaks elsewhere around the house. While windows and doorways are where many leaks are found, leaks also may be found around plumbing, electrical fixtures and dryer vents. Inspect such areas by feeling for drafts or looking for signs that insects and critters might be entering.

Look up and down. Evidence of air leaks may be noticeable on both the floor and the ceiling. Dirty spots on carpeting and the ceiling may be indicative of air leaks at interior wall/ceiling joints and wall/floor joists. Fixing such leaks may be as simple as applying some caulk.

Go with gaskets. The United States Department of Energy recommends installing foam gaskets behind outlet and switch plates on walls. Outlets and switch

boxes on exterior walls provide another place for air to leak into a home and drive up energy costs. Properly installed gaskets can cut back on air infiltration, providing an inexpensive way to save energy and money.

Cover the kitchen exhaust fans when you are not cooking. Kitchen exhaust fans can help prevent fires and unfavorable indoor air conditions when preparing meals at home. But such fans provide opportunities for air to enter a home, so make sure they are tightly closed or covered when no one is cooking in the kitchen.

Air leaks around a house can waste energy and contribute to high energy bills, particularly during the winter and summer when temperatures outside tend to be at their most extreme. Homeowners looking to reduce their energy consumption and save money can inspect various areas of their homes for air leaks and immediately address any they discover.



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Bold colors add vitality to homes



great outdoors. These hues can add a touch of floral spring sunshine even when that season has long since passed. Opt for a deep green and a carnation pink for maximum impact. And don't forget a vase full of fresh blooms as the finishing factor.

Lavender and deep blue

Analogous colors are three colors that sit side-by-side on the color wheel and share a common denominator in terms of shade. Lavender, blue and an orchid pink are examples of such hues. This cool, regal combination can add femininity to a bedroom or even drama to another space in the house. If painting the walls dark blue or lavender seems scary, opt for a neutral shade on walls and then dress up the space with inky and violet accents.

Turquoise and brick red

Enhance the "wow" factor with these bold colors. Although they are striking, when they work together, they also can impart a soothing feel, particularly since they are often inspired by Asian influences. Feature a light turquoise sofa with red throw pillows. Or dress up meals with a red tablecloth on the dining table and turquoise, white and red, patterned place mats.

Gray and yellow

Yellow is a pick-me-up color any time of the year, but, when combined with a gray, it's toned down to be soothing instead of startling. This color combination is popular in kitchens, nurseries and entryways. Have fun in the kitchen with mottled gray stone countertops, pale yellow walls and canary café curtains.

Color can affect mood and transform spaces with just a small investment of time and money. Homeowners can experiment with color palettes so rooms remain vibrant all year long

Whether it's Independence Day, St. Patrick's Day or the holiday season, the bold hues that are synonymous with these events add a splash of color to rooms that can use a little design lift.

While some colors may be synonymous with certain times of year, homeowners can employ bold colors in their homes all year long. By embracing bold painting and decorating styles, homeowners can use fresh color palettes to make rooms more inviting and colorful. These popular color combinations can provide inspiration.

Green and pink

Colors on opposite ends of the color wheel will always complement each other. Green paired with pink (a lighter shade of green's opposite, red) calls to mind the

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Must-have kitchen remodel features

Homeowners looking to renovate often see room for improvement in their kitchens and bathrooms. The National Association of Home Builder's Remodeling Market Index Survey, which measures conditions in the remodeling market, indicates that, in 2015, the two most common remodeling jobs were bathroom remodels (81 percent) and kitchen remodels (79 percent). According to HGTV and Statistics Brain, a new kitchen remodel for a kitchen measuring 12 by 12 feet may cost homeowners anywhere from \$17,000 to \$37,000.

Before investing so much into their remodeling projects, homeowners should think carefully about the features that will improve their time spent at home. When planning a kitchen renovation, homeowners may want to consider the following upgrades to make the room more enjoyable while improving its functionality.

Oversized sink

Although high-efficiency dishwashers are popular, deep sinks to soak soup pots or woks are still useful. Deep sinks may be preferable to double sinks, especially for homeowners who use lots of kitchen tools when preparing meals.

Soft-closing hinges

When replacing cabinets (or just the hardware), consider installing soft-closing hinges and slides on doors and drawers. These devices eliminate slamming and caught fingers, reducing noise and injuries in the kitchen.

Foot-pedal water operation

When outfitting a sink, think about foot controls, which are popular in doctors' offices and hospitals. Turning on the water with the tap of a foot can reduce the transfer of pathogens to faucets from hands during food preparation. These pedals also free up hands for other tasks.

Bottom's up

People likely spend more time raiding the refrigerator than the freezer on any given day. Rather than having to bend down to seek out that favorite flavor of Greek yogurt, choose a model with the fridge on top and freezer on the bottom, especially if anyone in the household has mobility issues. When shopping for refrigerators, French-

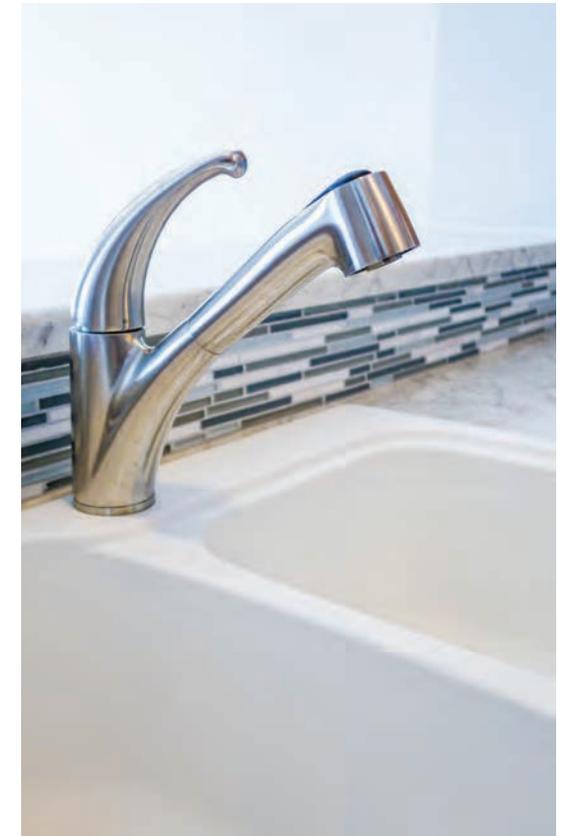
door style units may offer even more access, making it easy for homeowners to slide fruit trays, sheet cakes and other large items into the fridge.

Extra lighting

A kitchen should be a balance of form and function. A combination of overhead lighting, decorative lighting and task lighting can illuminate all areas of the space effectively.

Appliance garages

Architectural and design resource Houzz says that appliance garages are popular kitchen additions, too. Set at countertop level, these cabinets allow people to keep small appliances plugged in but tucked neatly behind closed doors. Kitchen remodels are a sizable investment, and renovations can be customized to make the kitchen more hospitable for all in residence.





Tile can be a worthy addition to rooms with potential moisture issues or areas in a home that may routinely necessitate quick cleanup. Because they are not damaged by constant contact with

water, tiled floors and walls are often found in bathrooms, kitchens, laundry rooms, and entryways.

Although tile is resilient, it is not impervious to the microorganisms that tend to

proliferate in areas where moisture and humidity are commonplace. Microbes can grow rapidly in warm areas, especially if food is present. Mold or mildew issues also can become problematic seemingly overnight. But certain modifications can help homeowners alleviate the proliferation of microorganisms.

Various manufacturers have developed their own innovative tile that contributes to cleaner, and sometimes more eco-friendly, home environments. The application of certain treatments can make ceramic tiles even more impervious to water and moisture. Some tile may help reduce the spread of certain strains of bacteria, such as E. coli and staph, without requiring the application of potentially harsh chemical detergents. Others treatments may protect against yeast, molds and fungi that can cause stains and odors and result in the degradation of tile.

Antimicrobial products inhibit the growth of microorganisms and suppress their reproduction. For example, tiles with Microban® protection employ an antimicrobial agent built into the product during the manufacturing process. When microbes touch the product surface, the agent penetrates the cell wall of the microorganism. Other tiles are treated with

micrometric particles of titanium dioxide (TiO₂), which is activated by sunlight or artificial light. This causes a photocatalysis process, which is responsible for the product's antipollution and bactericidal properties. Examples of TiO₂-treated tiles include Active Clean Air & Antibacterial Ceramic™.

Antimicrobial ceramic tile can be advantageous in rooms where sanitation and hygiene are an utmost priority. This includes not only public places, but private residences. Worktops and floors where microbes can be transferred are particularly beneficial areas to install antimicrobial tile. A potential side effect of antimicrobial tile is a reduction in reliance on harsh cleaning products. Although regular washing is recommended, residents may not need to use odoriferous or strong chemical cleaners to sanitize their homes. This helps improve indoor air quality and reduce the potential contamination of the environment from chemical runoff.

Homeowners thinking of installing antimicrobial tile in their homes should discuss their options with a tile retailer or contractor during the planning stages.

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Millwork can add appeal and a classic feel



Homeowners are discovering that architectural accents can go a long way toward improving both the look and value of their homes. When renovating a space, the term “millwork” may be mentioned by designers and contractors. While it might be a mystery to some, millwork can give rooms unique looks. Millwork refers to items traditionally made from raw lumber in a sawmill. Examples of millwork include crown molding, base trims, door frames, window casings, chair rails, and paneling. Cabinets may also classify as millwork.

Used for both decoration and to increase the functionality of buildings, millwork comes in various types. Generally, millwork is fabricated in two ways. Stock millwork tends to be mass-produced commercial items. These low-cost items are interchangeable and may be widely available at retailers, including home improvement centers. Custom millwork is a product that is custom designed and produced for individuals and special building projects. Sometimes referred to as “architectural millwork,” these pieces may be more ornate and made-to-order. Homeowners who want to match a focal point of a home or an existing style often turn to custom millwork.

Between the 15th and 18th centuries, ornate millwork was largely reserved for royalty or the very wealthy. Skilled carpenters would hand carve each piece, taking weeks to finish most projects. Eventually, millwork became more commonplace. Distinguishing one property from another today could mean turning

Architectural millwork can be seen in many areas of a home, including kitchens.

back to the more distinctive designs of the past.

Homeowners looking for ways to enhance their properties can embrace millwork to achieve a luxury feel without a sizable investment. The first step is to choose millwork that will coordinate with the era and style of a home’s existing decor. Ornate

millwork in an overly modern house may seem out of place. The millwork should match the architectural theme of the home.

Although some do-it-yourselfers can successfully install prefabricated millwork, for custom designs and a truly seamless look, it is important to have millwork

professionally installed. Individuals should research carpenters who specialize in millwork and verify their license and reputation through a consumer protection agency.

Popular types of millwork include crown molding, corbels, wainscoting, and custom bookcases. Homeowners may not realize that millwork can be added to spaces of all sizes to give them an air of sophistication. Although millwork was traditionally formed from hardwoods, eco-friendly homeowners can now find millwork crafted from synthetic materials and even reclaimed woods. Millwork can add that special touch to the interior or exterior of a home. Learn more by visiting worldmillworkalliance.com.



Potential indicators of roof trouble

With regard to home repairs, homeowners may be able to delay some projects until the weather permits or they find room in their budgets. But other areas, including the roof, may demand immediate action.

Few homeowners give the roofs of their homes much thought until a problem arises. But learning to recognize potential indicators of roof trouble can help homeowners prevent potentially drastic situations down the road.

Light: Homeowners with attics in their homes can inspect the ceilings inside the attic for signs of holes or leaks. Light peering through the top of the house indicates a hole or leak, as does stains or streaks on the ceiling.

Worn shingles: Shingles should lie flat against the roof, so any that appear to be buckling or turning up are damaged and in need of repair. A single damaged shingle does not require a full roof replacement, but inspect all the shingles nonetheless. Another indicator of shingle problems can be found when cleaning downspouts or gutters. If the gutters and downspouts contain lots of shingle granules, the roof may soon need to be replaced.

Moss: Moss on a rooftop may give a home character, but that added character is costly. Shady areas of a roof can be susceptible to the growth of moss and fungi because moisture can be trapped in such areas. If possible, remove moss or fungi from a roof with a stiff brush or hire a professional to do the job instead. Moss may come back even after brushing it off, so homeowners should keep an eye on areas of their roofs that get little sunlight. In addition, trapped moisture can be very harmful to a roof, so it may be wise to exercise caution and have roofs with mold or fungi growths inspected.

Age: Another indicator of roof trouble may be the age of the roof. Even if there are no visible signs of damage, homeowners whose roofs have some years under their belt may want to consider replacing them. Asphalt shingle roofs typically have life expectancies of 20 to 25 years, while roofs installed over existing layers of shingles may need to be replaced after 20 years.

Recognizing minor roof damage before it escalates into a larger problem can save homeowners substantial amounts of money.



Make lights sparkle

As days get shorter and natural light is less abundant, interior lighting becomes ever more important. Chandeliers, pendant lamps, recessed lighting, and tableside lamps are most effective when they are clean. HGTV experts say dirty lights can give off up to 20 percent less light than clean ones. Dirty fixtures also waste energy. Lighting fixtures that are within reach are easy to tackle, but what about those fixtures that hang or have multiple crystals, globes or bulbs? These tips can cut down on the time needed to give lights a thorough cleaning.

Stock up on the right cleaning supplies. Microfiber dusting cloths are smart choices because they can help trap grime and tend to be machine-washable and reusable. Extendable static-charged dusters are another

handy item to have around, particularly for fixtures that are hard to reach.

Dust regularly. Dusting regularly can prevent the buildup of grime that's difficult to wash off. Try to dust light fixtures weekly or biweekly. The more frequent the fixtures are dusted, the less time each cleaning session will take. Soft cloths can remove the dust from most bulbs and exterior surfaces. Lamp shades may need more attention. Use a lamb's-wool duster to attract dirt so it doesn't leave a residue on the lampshade.

Deep-clean at table level. Deep-cleaning at table level is more manageable. Remove any glass accents and set them out on a cushioned surface so they do not break. Soft cloths dampened with a vinegar solution should remove

most of the dirt on chandelier crystals and the globes or outer glass coverings of other types of fixtures. Take a photo of the lighting fixture prior to cleaning so you'll know how to replace removed parts correctly once everything is clean and dry. If you cannot remove a fixture for cleaning, use a sturdy stool, a spray bottle with your cleaning mixture and a soft cloth to wipe away the dirt. Remember to place something absorbent beneath the light to catch any drips. Do not spray liquids directly onto light bulbs; otherwise, you can damage the bulb and the electrical components.

It's best to exercise caution when cleaning lighting fixtures. Turn off the light itself and shut off the circuit breaker to avoid the risk of shock or burns from hot bulbs.

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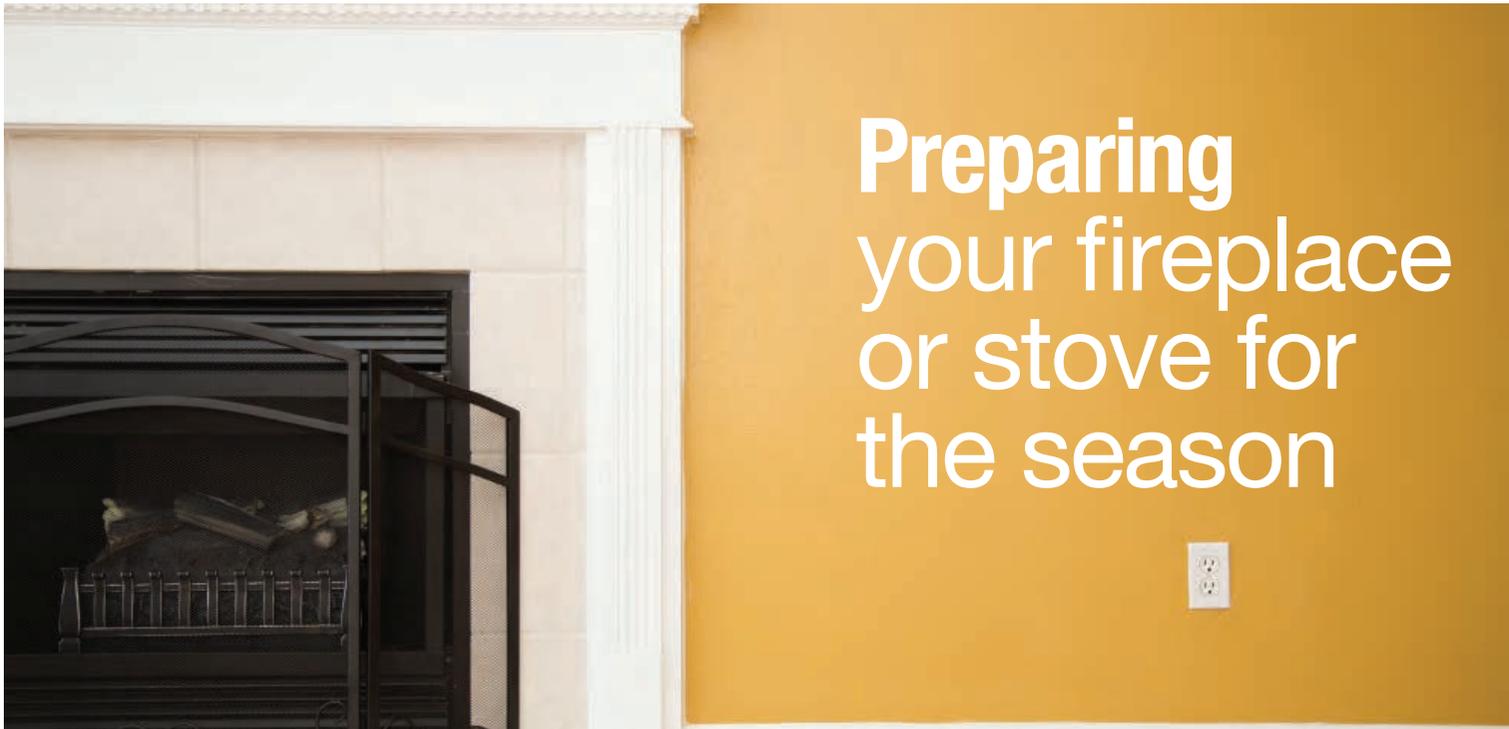
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Fireplaces and wood-burning stoves not only can be beautiful focal points within a home, but they also provide an additional source of heat and can be used to keep rooms or entire homes comfortable without the need for additional and potentially costly heating sources.

Just like more modern home heating systems, stoves and fireplaces need to be maintained, and that maintenance includes readying them before winter when they are used more heavily. Ensuring a fireplace or stove is in good working order helps to guarantee efficiency of use and safety during the winter months.

Open-flame heating sources carry with them certain risks. The National Fire Protection Association states that, between 2009-2013, American fire departments responded to 56,000 home structure fires that involved heating equipment. The NFPA notes that the leading factor contributing to home-heating fires is a failure to keep things clean, principally from solid-fueled heating equipment. The following are a handful of ways to stay safe as you get ready for another cozy season around the fire.

Start with the chimney. Begin by having your chimney thoroughly cleaned and inspected. Creosote can build up inside of the chimney. Creosote is highly flammable and becomes more difficult and expensive to clean the longer it builds up inside your flue lining. In addition, animals may have created nest inside of the chimney since the last time the fireplace was used. A professional chimney sweep should be hired in this situation. He or she will be able to effectively clean the chimney in a manner that is the least messy and disruptive to residents.

Install or check smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. Operational alarms are essential to preventing injury or death resulting from smoke or carbon monoxide inhalation. Such detectors are inexpensive safeguards that should be installed on every floor of the house. Batteries should be replaced every six months, and the alarms themselves should be changed every five to 10 years.

Inspect the chimney from outdoors as well. Inspect the mortar around any bricks in the chimney and surrounding areas for cracks. If left unaddressed, these can cause dangerous fires. If there are serious

cracks, a professional may need to make repairs or the chimney may need to be replaced. You also can have the chimney capped with a screen to keep animals and debris from entering.

Inspect the damper. A damper is a valve or plate that stops or regulates the flow of air inside a chimney. It should be checked prior to the first use of a stove or fireplace so homeowners can be certain it opens and closes smoothly.

Clear out flammable items. Move flammable items away from the front of a fireplace or stove. Be sure curtains or other home furnishings are far enough away that they will not catch fire from any errant sparks or flames.

Order wood now. Be sure there is plenty of wood for the season. Ask a wood supplier to estimate just how much will be needed, and double-check that the wood will arrive in time for the start of the season. By preparing for fireplace and wood stove use now, homeowners can ensure their winters are comfortable and safe.



Protect pipes from freezing this cold-weather season

Freezing pipes are a concern for homeowners who live in cold climates.

When temperatures dip below freezing, the risk that pipes will freeze rises. Should a pipe burst, the damage that results can be extensive and costly.

Any pipe can freeze, but those that are directly exposed to the cold are the most vulnerable. These include pipes that feed outdoor hoses, swimming pool supply lines, pipes in unheated indoor rooms (i.e., basements or garages), and any pipes that run close to the outdoors through uninsulated walls. Water expands as it freezes, and that expansion can place pressure on whatever is trying to contain it — including pipes. To avoid serious damage, homeowners need to prepare for the arrival of colder weather and be smart about how they protect pipes.

Drain water from swimming pools and water sprinkler supply lines prior to the onset of cold weather. Drain water before freezing temperatures arrive, and don't forget to drain outdoor garden hoses and store them inside after watering season has come and gone.

Close indoor water valves that feed outdoor spigots/bibs. Open the spigot outside to allow

water to drain out. Keep the outside valve open so that any water that has accumulated will continue to drain and expand outward without damaging the pipe. An insulated bib dome also can help prevent frozen pipes.

Open cabinet doors to allow heat to reach pipes inside of cabinets. Keep the doors open to spaces that may not be heated or insulated as well as other areas of the home so that heat can find its way inside. Consider wrapping these pipes with an insulating material as well, such as heat tape or pipe sleeves.

Maintain a consistent thermostat temperature. Ensure the temperature inside your home does not drop below 55 F; otherwise, problems can arise. Use a programmable thermostat to keep the house comfortable even when you are not home. Individuals who are traveling should set the thermostat so that it will keep the home at the recommended temperature to avoid frozen pipes.

Open one faucet. When it is very cold outside, particularly at night, let water slowly drip from one faucet to prevent freezing. Choose the sink that is furthest from where water enters the house so



water is flowing through all of the pipes to reach that faucet.

Increase insulation around where pipes enter the house. Use insulating foam to seal any drafts where pipes enter the house from the outdoors.

Frozen pipes cannot always be avoided.

Therefore, it is important that everyone in the household knows how to shut off the main water valve in the event a pipe bursts. This can prevent expensive damage to a home.

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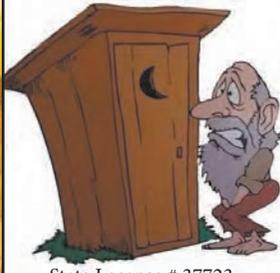
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All About Fall

Autumn is a season of many changes, with some of the most notable including the dramatic multicolored displays that occur just prior to trees shedding their leaves. It's also a time of year when many people feel reenergized by cooler temperatures and spend many hours outdoors enjoying all that fall has to offer.

Whether one is collecting leaves, picking apples, exploring corn mazes, or driving the countryside enjoying the foliage, autumn is full of fun ways to make the season that much more enjoyable.

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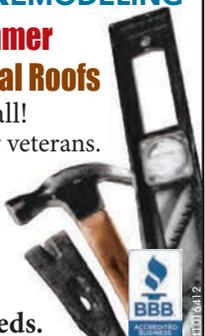
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How to make bedrooms more conducive to sleep

Insufficient sleep causes more problems than many people may know. Fatigue after a poor night's sleep might seem like an inconvenience that can be easily rectified, but the long-term effects of insufficient sleep are significant. According to the National Sleep Foundation, researchers have found a link between insufficient sleep and an elevated risk for type 2 diabetes. In one such study exploring that potential link, researchers asked healthy adults to sleep just four hours per night for six nights. At the conclusion of that period, participants' ability to break down glucose had decreased by an average of 40 percent and reached levels that are consistent with those of older adults at risk for diabetes. Insufficient sleep may be linked to any of a host of factors, including one's bedroom

environment. An environment that promotes restful sleep can help people suffering from insomnia or restlessness improve the quality of their sleep. The NSF offers the following tips to make bedrooms more conducive to sleep.

Set the right temperature. The NSF notes that research indicates a bedroom temperature of roughly 65 F makes for the best sleep. Human beings' body temperatures rise and fall throughout the day, reaching their lowest level around 5 a.m. each day before slowly climbing as morning begins. A room that is too warm overnight may interfere with this natural dip, leading to restlessness. If necessary, install a programmable thermostat in the bedroom so the temperature in the room remains steady and in line with your body's natural temperature fluctuations.

Address allergens. Some people may trace their sleeping difficulties to allergies. Dust and pollen in the bedroom can make for a disruptive night's sleep. Wash bedding once per week in hot water if dust mites are proving problematic. If pillows cannot be washed, dry them using high heat to kill dust mites. In addition, cover the mattress in a mattress protector that guards against allergens and dust mites. If pollen is finding its way into the bedroom, always keep bedroom windows closed during allergy season.

Use a white noise machine. Noise is another potential contributor to poor sleep. The NSF notes that some people may have their sleep interrupted by noise even if they don't know it. White noise machines are often used to help infants sleep, but such machines can be just as effective at helping

adults. The NSF notes that the constant ambient sound created by white noise machines masks activity both inside and outside the house, helping men and women enjoy more restful sleep.

Draw blinds, shades or curtains. Waking up to sunlight each day might be nice, but that morning sunlight may be interrupting your sleep. Early morning rays from the sun might be triggering your body to wake up before it's had adequate rest, so make sure blinds, shades and curtains are drawn before going to bed at night so you are not woken up prematurely in the morning. Making bedrooms more conducive to sleep is one way men and women can improve the quality of their nightly sleep.

What is a smart home?



one another. Such devices can be controlled remotely, according to SmartHomeUSA, an automation product retailer. Proponents of smart home technology say features can help people save money on utilities and conserve natural resources, all the while providing peace of mind to homeowners.

In 2016, 80 million smart home devices were delivered worldwide. That marks a 64 percent increase from 2015, according to the research data firm IHS Markit. The smart home trend is only expected to grow in coming years. Although there's interest in smart home technology, the industry remains fragmented. Consumers are trying to figure out which devices are simply fun and which provide practical benefits. Furthermore, the range of smart devices is expanding rapidly, making potential compatibility issues a concern. Companies that plan to educate consumers further about the advantages of smart home features and are open to standardization may have the best chances of survival.

Those interested in dabbling in some smart home technology and testing the waters may want to start with the following household items.

Smart bulbs: Manufacturers offer various types of smart light bulbs. Some are color-changing, others react to doorbells or alarms, and others can simulate typical lighting patterns when homeowners are away. Integrated apps enable remote access to scheduling so people can arrive home to a well-lit house.

Home security: Wi-Fi enabled doorbells with video capabilities allow residents to see who is at the door without having to open it. Cameras can even be accessed remotely, simulating that someone is at home at all times. Never wonder if you've locked the door again with smart locks that can be engaged via a smartphone. Make sure that homes are secured or that pets are behaving while out with smart cameras.

Flood sensor: Get peace of mind against damaging floods with Wi-Fi flood sensors.

Appliances: A new breed of smart appliances can make it possible for users to turn on the washing machine while out of the house, close refrigerator doors from afar or even start their vacuum cleaners remotely.

Smart technology is taking over and is likely to continue changing the way people live and work.

Refrigerators that inform their owners when it's time to buy more eggs and thermostats that learn homeowners' heating and cooling preferences may once have seemed like futuristic ideas straight out of a sci-fi movie. However, such products are no longer a dream but a reality.

The term "smart home" refers to a residence that has appliances, HVAC, lighting, entertainment systems, security, and many more devices that communicate with

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Create more closet space without major renovations

Closet space is at a premium in many homes and apartments. Many older homes were not built to accommodate large wardrobes, while rental properties are often designed to maximize living space at the expense of storage. Closets vary depending on the size of the home, but many tend to be a minimum of 24 inches deep so they can store garments without the clothes brushing against the walls. Bedroom and hallway closets can be four feet in length or more. Walk-in closets

are the largest options, but such spaces tend to only be available in modern homes or custom-built properties. It is not always practical or possible to undergo renovations to create more closet space. Apart from moving to a new residence, homeowners or renters must evaluate the space they have and make some more efficient choices in how they utilize available areas.

Clear out clutter

The first step to more closet space is to eliminate unused items. Clothing that no longer fits or items that can be stored elsewhere should be removed from the closet. Donate as much as possible. Some organizations will even pick up donations at your convenience.

Upgrade hangers and rods

Replace existing hangers with slimmer, more uniform alternatives that more easily

fit into your closet. In addition, remove empty hangers, which are likely just taking up space.

Consider dual closet rods if space will allow them. Hang the second rod below an area reserved for shorter clothing to achieve a two-tiered design. Grouping short items together also can free up valuable floor space.

Stack taller

Many closets are as tall as the ceilings of the rooms where they're located. However, the upper area may go unused because if it is not easy to reach. Install shelving above the closet rod with small swing-out style cabinet doors to offer access. In such areas, store seasonal items that you won't need to reach for each day. Keep a step stool close by for easy accessibility.

In small rooms, homeowners may want to find another way to utilize vertical space. A loft bed, which raises the bed up to a level where it might be on the top bunk of a bunk bed, will free up plenty of storage space beneath the bed. This can be turned into a floor closet.

Create storage for small items

Bookends, bins, boxes and drawers can be used to contain items that don't easily conform to closets. These may be purses, scarves, ties, and more. Don't overlook the possibilities of hanging items on the wall inside the closet or on the back of closet doors.

When finishing closet makeovers, be sure to install lighting inside the closet so items are more visible.



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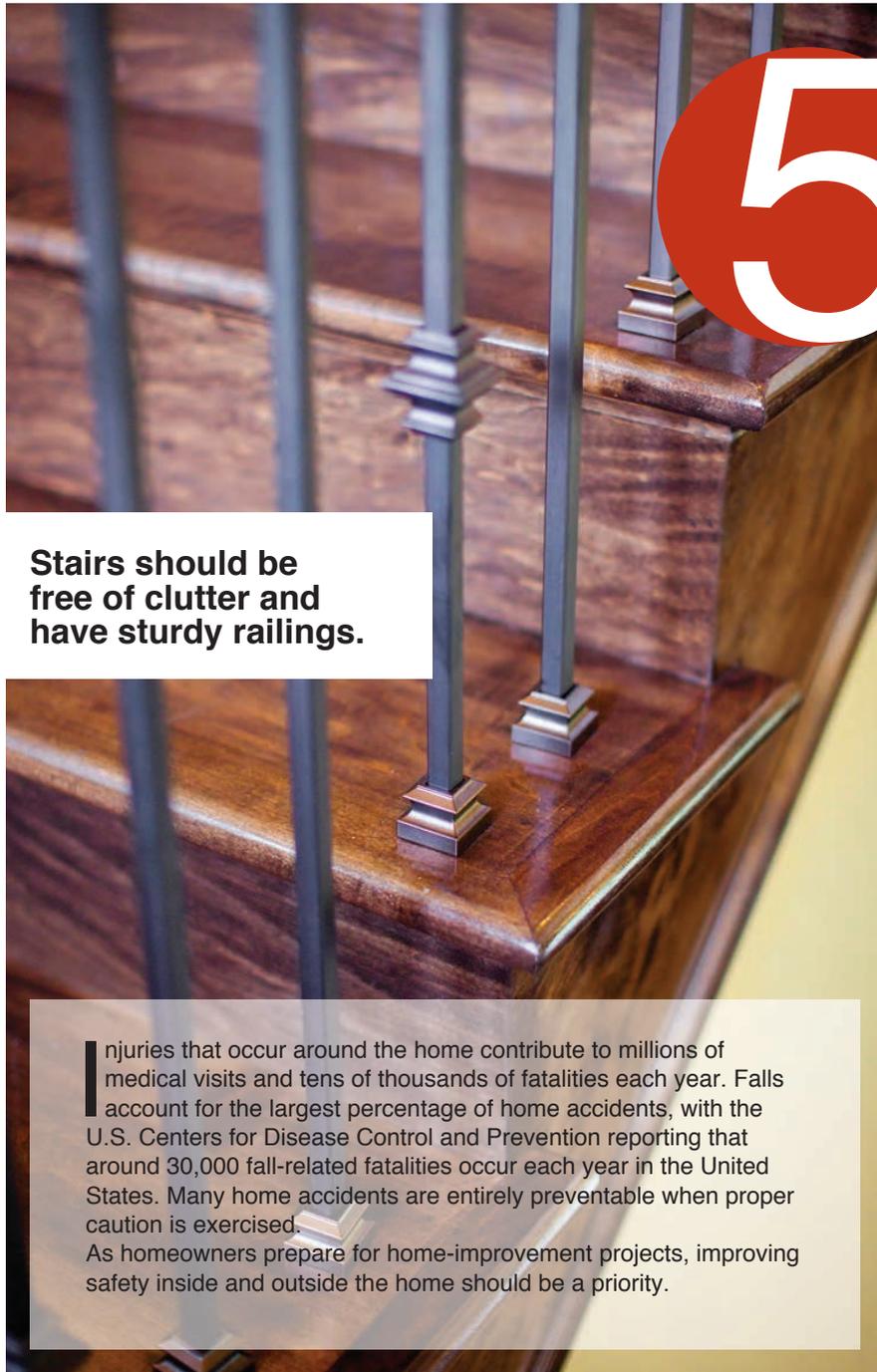
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Stairs should be free of clutter and have sturdy railings.

Injuries that occur around the home contribute to millions of medical visits and tens of thousands of fatalities each year. Falls account for the largest percentage of home accidents, with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reporting that around 30,000 fall-related fatalities occur each year in the United States. Many home accidents are entirely preventable when proper caution is exercised.

As homeowners prepare for home-improvement projects, improving safety inside and outside the home should be a priority.

5 ways to make homes safer

1. Improve lighting

One of the easiest ways to reduce the risk of falls is to improve lighting around the home. The National Institutes of Health state that adequate lighting is important at entrances to the home, stairways, hallways, and other frequently traversed areas. Make sure lighting fixtures are using the highest wattage light bulb allowed. Artificial lighting sources become even more vital in fall and autumn, when natural light is less abundant in a home. In addition, install lighting outdoors by the front door, over the garage and where garbage pails are stored to facilitate safe passage.

2. Eliminate slick surfaces

Improving traction around the house also can minimize falls. Throw rugs and runners can be made more secure with nonslip rubber backings. Bath rugs can reduce slipping on wet surfaces in the bathroom. Also, nonslip mats can be used inside of showers and bathtubs. Use shoe trays to reduce puddling from melting snow or rain runoff in entryways. Mop up spills quickly, and consider the use of matte- or textured-finished flooring to improve stability underfoot.

Promptly remove snow and ice from driveways and walkways. For those

who live in cold climates, heated concrete can help melt precipitation before it accumulates.

3. Make needed repairs

Repair loose floorboards and pull carpet taut if it has started to stretch out. Address cracks outdoors and ensure that patio stones, bricks and pavers are secure and level to reduce tripping hazards. Fix areas of the landscape where water may pool and freeze, creating potential hazards.

4. Declutter all spaces

Remove unnecessary items and furniture from rooms to free up more space to get around. Be sure there are no obstructions in walkways, entryways and near doors. Keep staircases clear at all times.

5. Invest in assistive devices

Handrails, grab bars, nonslip stair treads, and many other devices can make homes safer for people of all ages and abilities. Outfit cabinets and closets with organizers that put frequently used items within easy reach. A sturdy step stool can reduce the risk of injury while reaching for items stored on high shelves. Taking measures to reduce the risk of falling around the home is a worthwhile home improvement project.

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Fall lawn care tips

Spring and summer may be the seasons most often associated with landscaping and lawn care, but tending to lawns and gardens is a year-round job. If lawn and garden responsibilities dip considerably in winter, then fall is the last significant chance before the new year that homeowners will have to address the landscaping around their homes. Fall lawn care differs from spring and summer lawn care, even if the warm temperatures of summer linger into autumn. Homeowners who want their lawns to thrive year-round can take advantage of the welcoming weather of fall to address any existing or potential issues.

Keep mowing, but adjust how you mow. It's important that homeowners continue to mow their lawns so long as grass is growing. But as fall transitions into winter, lower the blades so the grass is cut shorter while remaining mindful that no blade of grass should ever be trimmed by more than one-third. Lowering the blades will allow more sunlight to reach the grass in the months ahead.

Remove leaves as they fall. Much like apple-picking and foliage, raking leaves is synonymous with fall. Some homeowners may wait to pick up a rake until all of the trees on their properties are bare. However, allowing fallen leaves to sit on the ground for extended periods of time can have an adverse effect on grass. Leaves left to sit on the lawn may ultimately suffocate the grass by forming an impenetrable wall



that deprives the lawn of sunlight and oxygen. The result is dead grass and possibly even fungal disease. Leaves may not need to be raked every day, but homeowners should periodically rake and remove leaves from their grass, even if there are plenty left to fall still hanging on the trees.

Repair bald spots. Summer exacts a toll on lawns in various ways, and even homeowners with green thumbs may end up with a lawn filled with bald spots come September. Autumn is a great

time to repair these bald spots. Lawn repair mixes like Scotts® PatchMaster contain mulch, seed and fertilizer to repair bald spots, which can begin to recover in as little as seven days. Before applying such products, remove dead grass and loosen the top few inches of soil. Follow any additional manufacturer instructions as well.

Aerate the turf. Aerating reduces soil compacting, facilitating the delivery of fertilizer and water to a lawn's roots. While many homeowners,



and particularly those who take pride in tending to their own lawns, can successfully aerate their own turf, it's best to first have soil tested so you know which amendments to add after the ground has been aerated. Gardening centers and home improvement stores sell soil testing kits that measure the pH of soil, but homeowners who want to test for nutrients or heavy metals in their soil may need to send their samples to a lab for further testing. Fall lawn care provides a great reason to spend some time in the yard before the arrival of winter.



Did You Know?

Of the 29 projects it studied for its 2017 “Cost vs. Value Report,” *Remodeling* magazine found that the average payback in resale value was 64.3 cents. The lone project in the 2017 report to return a higher value than its cost was the installation of loose-fill insulation in an attic, which provided a return of 107.7 percent. Homeowners who replaced an existing entry door with a 20-gauge steel unit recouped 90.7 percent of their investment at resale, placing that project second on the list. What helps homeowners who finance such projects recoup their associated costs is the relatively low sticker price of the projects, which both rank among the five least expensive projects examined in the 2017 report. But a recovering real estate market has helped homeowners recoup more of their investments on some expensive projects as well. For example, the 2017 report saw the biggest year-over-year percentage increases in value on expensive projects like upscale bathroom remodels, upscale master suites, two-story additions, grand entrance installations, and family room additions. The increase in value on those projects ranged from 5.6 percent to 7.4 percent from a year earlier.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, there are no safe levels of lead. Lead is particularly harmful to children’s health. Exposure to lead can stunt children’s growth while also contributing to behavioral and learning problems. Anemia, reduced growth of fetuses in pregnant women, cardiovascular effects, and reproductive problems also are side effects of lead exposure. Many people once came into contact with lead via lead-based paints, which have been banned in the United States for consumer use since 1978. But lead also can be lurking in water supplies. The EPA says that between 10 and 20 percent of instances of lead exposure can be traced to contaminated water. Homes built before 1986 are the biggest risk factors for lead plumbing. As of January 2014, all newly installed water fixtures, pipes and fittings must meet new lead-free requirements. But within the United States, public water suppliers and existing homes do not need to retrofit. The National Drinking Water Advisory Council found around 7.3 million lead service lines currently deliver water to customers. Homeowners can request testing through their local water supplier or conduct certified home tests.

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Make the most of limited space



Storage beds can help homeowners living in small homes make the most of their limited space.

Downsizing with regard to living space is a trend that has long been associated with empty nesters and senior citizens. As children move out and start families of their own, many homeowners decide to downsize to less expensive, more manageable properties.

But downsizing is not just for seniors anymore. According to a 2017 survey from the popular real estate website Trulia, among homeowners currently living in homes larger than 2,000 square feet, more would choose a smaller home than a larger one if they decided to move this year (60.6 percent to 39.4 percent).

Homeowners who decided to downsize or those who purchased a small property to begin with may need a few pointers to make the most of their limited space.

Reconsider your furniture. Furniture can make rooms feel cozy, cramped or spacious.

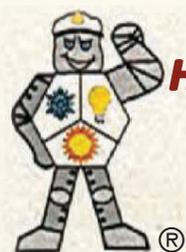
For homeowners with limited space in their homes, furniture that also can be used as storage can save space without sacrificing comfort. For the bedroom, choose a storage bed if the quarters are cramped and it's difficult to find space for two dressers. Such beds also can be used to store bed linens if closet space is limited. Purchase storage ottomans and/or end tables with storage beneath to make living areas feel less cramped.

Discard some items. Homeowners who are downsizing from large homes may need to part with some of their furniture to make their transition to smaller homes go more smoothly. For example, homeowners may need to get by with just one bedroom nightstand and may even need to replace their existing nightstands with something more compact. Discarding living room end tables and downsizing to a smaller coffee table also can help homeowners make smaller common areas more welcoming and less cluttered.

Put paint to work. Paint is another way to make the most of a limited space. Painting certain pieces of furniture the same color as the wall can make the furniture blend in and feel less imposing. The result is a room that feels calm and open, even if there is less space to move around than homeowners might have

grown accustomed to in their larger homes.

Keep surfaces free of clutter. Surfaces such as dining tables, coffee tables and kitchen counters tend to accumulate clutter. While such clutter might not feel overwhelming in a large home, in small spaces crowded surfaces can make it feel as though the walls are closing in. Make an effort to keep surfaces free of clutter, resolving to discard or put items away each night before going to bed. Many people wish they could live in homes without as much square footage as their existing homes. For those who have downsized, there are many ways to make the most of less living space.



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Rooms can serve double duty

Many homes do not have space for guest rooms, kids' play areas and home theater lounges that are possible in homes with substantial square footage. But they may not be missing out at all.

While large homes remain popular, many people are embracing the benefits of smaller residences. Small homes help homeowners save money, require less maintenance, have smaller environmental impact, and reduce the temptation to accumulate "stuff."

Owners of small homes or apartments can still enjoy the benefits of larger spaces, they just need to equip rooms to perform double duty.

Living room/guest room

Entertaining guests is easier when there's a dedicated space where visitors can feel at home. When furnishing a living room, keep the guest room in mind. A sofa that opens up to a bed or a convertible sectional can be a comfortable place for guests to lay

their heads. Side tables provide guests with places to store their belongings, and an empty storage chest can house bed linens or guests' clothing.

Den/playroom

Children tend to accumulate toys and games. And as kids grow from children to young adults, their list of must-have items — from video gaming systems to other electronics — grows along with them. Storage can make a room functional for both adults and children. Devote an entire wall to a closet or drawer system where toys can be stored out of sight when necessary. Storage ottomans can be used for extra seating while also providing somewhere for homeowners to stash stuffed animals or games for easy access. When choosing furniture, look for fabrics that are resistant to stains and modular pieces that can be moved around as necessary to create room for playing or entertaining.



A trundle sofa bed enables overnight guests to sleep comfortably right in the living room or den.

Bedroom/home office

In 2015, 24 percent of employed people in the United States did some or all of their work at home, says the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Bringing work home means men and women will need a space to work. In tight quarters, bedrooms may be the only available area. An armoire-style desk will blend in with the decor and can hide

paperwork and electronics behind doors. Otherwise, a makeup vanity can serve the dual purpose of providing a place to get ready for a night out and a ready space to house a laptop during the day. In smaller homes, homeowners may be forced to turn rooms into dual purpose areas.



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Your guide to proper tree pruning



Pruning is a job that may be tackled by do-it-yourselfers, but sometimes larger tasks are best left to a professional tree trimming service.

prime times to prune. Pruning during the dormant period also minimizes sap loss and stress to the tree, and can help cut down on the growth of fungi. In addition, insects are less likely to be problematic during the colder months of the year.

Trimming and pruning can be handled by do-it-yourselfers if the branches are smaller and more manageable. Practice on thinner branches before moving on to thicker ones, which may require extra help. Branches may be heavy, and it takes a guided hand to ensure the branches fall in a safe manner so they do not cause damage or injury.

Branches also need to be trimmed properly to facilitate good healing. Trees will form a callus bark covering over cuts to keep out disease and decay, much as a scab forms over a person's wound. Damaging the bark on a tree while pruning may interfere with that process, so do-it-yourselfers need to take the time to prune correctly.

According to Danny Lipford, home improvement expert and host of the radio program "Today's Homeowner," larger limbs may require three cuts instead of one. The first cut is a small notch in the bottom of the limb, around two to three feet from

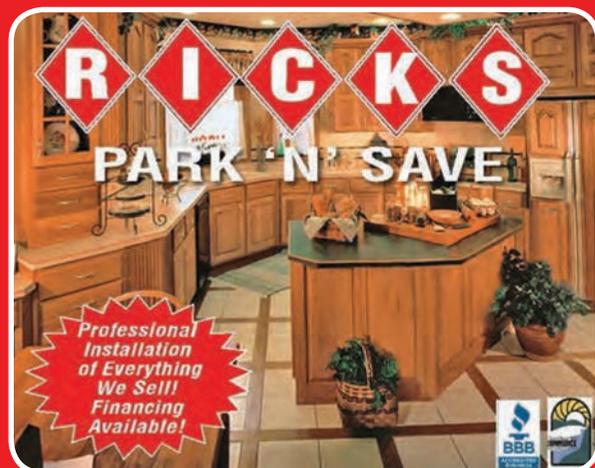
the trunk and about one-quarter of the way through. This helps prevent the bark from splitting. A relief cut is then made a few inches away from the notch cut, and goes all the way through. This removes the weight of the branch so that the final cut can be made without the branch splitting and falling. The final cut is made right where the limb extrudes from the branch collar, or the swollen bump that then forms into the tree limb. Follow the slant of the branch collar when making the cut. Smaller or thinner branches may not require the same three steps, but every effort should be made to reduce injury to the tree.

When deciding how much to prune, less is usually more. All pruning can put some level of stress on the tree and increase its vulnerability to disease and insect infestation. A good rule of thumb is to never prune more than 25 percent of the crown. According to experts at TreeHelp.com, living branches should comprise at least two-thirds the height of the tree. In some instances, the rules may need to be bent if trees are interfering with utility lines or to meet community laws. However, always prune minimally to avoid damaging the tree.

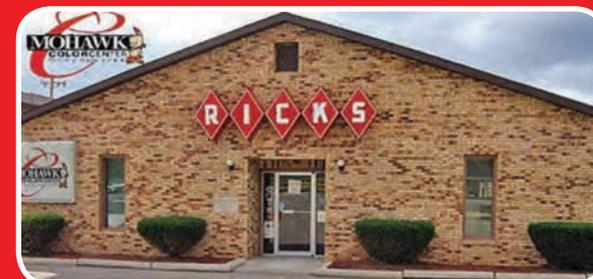
The right tools also make the job safer and easier. Use a pole pruner and lopper, rope saws, folding pruner, and a bucksaw. A chainsaw can be used in some instances, especially when pruning larger limbs. Always disinfect pruning tools after you're done to prevent the spread of disease to other trees.

Consider hiring a professional tree service if pruning proves beyond your capabilities. Doing so is safe and often well worth the investment.

Trees may require pruning for a variety reasons. Storms may have damaged branches, necessitating a pruning. In other instances, trees may have outgrown their yards, overpowering the landscape. Autumn and winter, when trees largely go dormant and fallen leaves make it easier to see the branches beneath, may be



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Did You Know?

According to the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, soil pH indicates the acidity of alkalinity in soil. Soil pH can be used to learn various things about soil properties, and can be most accurately measured using a pH meter. A less accurate, though still reliable way to measure soil pH is to use a pH kit that employs dyes. Such kits require soil samples, which homeowners will then saturate with dye. Dyes change color, and the colors that appear will indicate to homeowners whether the soil pH has increased or decreased. Soil pH can vary on the same lawn, so homeowners who want to get an accurate determination of the soil pH levels on their properties may want to gather samples from various areas of the yard. The scale to measure soil pH runs from 0 to 14, and as numbers decrease from 7, the acidity of soil gets higher, while the alkalinity of soil increases as numbers increase from 7. Soil pH levels typically range from 3 to 10, though most plants thrive in slightly acidic soil (pH levels between 6 and 7) that provides ample access to many nutrients.



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