A Special Supplement to the Winchester Press



fall home
IMPROVEMENT GUIDE

Silverlawn Contracting and Excavation open for business





Keith Durant, owner of Silverlawn Contracting and Excavation, is ready to help homeowners or other professionals with a variety of projects, including backhoe services, excavation, site clean-up, landscape preparation, trenching, and post-hole drilling. He is pictured here with his 50-foot wide Ditch Witch multi-tool excavator, which is equipped with a 12 foot digging bucket, a 40 foot trencher, a 12-by-30-foot auger, bucket, and carryall.

Pictured above: Durant also owns a backhoe, tractor and dump wagon, and a skid steer.

WINCHESTER

Are you looking to build a deck? Create a walkway? Install a fence? Need a machine small enough to get into your backyard? Something equipped with all the right gadgets to get the job done?

Keith Durant, owner of Silverlawn Contracting and Excavation, is ready to work with homeowners on a variety of projects, from landscaping to deck preparation to excavating. He also works alongside contractors and other professional tradespeople, assisting when needed.

While Durant's Silverlawn business is new – having been launched in May – Durant himself is far from a novice when it comes to tackling home improvement projects, manning various machinery, and working hard.

A former dairy farmer and cash cropper, Durant has also worked construction, building fabric-covered buildings for a wide range of companies for many years, from hay and equipment storage to free stall facilities for cattle. It wasn't until 2013, when Durant was renovating his family's farm house, that the idea for Silverlawn was born.

Built by his great grandfather in the late 1800s, the property has been in the family for more than a century and Durant felt it was time to gut the interior of the homestead, leaving the building's frame intact, but updating its living space. Honouring the family's history, Durant used found material and objects when remodeling and decorating the new, more spacious home. (He turned the former garage into a great room complete with a fireplace.) He also added a wrap-around porch, replacing the one that had been removed at some point in the home's long history.

To accomplish the challenging task, Durant bought a Ditch Witch for use in the renovation process.

"People would contact me to do work for them with the excavator," he said. "This led to the creation of Silverlawn Contracting and Excavation."

The name was an easy choice, he added. Silverlawn was the prefix the family used in naming the members of the former purebred Holstein herd. It was his great-grandfather who came up with the name. The story, passed down from generation to generation, was that he had looked out the window one day and remarked on how the falling leaves looked silver. They were covering the lawn like a blanket… and, that was that.

Today, Durant owns a backhoe with a tooth and ditching bucket, a skid steer with a material bucket and pallet forks, a Ditch Witch multi-tool excavator with a 12 foot digging bucket, 40 foot trencher, 12-by-30-foot auger, bucket, and carryall, as well as a tractor and dump wagon.

"This [Ditch Witch] unit is only 50 feet wide and is exceptional for accessing backyards where space is limited," Durant said.

His machine inventory, along with his skills and experience, allow Durant to provide the following services: trenching for water, electrical, or sewer; excavating for foundations and footings; auguring for fence posts, lamp posts, trees and shrubs; site clean-up and debris removal; and backfilling and leveling.

For more information, visit www.silverlawn.com or call Durant at 613-316-4782.





How to safeguard your home from harsh weather

Autumn is a beautiful time of year marked by welcoming cooler temperatures and the natural beauty of leaves changing colours. Autumn also has a tendency to fly by, as if the powerful weather of winter simply cannot wait to make its presence felt.

With such a seemingly short time between the end of summer and the dawn of winter, homeowners know they don't have too many weekends in between to prepare their homes for the potentially harsh months ahead. But such preparation, often referred to as "winterizing," can make a home more comfortable when the mercury dips below freezing, while saving homeowners substantial amounts of money along the way.

Clean the gutters

Leaves falling in autumn can be a beautiful sight to behold, but many of those leaves are likely finding their way into your gutters, where they can lodge and cause a host of problems down the road. If the leaves and additional debris, such as twigs and dirt, that pile up in your gutters are not cleared out before the first winter storm, the results can be costly and even catastrophic.

Winter rain and snowfall needs a place to go upon hitting your roof, and gutters facilitate the travel of such precipitation from your roof into street-level drainage systems. If gutters are backed up with leaves and other debris, then ice dams may form, forcing water to seep in through the roof. That damage can be costly and can even cause the roof to collapse inward in areas with heavy snowfall. Clean gutters throughout the fall, especially if your property has many trees, and be sure to check gutters one last time before the arrival of winter.

Tend to your attic

Homeowners who have attics in their homes might want to add some extra insulation up there, especially those who recall feeling cold inside their homes last winter, which is often a telltale sign of improper insulation in a home. A good rule of thumb when determining if your attic needs more insulation is to look for the ceiling joists. If you can see the joists, then you need more insulation.

Address leaky windows and doors

Sometimes attic insulation is not the culprit when it comes to a cold home. Oftentimes, leaky windows and doors are the real bad guys in a drafty home. Fall is a great time to inspect for leaky windows and doors, as the wind outside can serve as your partner. When the wind outside is blowing, take a tour of your home's windows and doorways, standing next to them to determine if there any holes or leaks that are letting outdoor air inside. If you notice any leaks beneath exterior doors, install some door sweeps to keep outdoor air where it belongs. Leaks around windows can be snuffed out with caulk or weather stripping.

Test the furnace

Homeowners typically do not devote much thought to their furnaces in spring, summer and fall. But with winter on the horizon, fall is the time to test the furnace to make sure it's ready for the months ahead. Expect a somewhat foul yet brief odour to appear when starting the furnace. That odour should dissipate shortly, but if it does not go away, then your furnace is likely in need of repair. But even if the smell does not stick around, you might want to have the furnace cleaned by a professional anyway. Such cleanings ensure the furnace works efficiently throughout the winter.

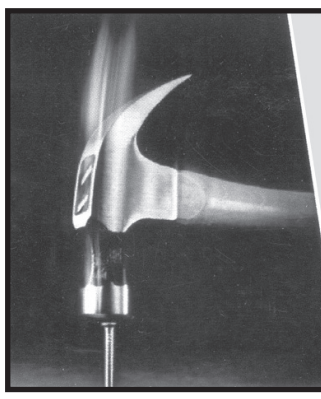
Clean the garage

You might not mind parking in the driveway during the warmer months of the year, but why subject your vehicles to harsh winter weather if you don't have to? Clean the garage in the fall so you have an indoor parking spot throughout the winter season. Protecting your car from the elements can add years to its life and also saves you the trouble of digging your car out of the snow.



Cleaning gutters in the fall can prevent roof damage resulting from winter rains and snowfall.

Fall is a time of year for homeowners to spend a weekend or two preparing their homes for the often harsh weather that awaits when winter arrives.



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How to inspect your furnace before winter arrives

It is time to bid adieu to the warm days of summer. Chilly afternoons followed by continually dropping temperatures are on the horizon, and fall is the perfect time to service the home furnace to ensure it is ready to withstand the demands of winter.

Furnace maintenance should be done on a regular basis. The best time to do so is in late summer or early fall, when you still have enough time to address any problems before it gets too cold outside.

HVAC systems malfunctions are typically caused by one of a handful of common problems. Inspecting certain components can help to guarantee a furnace is in working order when the first cold days arrive.

Filter and air intakes

After several months of running the air conditioning, the filter on the heating and cooling system may need to be changed. Check the condition of the filter to see if it is heavily soiled. Furnace filters are relatively inexpensive. Since this thin barrier will be responsible for cleaning the air you breathe, it is important to keep a fresh filter in the unit. A clogged, dirty filter will reduce the efficiency of the HVAC system and may contribute to poor indoor air and allergies.

Check the air intakes around the house for obstructions. Do not place furniture directly in front of intakes or venting that delivers air to the home, as this can compromise air flow and force the unit to work harder. Without adequate air flow through the system, the furnace may not turn on.

Many systems also have some sort of external vent or exhaust pipe. Check that the area is free of leaves, debris and animal nests. Again, any blockages can impede the efficiency of the unit or cause it to fail.

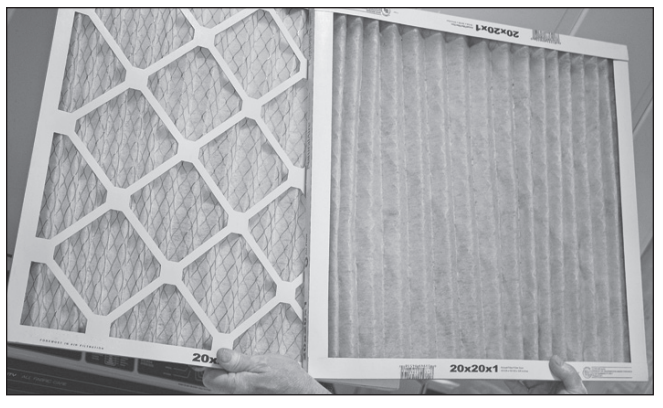
Thermostat

Very often a furnace may not turn over because the thermostat is faulty. Many a homeowner has spent money to have a service person come out to examine the furnace, only to learn they only need a new thermostat or battery in the thermostat.

Check the thermostat against a separate thermometer to ensure that it is reading the right temperature in the house. Raise the setting a few degrees to test if the heat kicks on.

Fuel

Furnaces are powered by various energy sources. Electricity, gas or oil may be involved in the process. If fuel is not being delivered to the furnace, the pilot will not light and warm the air to be blown through the house. Some systems have an emergency shut-off switch that will halt fuel delivery to the unit. It's easy for these switches to be flipped accidentally if a furnace is located in a high-traffic area. Make sure the switch is in the "on" position before reporting a problem.



Installing a fresh furnace filter is one way to ensure the furnace runs smoothly through the winter.

In addition to these steps, you may want to vacuum the vent screens around the house. This will reduce the amount of dust blown around. Also, if the furnace exhausts into a flue, be sure that the exhaust route is clear so that carbon monoxide does not back up into the home.

Improve your home's air quality

Unlike the other seasons of the year, when homeowners can comfortably air out their homes by opening windows, winter offers no such opportunities to let nature improve indoor air quality.

Such a reality can make a home uncomfortable as winter drags on. But that discomfort pales in comparison to the health risks presented by poor indoor air quality. Radon, volatile chemicals from fragrances used in conventional cleaners and lead from house dust are just a few of the many sources of indoor air pollution commonly found in homes, and these pollutants can be especially harmful in winter, when many people spend more time indoors thanks to harsh weather. But while you might not be able to change the weather so you can open windows in the wintertime, you can take steps to improve indoor air quality in your home.

• **Clean the floors regularly.** Dirty floors take their toll on a home's indoor air quality. Dust that's allowed to settle on floors may contain harmful chemicals and allergens that can lead to respiratory problems and additional uncomfortable health conditions. Clean your floors at least once per week during the winter months, ideally with a vacuum that's equipped with a HEPA filter. The HEPA filter is important because it can prevent dust and dirt from being blown back out of the vacuum in the exhaust. After you have vacuumed, mop the floors as well, as even the most effective vacuums leave potentially harmful dust particles behind. A once-over with a mop and some hot water can remove any lingering dust left behind by the vacuum.

• **Place a floor mat near every entrance.** Winter is a messy season, and it's easy to bring in the great outdoors when you enter your home during cold weather seasons. Dirt that sticks to your shoes may contain potentially harmful chemicals, so place a floor mat near any door where people routinely enter your home and politely ask that all who enter wipe off and remove their shoes before moving about the house.

• **Dehumidify your home.** Mould and dust mites thrive on moisture, so homeowners concerned about the moisture in their homes during the winter months can purchase a dehumidifier to control allergens and reduce moisture in the air. In addition to using a dehumidifier, you can control humidity in your home by using an exhaust fan when cooking, addressing leaky plumbing fixtures to prevent mould growth and making sure your clothes dryer is vented to the outside of your home.

• **Choose naturally scented laundry products.** Everyone wants their freshly cleaned clothes to smell good, but the price you pay when using laundry products that employ synthetic fragrances may be far more steep than you realize. Such synthetic fragrances emit dozens of chemicals into the air, so choose naturally scented detergents, fabric softeners and dryer sheets when possible.

• **Avoid plug-in air fresheners.** Unless otherwise noted on the packaging, plug-in air fresheners likely contain volatile organic compounds, or VOCs, which contain a variety of chemicals that can negatively impact both short- and long-term health. Instead of plugging in an air freshener to improve a home's interior aroma, slice fresh lemons and leave them out in the kitchen and keep fresh indoor plants in living areas. Studies from NASA have shown that indoor plants naturally purify indoor air by absorbing materials released by synthetic materials.

As winter gets set to return, homeowners can employ several simple strategies to improve indoor air quality in their homes.

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Get the 411 on flooring

Choosing the right flooring for a home is no small task. Flooring is expensive, so homeowners want to make the best decision possible so their choice of flooring is not one they regret and ultimately replace in the years to come.

When choosing flooring for their homes, many homeowners are overwhelmed by the options at their disposal. Each type of flooring can look great in its own way, which is why homeowners may struggle to find the right fit for their homes. Educating yourself about flooring is a great way to make the process of choosing your next floor much less overwhelming and more enjoyable. The following are some of the more popular flooring options you will no doubt encounter as your search for a flawless floor begins.

Hardwood

Nearly everyone is familiar with hardwood floors, which are durable, warm and a favourite of homeowners aiming for a traditional look. Homes with open floor plans often benefit from hardwood flooring, as it creates the feeling of continuity that homeowners hope to achieve with open floor plans. Various species, including oak, maple and cherry, of hardwood flooring are available, and they typically vary in price, with more exotic imported options carrying hefty price tags. More traditional hardwood flooring is less expensive, and solid wood flooring can be refinished several times to increase its lifespan.

Engineered wood

Engineered wood is less susceptible to temperature changes and humidity than solid wood, and some new varieties of engineered wood include substrates made from recycled wood fiber and stone dust, which may appeal to eco-friendly homeowners. Do-it-yourselfers who want to install their own floors may prefer engineered wood, which is now available in self-locking parquet or plank squares that can be installed without using glue or nails.

Bamboo

Bamboo is another flooring alternative that's popular among eco-conscious homeowners, as it comes from plants that regenerate quickly and is therefore considered a sustainable material. Bamboo flooring is made of strands of bamboo that are glued together, forming engineered planks or solid strips. Bamboo flooring is strong and able to resist the negative effects of fluctuating humidity, which include swelling and contraction. Many people prefer the fresh, bright feel of bamboo flooring.

Laminate

Laminate flooring is among the less expensive flooring materials to buy and install. Homeowners who purchase laminate flooring have an array of options to choose from, and floating laminate flooring systems can be installed over existing floors without glue or nails. Some feel laminate flooring is indistinguishable from real wood, but the plastic coating that makes up the top layer of laminate flooring is often a giveaway that the floors are laminate and not real wood. Similar in construction to engineered wood, laminate flooring differs because its top layer is a photographic imprint on the face of each board, whereas engineered wood is made up of real hardwood veneer attached to several layers of plywood.

Cork

Cork is another sustainable flooring material that's a favourite among homeowners looking to make their homes more eco-friendly. The appearance of cork floors is unlike many flooring materials, as it is speckled thanks to unusual grain patterns of the trees from which it is harvested. Cork flooring is popular in kitchens and bathrooms because cork tiles have a naturally nonslip surface that makes areas of a home where floors get wet safer. Cork flooring may need to be resealed every few years to guard against stains and potential moisture issues.



Hardwood flooring is a popular and traditional choice for homeowners replacing their existing floors.

Flooring choices vary greatly, and it's easy for homeowners to become overwhelmed by all of the options at their disposal. But taking time to understand each of those options can make the process of choosing a floor that much more fun.

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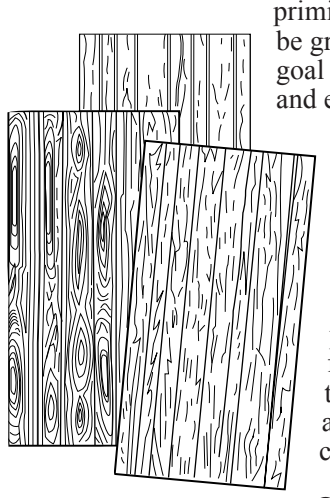
Handy tips for revitalizing paneled rooms

Paneling is a low-cost way to cover problem walls. In the 1960s and 1970s, paneling was very popular. Sold in large panels, paneling was relatively easy to hang, and quickly became a staple of dens and finished basements.

But few of today's homeowners are enamored with the look of faux wood paneling. Those who purchase homes that have paneling on the walls often search for ways to transform the look of rooms in which the walls are covered in paneling. While paneling does go up quickly, removing it may not be as simple. Explore these options for giving paneled walls a new look.



Paint over the paneling

The fastest way to breathe new life into a paneled room is to paint over the paneling. The texture of the paneling will show from beneath, giving the room appeal without the dark hue of the wood or veneer panels. Consult with a paint store or home improvement centre to determine the most effective way to cover up paneling with paint. Sometimes it is wise to lightly scuff the paneling with a fine-grit sandpaper so that the paint will adhere. Shiny or glossed paneling can be dulled with a de-glossing product. Sometimes a combination of a thick primer and colour will grip the paneling and reduce the number of coats needed to cover it. Also, invest in a high-quality, professional-grade paint. It may cost a bit more, but such paint will be well worth it when it glides over the paneling, covering it completely. If you don't want the grooves showing between the panels, fill them in with spackle and sand down to create a smooth surface before painting.

Cover the paneling

Covering up the paneling is another tactic. Rather than coating the wall in paint, consider a wallpaper liner. Liners are essentially a thick, plain wallpaper that is applied on top of the paneling or used when dealing with damaged walls. In lieu of tearing down the walls and putting up new drywall, the liner will cover imperfections. Many of these products can be painted directly and may not require priming beforehand. This can be great for homeowners whose goal is to cover paneling quickly and easily.

Those who prefer a patterned look on the walls can opt to cover paneling with a printed wallpaper. However, depending on the thickness of the wallpaper, this may be a two-step process. You may need to fill in the creases between the panels first, or first use a thick wallpaper liner to create a seamless surface.

Cut the paneling

If you desire a cottage or country look in a room, remove half of the paneling, leaving the bottom portion intact. Then place moulding or a chair rail where you made your cut, creating a wainscoting effect. The top portion of the wall can be painted, while the bottom portion can be left as the wood colour or painted a complementary colour.

Remove the paneling

The most labor-intensive way to give a paneled room a new look is to remove the paneling. Pry at a portion of the paneling in an inconspicuous spot in the room to determine which method was used to install the paneling. Some people only tack it into place with small, finishing nails, while others glue the paneling to the wall for a secure installation. Glue will be much more difficult to remove and could further damage the walls and paneling in the process. If the paneling is too difficult to remove, covering or painting it may be a smarter option. Small nails can be removed by pulling at the panels. Spackle holes before painting over the walls.

Paneling is an inexpensive decorating option that was first popularized 40 years ago. Though less popular now, paneling still shows up in homes and can be remedied with some relatively easy tips.

Remodeling insurance can protect homeowners

Many steps are involved in a successful home remodeling project. A common mistake made by homeowners is failing to consult with a homeowners' insurance agent before beginning a major home overhaul. It is a good idea to review your home insurance policy before any significant work is done on your home. The right amount of coverage will protect your assets both during construction and afterward when your home is worth more.

Review your insurance policy

According to the independent consumer insurance web site Insure.com, one in four remodeling projects will increase the value of a home by more than 25 percent, so there's a good chance you will need to increase your coverage to compensate for renovations done on the home. Many insurance companies require you to insure your home for at least 80 percent of its replacement value. If you have added an extension or installed an inground pool, you may have raised the value of your property enough to necessitate an insurance policy change.

Begin by talking with your insurance company and explain the scope of the planned renovations. Inquire whether you will need to update or amend your current insurance policy to protect yourself financially during the renovation. This is particularly important for those who will be doing the work themselves or asking a friend or family member for help. While many contractors have business and general liability insurance to protect themselves if a worker is injured, homeowners may need sufficient liability protection in the event a non-contractor gets hurt working on your home. Your insurance company may have other types of insurance to protect you further if you are planning a very large project. Failure to ask about coverage before starting the renovations puts you at risk.

If you will be using contractors and subcontractors, be sure that they are insured and bonded. Should they damage your home or be injured during the renovation, their insurance will cover any resulting expenses. However, if they are not insured or bonded, you may be held liable through your own insurance policy or you may have to pay out of pocket.

Keep all receipts and document the progress of the renovation. You may need this information to present to your insurance carrier after the renovation is complete. This way you can request a new appraisal of the property and secure adequate insurance coverage.

Certain improvements may make you eligible for discounts. For example, a new heating system, energy efficient appliances or an alarm system may qualify you for rebates or lower premiums.

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Harbers helps homeowners prepare for winter

WILLIAMSBURG

"We're very busy. We haven't seen this kind of activity in years… [Not] since the ice storm."

Joy Harbers, who owns Harbers Flame Centre and Masonry near Williamsburg with her husband, Brian, said customers started ordering their new heating systems by the second week in August, and since then business has been non-stop.

"This year we started very early in the season. We've seen a dramatic increase," she said, explaining that customers are concerned with the potential cost of heating their homes this winter.

While some customers are searching for their first fireplace or woodstove, Joy said many are looking to upgrade to more efficient units in preparation for what *The Old Farmer's Almanac* has predicted will be a long cold winter.

"It's been in the forefront for everybody. 'What are we going to see this year?'" she said.

With the recent increase in the cost of electricity, gas, and propane, the Harbers anticipated a potential need for a wider variety of more efficient heating options, and began investigating those options earlier this year.

Among some of the newer heating units on display in the Harbers showroom is a pellet stove from the Italian company, Piazzetta. The Williamsburg shop currently offers the Sabrina model, which is tall, slim, quiet, and controlled by an electronic panel installed in the top of the unit itself. The stove was built to be durable and aesthetically pleasing, and, more importantly, it offers a long burn time.

Another new pellet stove on display at the Flame Centre is one from Quadra-Fire, which comes with its own thermostat and offers a line of varying styles and sizes of high efficiency units.

In addition to pellet stoves, Harbers offer an assortment of wood-burning, gas, and propane stoves and fireplace units, all of which have been vetted by the couple in their home or showroom before making them available for purchase. Among the products shown in their shop, the Harbers' carry products from Blaze King (wood or gas), Jotul (wood, gas), and Valor (radiant gas fireplaces).

"Anyone thinking of a new heating system this year, they need to make the commitment so they can be ordered and put in on time," Joy said, explaining the huge demand has caused manufacturing backups across Eastern Ontario, as well as local delays in installation once the product is received. "You can't come in today and have it tomorrow."







Left and above: *Harbers Flame Centre and Masonry now carries pellet stoves from Piazzetta (above, right) and Quadra-Fire (above, left). Piazzetta's stoves come to Harbers from Italy via British Columbia. Joy Harbers is pictured at left with the store's new Quadra-Fire pellet stove.*



Right: *With several Blaze King units available, Harbers offers model options with differences in design (decorative or utilitarian), fuel-type (wood or gas), and size.*

Currently, Harbers is booking installations roughly 1.5-to-two months ahead with mid-September customers looking at November installation dates.

While Brian makes a point of being at every installation, the couple's son, Matt, who recently joined the business in July, is the new full-time gas technician and oversees all gas installations.

"We are very tuned into quality control," Joy said. "It's an investment in your home and it's significant."

The family business is located at 4385 Billy Lane west of Williamsburg. For more information, visit www.harbers.ca.



Left: *A new feature in the showroom is a wall devoted to Jotul units.*

Press Photos – Casselman



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Fixing leaky fixtures around the house

People who have slept within steps of a leaky faucet know full well the nuisance that such water fixtures present. A leaky faucet can make it difficult to sleep at night, but leaks around the house also cost homeowners lots of money.

Many leaks around a house are not nearly as noticeable as a dripping faucet. But worn toilet flappers or leaky valves can wreak just as much havoc on a water bill as a leaky en suite bathroom faucet does on a night's sleep. Identifying those leaks, many of which are easy to fix, is a great way to conserve water and save money at the same time.

Conserve water, save money

• Start with your water meter. The hours after everyone in the household has taken their morning showers, brushed their teeth and had their coffee is a great time to determine if you have a leak. Water is not typically used during these hours, so check the water meter once the last coffee mug has been washed and then revisit the meter two hours later. If the meter has changed, then chances are you have a leak.

• Test the toilet with food colouring. Toilets are a common source of water leaks, as deteriorating toilet flappers slowly waste water via leaks that are not always noticeable. Because toilet leaks can be difficult to notice, homeowners might have to get a little creative. Add a drop of food colouring to the holding tank of your toilet, then wait roughly 15 minutes to see if the colour of the water starts to change. If it has, your toilet is leaking.

• Inspect faucet gaskets and pipe fittings. Faucet gaskets and pipe fittings should not be wet, but wet gaskets and pipe fittings is typically evidence of surface leaks. When washing dishes in the sink, turn the faucet on high. If you notice water coming from anywhere other than the head of the faucet, then you have leaky gaskets.

Once you have determined the source of the leak, you can begin to address the situation. Toilets, faucets and showerheads are the most common culprits with regard to water leaks.

• Toilets: Flappers are the rubber parts in the toilet's holding tank. These flappers are susceptible to mineral buildup and decay, and over time that can create leaks. Flappers are inexpensive and easy to replace. When replacing your toilet flapper, take the worn out flapper with you to the hardware store to make sure you buy a new one that is compatible with your toilet.

• Faucets: When a leaky faucet is your biggest foe, be sure to turn the water supply in the house off before you get to work. If your faucet has any decorative knobs, gently remove these so they do not break and you can replace them when the leak has been addressed. From there you must remove the packing nut and the stem. Some stems come off easily, while others must be twisted off from the valve. Inspect these parts for damage before moving on. The O-ring and washer inside the valve seat may be responsible for your leak, so inspect these parts and replace them if necessary. Be sure they are an exact fit so you don't end up with a fresh leak. Once these items have been replaced, you can reassemble the parts, turn the water back on and check to see if the leak has vanished. If the leak remains, then your valve seat may be corroded or your plumbing might need a professional inspection.

• Showerheads: If the showerhead is your source of leaks, you may just need to tighten the connection between the showerhead and the pipe stem. This can be done using pipe tape. If the problem with your showerhead can be traced to the shower handle and cartridge, you might want to hire a professional to fix your leak, as addressing this problem can be tricky. If you want to do it yourself, first turn the water supply off before removing the shower handle. Some handles are especially difficult to remove, in which case you might need to visit the hardware store to purchase a handle puller. Once the handle has been removed, you can then pull the cartridge, which is likely to prove more difficult than removing the handle. The cartridge may need to be twisted loose with pliers before you pull it out, or you may need to buy a cartridge puller that is compatible with the brand of showerhead you have. Once you get the cartridge out, you can install your replacement and reassemble the parts that were removed.



Water leaks around the house can be costly and wasteful. Addressing such leaks can be done in a matter of minutes, but more complex problems may be best left to a professional.

Did you know?

Inadequate ventilation in a home can increase indoor air pollution levels. Those pollutant levels rise in a poorly ventilated home because not enough outdoor air is making its way into a home to dilute emissions from indoor sources of pollution. In addition, in a poorly ventilated home, indoor air pollutants are not being carried out of the home, leaving the pollutants to linger and potentially putting the health of the home's residents at risk.

Long-term effects of prolonged exposure to indoor air pollution can include respiratory disease, heart disease and cancer. But homeowners who want to increase outdoor air infiltration in their homes do not have to open the windows even when temperatures dip. A simple inspection of mechanical ventilation systems, such as bathroom and kitchen fans and air handling systems that employ fans and ducts to remove indoor air and distribute filtered and conditioned outdoor air throughout a home, may be all that's necessary to ensure indoor air stays healthy during the winter.

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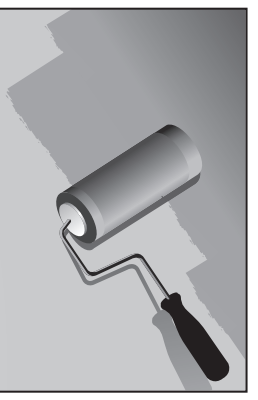

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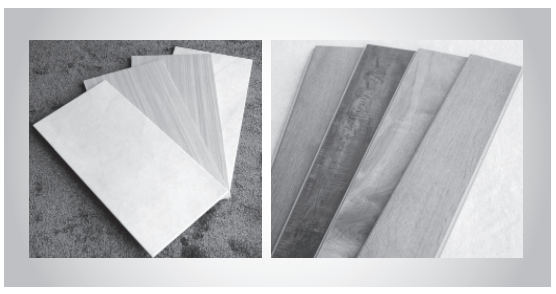

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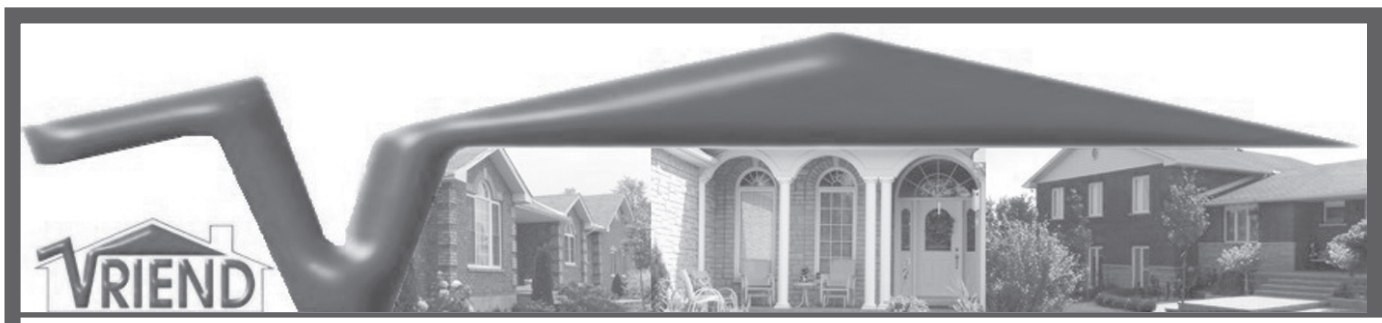

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Budget-friendly bathroom transformation tips



Homeowners need not bust their budgets to transform their washrooms into modern, luxurious oases.

The allure of a spa-style bathroom is something few homeowners can resist. Such bathrooms can make for a welcome retreat after a long day at the office or an afternoon spent chasing kids around the yard.

But as appealing as such a sanctuary may seem, the cost of creating a luxury washroom is more than many homeowners' budgets can withstand. Fortunately, a dream bathroom does not have to break the bank. In fact, there are several ways to make a bathroom worthy of the most comforting spa without stretching your budget.

Install a wall-hung mirror

If your idea of a luxury bathroom harkens back to a time before the advent of recessed medicine cabinets, then a wall-hung mirror can give the bathroom an entirely new feel without much of a financial commitment. Flush-mount mirrors need not require the services of a contractor, but they can provide a sense of elegance that recessed cabinets cannot.

Replace bathroom countertops

A countertop replacement job may sound expensive, but such an undertaking is not very costly in the washroom, where counter space is typically limited. Since the cost of countertop materials is by the square foot, you can replace bathroom surfaces for a relatively small amount of money. Granite countertops can be beautiful, but such surfaces do not create the warm feel that many prefer in a luxury bathroom. A material such as soapstone is warm and inexpensive and can quickly give the bathroom a new look.

Embrace calm colours

Painting the bathroom is another inexpensive way to give the room an entirely new look. If the walls of your washroom are currently a vibrant colour, consider a more calming tone to give the room the luxurious and relaxing feel you're aiming for. If your bathroom includes a clawfoot tub, you also can make it a two-tone tub to add a touch of relaxing elegance. Paint the tub's exterior in a calming tone such as soft gray, and you will have transformed the washroom at little cost and even less effort.

Transform your double vanity

Many homeowners prefer a double vanity in their bathrooms, as such a setup allows a couple the space to get ready for bed or work without getting in one another's way. But instead of a traditional vanity with a counter between the sinks, consider installing matching pedestal sinks to surround an antique washstand. This can give the washroom a feel of antique luxury, and such washstands can found for a few hundred dollars.

Replace old fixtures

Though they are often overlooked, cabinet and door fixtures as well as towel racks can greatly influence the feel of a washroom. If the cabinet and drawer handles are old or outdated, replace them with more modern options. Such a job might be even more effective if you repaint or reface existing cabinetry. Neither task is terribly expensive, but both can give the washroom a more luxurious feel. The same goes for replacing old towel racks, which can be an eyesore if they're especially dated.

Transforming a bathroom may seem like a significant and costly undertaking, but savvy homeowners can give their washrooms a new and luxurious look without spending much money.

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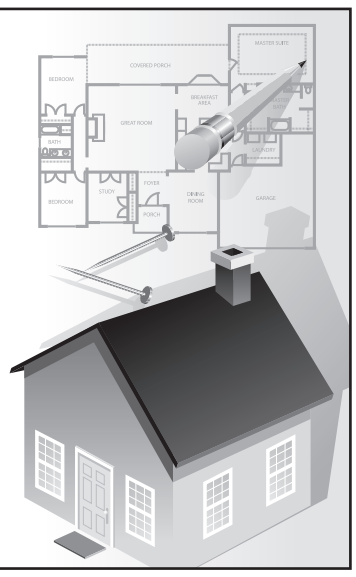

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How to stay within your home improvement budget

Home improvement projects range from small scale undertakings that can be tackled in a single weekend to large remodels that can take several months to complete. While no two projects are the same, every home improvement project demands that homeowners dip into their pockets and spend some money.

Much like the scale of projects varies greatly, so, too, do the financial commitments required of homeowners to make those projects a reality. But no matter the size of the project, homeowners can find ways to stretch their budgets without sacrificing the quality of their improvements.

• **Do your homework.** Before you decide to make changes to your home, it's best to first do some research into any potential projects you're considering. Many homeowners have decided to dive into a project before they fully realize its scope and cost, and going in blind can bust a budget, turning what might have seemed like a relatively simple project into a money pit.

Understanding just what a project entails and how much it's likely to cost can give homeowners an idea of what they can afford and where they might be able to stretch their budgets. For example, if you want to replace your kitchen countertops but can't afford engineered quartz countertops, you might be able to find a less expensive alternative, such as tile, that you like just as much. But it's best to research such alternatives before you decide to replace your existing countertops. If you can't find a less expensive alternative, you might want to postpone the project until you can grow your budget. But starting the project without first grasping its true cost is a recipe for disaster, so do your homework before you find your toolbox and start working.

• **Build unforeseen expenses into your budget.** Another way to stay within your budget is to include budget-busting unforeseen expenses into the budget from the get-go. Whether you're doing the project yourself or paying a contractor, nearly every home improvement project will present some unforeseen, and costly, hurdles. For example, you might find mould inside the walls when you're converting a basement, and it can cost a pretty penny to make that mould go away. If you go into the project expecting such hurdles, then the financial sting of addressing them won't prove too great a burden. But if the mould catches you and your budget completely off guard, you might be forced to overextend that budget or make sacrifices elsewhere in order to complete the project. Build some contingency money, including permit and permit fees, into your home improvement project to safeguard against such unforeseen issues.

• **Get to work.** If you're hiring a contractor, speak to him or her before signing a contract to see if there is anywhere you can pitch in to keep the labor costs low. You might be able to pitch in during the demolition phase, saving the cost of paying your contractor's workers to tear down walls or remove debris you can just as easily remove yourself. Another way to pitch in is to do the end-of-day cleanup yourself. Any role you play with regard to labor will likely need to be negotiated upfront, but you can save yourself a substantial amount of money on labor if you're willing to get your hands dirty.

• **Determine if piecemeal is the most affordable option.** Sometimes it makes sense to tackle one project at a time, while other times you might want to combine projects to save on the cost of materials. For instance, if your ultimate goal is to install wood flooring throughout your home, determine if it makes more financial sense to install the flooring all at once rather than doing one or two rooms at a time. You might save by buying all of your materials at once rather than buying a small amount of materials several times over the next several years.

Strategies for proper pruning



As the leaves fall off the trees and greenery thins out for the season, exposing branches and undergrowth along the way, homeowners may be tempted to prune their trees and shrubs. But while autumn pruning may seem like a good idea, many gardening experts say it is often best for homeowners to wait until winter or early spring before pruning.

Although pruning does thin out branches and tame spent blooms, which can be eyesores, pruning also stimulates new growth. Pruning in the autumn, when plants are naturally preparing to go dormant, can weaken the plants considerably. This can compromise their chances of surviving into the next growing season.

Fall temperatures also can be deceiving. While it may be warm during the day when the sun is shining, temperatures can quickly drop overnight. Pruning during the warmth of day, when the sap has risen in the plants, may deplete energy from the plant. When the mercury drops at night, the plant can suffer.

If you spend time in the yard in the fall, tend to the leaves and debris that have already fallen to the ground rather than focusing energy on fall pruning. If you have been diligent during the spring and summer, your shrubs and other plants likely won't need pruning at this time of year.

Wait until colder weather before taking out the shears. At this point, the woody parts of many plants are dormant and will not be harmed or primed to grow by the pruning. Chances are you won't prune too much as well, as chilly temperatures will keep you from spending too much time outdoors.

When it's time to prune, consider these other pointers.

• **Keep tools clean and in good working order.** You risk injury if your tools are dull and in poor shape overall. Spend time sharpening pruners and keep manual tools oiled and clean. Debris can lodge itself in clippers, making it more difficult to open and shut them. Wash and dry tools after use, especially when dealing with diseased plants. Otherwise you risk spreading disease to healthy plants.

• **Cut back stems completely.** It's usually a good idea to prune branches back to the main stem. Leaving a portion sticking out can catch on people or animals and produce a gathering spot for bacteria and insects. Take out thinner, smaller shoots first before moving on to any dead or dying branches.

• **Prune dry branches.** Do not prune when plants are wet. Pruning damp plants encourages the growth of microbes that can infiltrate the plant. This is not as significant a problem in the winter, when microbes have already been killed.

• **Ask an expert.** If you are unsure of how and when to prune particular plants, consult with an expert at a nursery or wherever you buy your plants.

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Paint-free ways to brighten your home

Autumn is a beautiful time of year marked by pleasant temperatures and colourful fall foliage. But as vibrant as nature can be in the weeks after summer has ended, homeowners know that the shortened days of autumn mean less light inside their homes, which can become dreary even in the weeks before the arrival of winter.

Many homeowners pick up their paintbrushes in an effort to make their homes more colourful. But homeowners need not embrace their inner Picasso to brighten their homes' interiors. The following are a handful of paint-free ways to add some splashes of colour to your home this fall.

Bring nature inside

Flowers and plants can make colourful additions to a home's interior. Flowers tend to be aromatic, which can make a stuffy house in which windows need to be kept closed a lot more pleasant. Plants and flowers also can improve indoor air quality. Several studies have shown that houseplants improve indoor air quality by filtering out volatile organic compounds, or VOCs, that can be harmful to human health. That's especially important come late fall and winter, when homeowners typically shut their windows and keep them shut until spring, making it difficult for fresh air to enter a home.

Invest in some colourful throw pillows

Natural sunlight brightens a room come spring and summer. But sunlight is increasingly scarce as fall turns into winter, and rooms that do not boast too many colourful accents can quickly grow drab as summertime sunlight dwindles. Instead of buying new furniture, invest in some colourful throw pillows to give a room a more vibrant look. Patterns can be mixed and matched to provide some contrast and transform a room from somewhere to spend time into a sight to behold.

Paper the walls

While many of today's homeowners prefer paint to wallpaper, those who want a less permanent solution to brighten up their homes may want to consider removable wallpaper. Such paper is less expensive than traditional wallpaper, and many do-it-yourselfers find removable wallpaper is easy to both install and remove. Choose a colourful pattern that can turn an otherwise plain wall into a potent palette that adds some life to your home's interior. Because removable wallpaper does not require a significant financial investment, you can experiment with various colours or change things up each month if you so desire.

Add some artwork

Another way to add colour to the walls inside your home without dusting off your paintbrush is to hang some colourful artwork. Paintings that feature bold colours tend to draw your immediate attention when you enter a room, and that quality can make you forget the room is not benefitting from natural light. If you want to go the extra mile, find a painting that features colours which match throw pillows or other accessories in the room. This way your walls and your accessories are working in concert to make a room more colourful.

Rug it out

A patterned throw rug is another accessory that can effectively brighten a room without much effort or financial investment on the part of homeowners. When choosing a throw rug, find one that's colourful but does not clash considerably with existing furnishings, as you don't want the rug to draw attention for all the wrong reasons. You have more freedom with regard to rugs if you're furnishing an empty room, as you can choose whichever rug you look and then choose additional furnishings based on the rug.

Homes tend to darken as late fall turns into winter. But homeowners can brighten their homes in various ways, even if they prefer not to paint.



Colourful flowers and throw pillows can brighten a home's interior with minimal financial investment on the part of homeowners.

Did you know?

Homeowners about to embark on home improvement projects should prioritize dust removal to avoid the potentially negative side effects of exposure to lead dust. When undergoing a renovation, homes built before 1960, are likely to produce lead dust, which occurs when lead paint is sanded or chipped. That dust can be especially harmful to children, pregnant women and pets. According to the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, lead dust that is as small as a grain of sand is enough to poison children, who may suffer brain damage, hearing loss, nervous system and kidney damage, and decreased muscle and bone growth after exposure to lead dust. When pregnant women are exposed to lead dust, that exposure may affect the baby's cognitive development while increasing the mother's blood pressure. Household pets exposed to lead dust may suffer from a series of side effects, including vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain and possibly death. Homeowners can open windows and wear protective gear such as masks and safety goggles to avoid direct exposure to lead dust.

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Chimney cleaning tips for the DIYer

Homeowners whose homes have fireplaces understand that a little more maintenance goes into autumn prep work for their homes than for those homeowners without fireplaces. Readying the fireplace for another season of use requires some upkeep.

A clean fireplace and chimney is the best defense against hazardous conditions that can cause a chimney or home fire. For those who did not clean their chimneys in the spring after extensive winter use, it is imperative to handle cleaning prior to lighting your first fire in the coming winter.

Chimney cleaning can be a do-it-yourself job. Rods and brushes can be purchased for the task. But if you have a fear of heights or prefer not to climb up on the roof to inspect the chimney, you may just want to hire a professional.

When cleaning your chimney, first place plastic sheeting in the fireplace and around the opening to the fireplace inside the home. Then climb up on the roof and remove the chimney cap inspecting the chimney for soot and creosote, which tends to be thickest at the mouth of the chimney where it will cool and stick to the inside of the masonry. Use the correct size brush for your chimney to make adequate surface contact to sweep out the debris. Go inside and clean up the residual mess, then reach up into the chimney from the fireplace side and remove any other soot before moving into the basement (or wherever the chimney reaches the bottom) to remove any soot that has dropped from that area as well.

Cleaning a chimney is a messy task that will take some work, but it is a task that needs to be done to safeguard a home before the arrival of winter.

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Customer-centric business practice continues at Winchester BMR

WINCHESTER

The fall home improvement season is well underway at Winchester BMR on County Road 38 south of the village.

The store – now comfortably aligned under the Quebec-based BMR banner – is stocked floor to ceiling with items those "weekend warriors" or skilled trades people require for preparing a home to sustain winter's wrath.

Shopping stations are now largely in place at the overhauled store, as from north to south, east to west, each area of the facility has been renewed with emphasis paid to user-friendly aisles and a more aesthetically pleasing layout.

The installation of more signage helps to better assist shoppers and store employees when it comes to finding what is being asked for, while most racks throughout the store have pictures attached to help identify products and services.

These efforts are part of the mantra of Ken Boje, who co-owns the local BMR with his wife, Trish, and who strives to provide the best customer experience possible for all shoppers, whether they are new to the location or have been attending for years.

All told, the business now encompasses well over 50,000 square-feet, with a fully serviced, 7,000 square-foot drive-through system for lumber pickup and 40,000 square-feet of area for wood and a myriad of other building and construction products.

It is the expansion of the retail portion of the store that is most noticeable, having increased to roughly 23,000 square-feet, with a 7,000 square-foot garden centre (now stocked with fall lawn care products and seasonal plants), which is an offshoot of the main building, and an adjacent 5,000 square-foot outbuilding.

For Boje and his team, these alterations have helped to streamline the hardware and home improvement aspects of Winchester BMR. However, customers can still expect to find a wide selection of housewares, appliances, various gadgets, home décor items, and giftware in the highly popular Country Treasures area.

While much of the on-floor product selection is in place, other areas are transforming constantly based on the passing of the seasons, and needs of customers.

The most compelling features of the new store set up, however, is the assorted displays, from plumbing to lighting, to kitchen and bathroom.

In the kitchen display area, customers can choose from different product lines (including BMR stocked material and Cabinetsmith), while the local store also sells the backend items needed to complete the renovation, such as a variety of countertop options and necessary hardware (knobs, hinges, etc.).

Undoubtedly, each stage of the renovation process is acknowledged with its own personal space at BMR.

Other intact product lines that have been expanded include a healthy choice when it comes to flooring, paint (Winchester BMR is the only hardware dealer in the region to stock the Benjamin Moore line) and associated products, siding, shingles, and much more.

As well, the store carries a full complement of lumber, including spring, pressure-treated, plywood's, and the like.

It should be also be noted that Winchester BMR is a stocking dealer for Kaycan Siding and Ideal Roofing products, including Wakefield steel shingles. The store also stocks the Fusion Stone line, a dry stack veneer finish for both interior and exterior use. Other brick displays will be also added to an outside portion of the store's property, where customers will be able to peruse BMR's extensive line of stone material, featuring such brands as Rinox and Permacon.

In the store's back room shop, meanwhile, both a cut room, where lumber can be brought to specific lengths to meet a customers needs, and a metal bender are housed. For the bender, customers and contractors are able to purchase the necessary material at the store and then use the device to reduce it to desired sizes and shapes – ideal for those roofing or siding projects.

The store also benefits from the addition of a boom truck, which has joined the fleet alongside the flatbed vehicle and some forklifts. The boom assists those requiring product lifted to upper levels of a constructed building.

For customers, despite the many transitions that have taken place at Winchester BMR, it is easy to that throughout the changes many familiar products continue to line the shelves of a store that has been serving the area and community for decades.





Despite the expansive changes at Winchester BMR, store co-owner Ken Boje said employees still pride themselves on offering a quality customer experience, and ensuring a complete understanding of the products offered.



Areas of upgrade at BMR including an enhanced kitchen display, featuring some of today's popular models, and a larger selection of siding, as well as interior and exterior stone.

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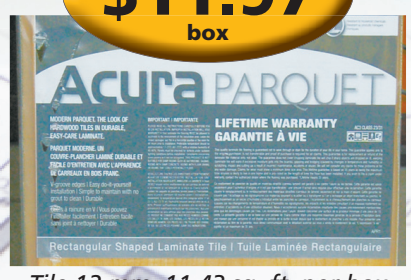

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Prep the yard for winter weather

It's time to begin preparing your yard and outdoor living spaces for winter. Homeowners may be sad to bid farewell to the furniture and accessories of the fair-weather season, but time is of the essence when prepping for impending ice and snow.

Clean patio furniture

Give cushions and structures a thorough cleaning and allow to dry completely. Cleaning items before storing them for the winter saves time and energy next year when it's time once again to set up the yard for recreation. If anything is damaged beyond repair, discard it and look for replacements during end-of-season sales when savings can be had.

Move things indoors

The more items you can store in a safe and secure location the better. Load the garage, basement or storage shed with outdoor gear. Leaving items exposes them to the elements, and such exposure can cause rust, wear and damage. Flower pots and lawn ornaments also can blow around in winter wind or collapse under the weight of the snow, so collect these items and store them for the winter. Take out patio umbrellas and put them in the shed. If something is too large to move indoors, such as a barbecue or a pool filter, cover it with a durable tarp and secure it with rope.

Remove water collectors

Bring in or cover anything that may accumulate water, such as bird baths or kids' toys. Water expands when frozen, and that means water trapped in any ceramic, glass or even plastic vessel can expand and cause the container to crack.

Clean up leaves and debris

Piles of leaves not only can suffocate a lawn and cause discolouration, but also can be attractive homes for rodents and insects looking for a warm place to spend their winters. Keep your yard neat and clean to discourage wildlife from taking up residence near your home.

Care for outdoor ponds

If you have a pond on your property, remove any weeds around it and fish out any leaves from the water. Leaves will decay in the water and build up ammonia levels that can harm fish. If the pond is small, cover it for the winter. Also, start cutting back on feeding outdoor fish. These aquatic animals' bodies begin to prepare for winter by slowing down metabolism. Continuing to feed them can harm the fish when the temperature drops.

Wrap up pool season

It's wise to close the pool and cover it before leaves start to drop. Otherwise you will have a hard time of keeping the water clean.

Plant spring bulbs now

Now is a good time to plan where you want to put spring bulbs. Once you have mapped things out, get the bulbs in the ground. Bulbs are relatively inexpensive and will provide that first punch of colour when winter finally skips town.



Autumn is a busy time for preparing your home and yard for the arrival of winter weather.

Did you know?

Many home improvement projects involve hanging decorative items, such as photo frames or shelving. Homeowners frequently wrestle with nails, screws and hanging hardware, perhaps creating more holes in their walls than is necessary to get items level and in the right spots. Instead of playing a guessing game of figuring out where the hanging holes or hooks are located on the back of items, use your office equipment to make life easier. Make a copy of the back of the item you're trying to hang with a printer/scanner or a copy machine, making sure to copy the item to full scale. Print the copy at full size and use it to drill the hanging holes. If you don't have access to a copy machine or scanner, use a piece of tape to measure the distance between the hanging holes on the back of the frame. Stick the tape to the wall and then put your nails or screws at the ends of the tape.

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Understanding attic insulation

Insulation is one of the best investments a homeowner can make, but too often people overlook insulation in favour of more eye-catching renovations. Insulation is not something to be ignored, as it contributes to year-round comfort in the home while reducing energy costs along the way.

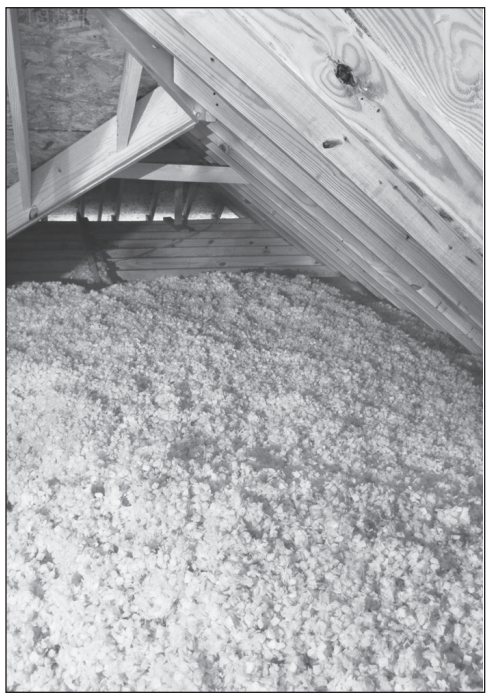
According to the Energy Star program, you should add more insulation if the existing insulation is just level with or below the floor joists of your attic. If you cannot see any of the floor joists because the insulation is well above them, you probably have enough and adding more may not be cost-effective.

In addition, check to see if the insulation is an even thickness across the entire attic. Sometimes it can be thicker in the middle and then peter out toward the eaves.

Attic insulation is measured according to its R-Value, which measures the insulation's ability to resist heat flow. The higher the R-Value, the better the thermal performance of the insulation. In many climates, the recommended level for homes is R-38. If you prefer more insulation, increase the R-Value.

Insulation is made from different materials, including fiberglass, cellulose and rock wool. It comes in different forms. Rolls and batts are some of the more commonly used types of insulation. Loose-fill insulation is a loose insulation with no backing that is usually blown into a space. Rigid foam and foam-in-place insulation are additional types of insulation.

The type of insulation used depends on where the insulation is needed and your budget. Certain materials are not applicable for particular uses, and typically insulation that provides a higher R-Value tends to be more expensive. Examine the cost-effectiveness of the type of insulation being considered before application. You also can mix and match insulations depending on the application.



Loose-fill insulation is one option when insulating an attic.

Additional tips

• Consider factors such as your climate, home design and budget when selecting insulation for your home.

• Use higher R-Value insulation, such as spray foam, on exterior walls and in cathedral ceilings to get more insulation with less thickness.

• Install attic air barriers, such as wind baffles, along the entire attic eaves to help ensure proper airflow from the soffit to the attic. Ventilation helps with moisture control and reduces summer cooling bills, but don't ventilate your attic if you have insulation on the underside of the roof. Ask a qualified contractor for recommendations.

• Be careful how close you place insulation next to a recessed light fixture – unless it is insulation contact (IC) rated – to avoid a fire hazard.

• Follow the manufacturer's installation instructions, and wear the proper protective gear when installing insulation.

In addition to making a home more comfortable, insulation also can buffer noise, making the home more peaceful. Insulation can reduce noises from outside the home as well as absorb sounds from inside.

Plants can improve air quality indoors

Indoor air quality is not often an issue in the warmer months, when many homeowners open their windows to let the fresh air of the great outdoors enter their homes in abundance. But once the temperatures begin to dip and windows start to close, indoor air quality can suffer. Musty air is not only uncomfortable, it's also unhealthy. Volatile organic compounds, or VOCs, can build up inside a home, especially when windows are kept shut for long stretches of time, which is often the case in winter. Indoor plants can counter such stale air, in some cases filtering out VOCs to make the air inside a home more breathable and healthy. The following are a handful of houseplants that can improve indoor air quality.

• **Aloe:** Many of us know aloe for its restorative properties with regard to treating burns and cuts, but aloe also improves indoor air quality by helping to clear a home of the byproducts, including formaldehyde, of chemical-based household cleaners. Aloe loves the sun, so if you hope to keep an aloe plant healthy through the winter, be sure to place the plant in a window that gets lots of sun exposure throughout the day.

• **Gerber daisy:** Like aloe, a gerber daisy needs ample sunlight. These colourful, low-maintenance flowers remove trichloroethylene, a chemical that clothes may be exposed to during the dry cleaning process.

• **Golden pothos:** Homeowners should be careful not to let the plant dry out, which can happen if they are directly exposed to sunlight. A golden pothos vine will grow quickly, so a hanging basket is a great way to keep one inside a home, where the plant can help fight formaldehyde.

• **Ficus benjamina:** Also known as a weeping fig, the ficus benjamina can be difficult to overwinter. But that does not mean your ficus benjamina, which can filter pollutants such as benzene, formaldehyde and trichloroethylene from a home, won't make it through the winter. You just need to figure out the right watering and light conditions for the plant. Such conditions can be discussed with a gardening professional.

• **Warneck dracaena:** The warneck dracaena, or dracaena deremensis, fights pollutants created by varnishes and oils. The warneck dracaena is a sturdy houseplant that thrives in temperatures that are between 21 and 26 degrees Celsius.

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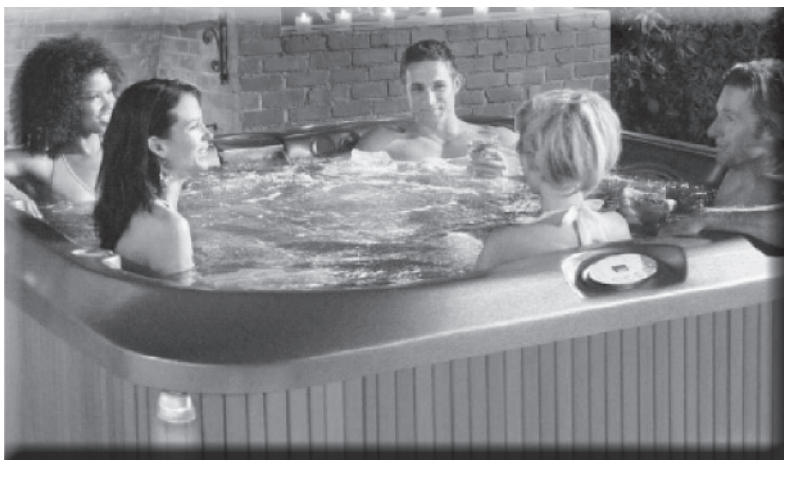
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How to clean up carpet glue

Many a homeowner has moved into a new home and immediately begun to renovate the place to make it more their own. Carpeting is often the first thing to go when a homeowner is handed the keys to his or her new home, and many a homeowner has pulled up an old carpet only to discover beautiful flooring beneath.

Pulling up carpet is a relatively simple task, but carpets that were glued down often leave their mark on the floor, turning even the most appealing hardwood floor into an eyesore covered in hardened clumps of glue. Such remnants may be harder to remove than the actual carpet, but with the right approach and a little elbow grease, homeowners will be enjoying their new hardwood floors sooner rather than later.

• Get the glue right. All carpet glues are not the same, so before you can begin to remove the adhesive from the floor you must first determine which type of glue you will be removing, as this can dictate how you proceed with the removal. Tar-based adhesives are dark brown or tan, but if the floor is coated in a yellow-looking substance, then the carpet was glued down with a more general adhesive.

• Choose the appropriate removal material. Once you have determined which type of adhesive was used on the floor, visit the hardware store to buy the appropriate removal material. Tar-based adhesives are best removed with mineral spirits, while general adhesives are best removed with a combination of elbow grease and adhesive remover.

When removing a general adhesive, first try to scrape or chip off any glue spots. Be gentle when chipping, as you don't want to scuff your wood floor. Scraping and chipping will likely only do so much, so once you have scraped and chipped as much as you can, you can then use your adhesive remover. Such products tend to be quite flammable, so exercise caution when using them. In addition, adhesive removers can be toxic, so keep the windows open while you're working so you don't get lightheaded or begin to feel sick.

• Follow the manufacturer instructions. When using mineral spirits or adhesive removers, it's imperative that you follow the manufacturer instructions. Oftentimes such products instruct users to apply them with a paintbrush or sponge in an attempt to dampen the glue. Once applied, these removers are typically left to sit for a predetermined period of time listed on the package.

• Use the right tool. Once the recommended period of time for the remover to set has passed, you can then begin to scrape the glue away. When doing so, be sure to use a plastic putty knife. You may not feel a plastic putty knife can be as effective as a metal alternative, but the plastic won't scratch or scuff the floor.

A plastic putty knife may or may not remove all of the glue, and chances are it won't. You will still be stuck with some stubborn spots that the putty knife simply can't remove. When such spots present themselves, apply a little more remover, wait the recommended time for it to set and then use an old towel to wipe away the rest of the glue. This can be hard, but stick with it to ensure the floor looks as good and glue-free as it possibly can.

• Allow the floor time to dry. The floor will need time to dry after all of the glue has been removed, so at this point you can call it a day and finish the job the following day. If weather permits, you can expedite the drying process by opening all of the windows. This not only dries the floor more quickly but also allows you to air out the room, which many contain some lingering chemicals left behind by the removers.



Restoring a wood floor after removing carpet and the glue it left behind is a simple process but one that requires homeowners put in a little elbow grease.

• Clean the floor. When the floor has dried, you can sweep and vacuum it to make sure it is free of debris.

• Sand the floor. While the floor may look beautiful, you will probably still need to sand it. No matter how carefully and effectively you removed the glue, you probably left behind a few scuff marks or noticed a few that likely resulted from the carpet installation. Sanding can remove these blemishes and take you one step closer to enjoying your beautiful and now-glue-free wood floors.

Smart technology may leave homes vulnerable to hackers

Devices that connect to computer networks are potentially vulnerable to hackers. This is a reality of modern living and also a concern for homeowners who have established "smart houses" or use network-based security systems.

In an effort to make homes "smarter" and more secure, some homeowners are spending substantial amounts of money on devices that automate certain aspects of home living. According to Reuters, the home automation market exceeded $1 billion in 2012, and those figures continue to rise. Internet-based devices and those that sync up to smartphone apps can handle a number of tasks. Some automatically sense if a home is occupied and adjust heating or cooling systems accordingly, while others allow remote control of lights, security systems, cameras, and doors. People can check up on kids via network-based nanny cams or turn on their hot tubs while on the way home from work. Although these devices make life more convenient, they also open up residences to the possibility of security breaches.

Wireless devices that tap into the home's IP address are a window into homes and sensitive personal data.

Imagine a third-party hacker accessing children's names through a nursery monitor. Hackers also may raise an unsuspecting person's energy bills by turning up the heat while that person is away from home. Home security cameras can be turned on the homeowner and become remote surveillance devices for hackers.

Despite the best efforts of programmers and manufacturers, there are ways to circumvent even the most reliable security systems. To protect themselves from hackers, homeowners should follow manufacturers' recommendations to change passwords or rename their devices from factory standard. These are important security measures. In addition, customers should not leave ports open or use port forwarding. Encrypted VPN systems should be used for home networks whenever possible. If any security weaknesses are discovered when using smart home devices, they should be brought to the attention of the manufacturer, who may have fixes, patches or new devices that offer more security than older models.

Did you know?

Smartphone apps can make it easier to plan home improvement projects. Some apps allow smartphone users to more easily match the colours of their furnishings with certain accents and accessories, saving homeowners the time spent wondering if certain items will match with existing furnishings. Homeowners can even make use of apps that make it easier for them to see how new furniture will fit in their existing spaces. Of course, homeowners also can take photos of their furnishings on their smartphones as well, and then compare those photos to shades of paint or carpet to save themselves from making a second trip to the store.

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Kitchen countertop options abound



Many things in a kitchen contribute to giving this popular room its personality. Appliances and choice of cabinets go a long way toward crafting that look, but perhaps nothing defines a kitchen more than a homeowner's choice of countertops.

Countertops are where the action takes place in a kitchen. It's where meals are prepared and where hungry houseguests or curious kids watch the family chef whip up the night's meal. The options with regard to countertop surfaces are numerous, and the following are just a few of the more popular options homeowners planning to replace their existing surfaces might want to consider.

Laminate

Laminate countertops are popular and affordable. Made of sheeting glued to plywood or particleboard substrate, laminate countertops are water-resistant but not very heat-resistant, so homeowners will want to place any hots pans, pots or baking sheets on trivets to maintain the laminate. Many homeowners prefer laminate countertops because they are available in so many colours, meaning they can match any homeowner's preferences, no matter how colourful those preferences are. Cutting on laminate countertops is not recommended, but such surfaces are easy to clean and maintain.

Quartz

Quartz is among the most durable countertop surfaces available, as it is resistant to bacteria, heat, stains, and water. Though quartz is not available in as many shades as laminate, it is similarly easy to clean. Also like laminate countertops, quartz surfaces tend to have easily visible seams, which may irk homeowners who find such minor imperfections an eyesore. Quartz countertops can be expensive depending on the amount of surface area a kitchen has, so budget-conscious homeowners with especially large kitchens may find quartz countertops bust their budgets.

Granite

The natural beauty of granite is what draws many homeowners to install this popular surface material in their kitchens. Thanks to their unique shading and tone, granite countertops are never the same from one home to the next, and granite complements many different cabinet colours. Granite also is resistant to heat, scarring and, when sealed properly, stains. Granite is naturally porous, so if it is not sealed properly, it can harbour bacteria. Some granite countertops must be sealed annually, while some pretreated countertops can go as long as 15 years without a need for resealing. Unlike other countertop surface materials, granite, which is among the most expensive countertop materials, does not come in a vast array of colours, so homeowners should expect to choose from just 20 or so colour options.

Recycled glass

Homeowners who want to give their kitchens a modern and eco-friendly feel may want to consider recycled glass countertops. Recycled glass countertops, the majority of which are now produced with 80 to 90 percent post-consumer glass, are made of pieces of glass that are held together with cement binders. Some might be concerned that countertops made of recycled glass are not very strong, but the cement binders are very hard, making the countertops durable, strong and unlikely to chip or crack. Recycled glass countertops come in various colours and are resistant to both heat and stains. Installation of recycled glass countertops can be tricky, as improper installation can lead to stress points that make the glass susceptible to cracking. As a result, the installation of recycled glass countertops is best left to professionals with experience on such projects. Recycled glass countertops can be quite expensive as well.

A homeowner's choice of countertop surface material can go a long way toward defining the personality of his or her kitchen, so homeowners should consider their options before making a final decision.

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Stay safe when cleaning out gutters

Come the fall, when trees start to shed their leaves and winds pick up in advance of winter, gutters can easily become clogged with all sorts of debris. When clogged gutters are not cleaned out, a host of potentially costly issues can result, making gutter cleaning an essential autumn chore no homeowner should ignore.

Fully functioning gutters direct water away from the structure of a home and into nearby drainage systems. When clogged, gutters cannot direct that water away, and the result is often costly water damage to the home's foundation. Water that is not directed away may find its way into the basement of a home, causing issues with flooding and mould. But clogged gutters also prevent water from leaving a roof, possibly leading to costly roof repairs and damage to the roof that can put a home's inhabitants in danger. When snowfall accumulates on a roof, melting snow needs to make its way off the roof via the gutters. If those gutters are clogged with debris leftover from the fall, roof damage, including leaks, is more likely to occur.

Clogged gutters also make a welcome respite for unwelcome pests, including rodents and insects. In the warmer months, clogged gutters may make an inviting home to mosquitoes and other pesky insects, while rodents may seek the warmth of clogged gutters when temperatures dip to near or below freezing.

Cleaning gutters is not that complicated, and many homeowners can clear their gutters of debris in a typical weekend afternoon. But the ease of cleaning gutters should not overshadow the safety risks homeowners take when climbing a ladder to clear out their gutters. The following are a few safety tips for homeowners to keep in mind when cleaning their gutters.

• **Wear appropriate clothing.** Loose-fitting clothing should not be worn when cleaning gutters. Such attire is a tripping hazard and can easily compromise your balance by catching on the gutter or ladder as you reach to remove debris. Wear clothing that does not hang off of you and choose pants that do not fall below your sneakers. Pants that might be a little long in the leg can catch under your feet as you climb the ladder, momentarily costing you your balance and possibly leading to a fall. When choosing footwear, avoid old sneakers or work boots without much traction, opting instead for footwear that easily grips each rung of the ladder.

• **Don't forget safety gear.** Many people forget to wear safety gear when cleaning their gutters. Such forgetfulness increases your risk of injury. When cleaning gutters, always remember to wear work gloves, which can protect your hands as you dig into gutters. Should you reach into a gutter without gloves on and grab something sharp, not only will you be cut but also you may be so startled that you lose your balance and fall off the ladder. In addition to work gloves, wear a dust mask and safety goggles when cleaning gutters to prevent debris from getting into your mouth and eyes.

• **Work with a partner.** Cleaning gutters alone is a recipe for potentially devastating injury. Even if you are not afraid of heights, scaling a ladder is not something to take lightly. Ladders can be shaky, especially on brisk autumn afternoons when the wind kicks up. Working with a partner when cleaning gutters ensures someone is below you to hold the ladder steady in case of a stiff wind or if your jostling unintentionally shakes the ladder. Working with a partner also means someone is there to seek help should you fall off the ladder or suffer another type of injury that requires medical attention.

• **Use a trowel instead of your hands.** Digging into the gutter with your hands, even if those hands are covered by gloves, is an unnecessary risk that can leave you susceptible to injury. When cleaning the gutters, dig out the debris with a trowel.

• **Dump debris below into a large garbage can.** When cleaning the gutter, do not carry a bucket with you to the top of the ladder. Carrying something as you climb up a ladder only increases your risk of injury. In addition, a bucket full of debris placed at the top of a ladder may tip over and compromise your balance. When dumping the debris you dig out with your trowel, dump it into a large garbage bin below. If you miss the bin every now and again, you can always sweep up after the job is completed.

Did you know?

Before saying "so long" to yard work at the end of autumn, homeowners should remove thatch from their lawns. Thatch is dead grass that's often identifiable by its yellowish tint, and this dead grass, if left to loom in the lawn over the winter, can block air and moisture from making its way into the soil. That can make it difficult for a lawn to recover come the spring and may even cost homeowners a substantial amount of money to address when winter finally skips town.

When removing thatch, resist the temptation to rake with lots of physical force, as raking too hard can harm the lawn. Instead, commit to three or four easy passes with the rake, as this will collect the thatch without damaging the lawn.

Many people rent a dethatcher from a nearby lawn and garden supply store, and such a device can make the process of removing thatch much easier. However, be sure to clean the machine before using it on your lawn, as there is no way of telling what condition the previous renter's lawn was in when he or she used the device. Failing to clean the dethatcher can spread disease from a previous renter's lawn onto your own, and that can prove another costly mistake come the spring when your lawn is looking to rebound.

If seeding the lawn in early fall, which can be a great time to reseed, remove the thatch before laying down any new seed. If you wait to remove thatch until after you have laid down new seed, then the lawn likely won't benefit from the seed and you will likely just rake the new seed away when it comes time to remove thatch.

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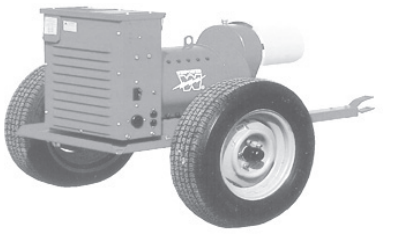

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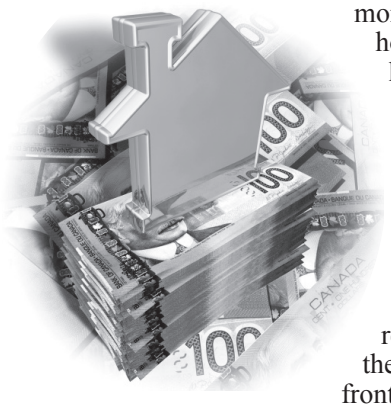
Pros and cons of reverse mortgages

Chances are you have come across an advertisement for a reverse mortgage and have probably wondered what this type of mortgage is all about. Geared toward seniors, reverse mortgages are growing in popularity and inspiring the curiosity of older homeowners.

A reverse mortgage is a loan offered to people over the age of 55 that enables borrowers to convert part of the equity in their homes into cash. People of retirement age may find that their limited income can make monthly expenses more difficult. Reverse mortgages were conceived as a method to helping people at this stage in life use the money they put into their homes to pay off debts or cover routine living expenses. The loan is dubbed "reverse mortgage" because instead of the homeowner paying money to a lender as is customary with a traditional mortgage, the lender makes payments to the borrower. What's more, the borrower is not required to pay back the loan until the home is sold or vacated. As long as a person is living in the home he or she is not required to make any payments toward the reverse mortgage loan balance. However, the borrower must remain current on insurance and tax payments.

When a person takes out a reverse mortgage, he or she may borrow up to 50 per cent of the market value of the home. Any outstanding existing mortgages are paid off with the proceeds of the reverse mortgage, and either a lump sum of the balance or monthly payments are established. A homeowner may also opt for a line of credit with the reverse mortgage proceeds. Here are some pros and cons of reverse mortgages.



Pros

A reverse mortgage enables seniors to live in their homes for the rest of their lives without fear of mortgage payments. Because there are no payments being made during the life of the loan, borrowers do not have to meet income requirements or credit checks.

As long as the borrower continues to maintain residence in the home, he or she is still eligible for the monthly payments received through the reverse mortgage. This money can be used for any purpose and is tax-free. Borrowers can opt to modernize their homes or make safety improvements. The funds can also be put toward medical expenses or travel or to help family with their own financial needs.

Another benefit of reverse mortgages is they protect homeowners against falling home prices. If the value of the home drops after the loan is negotiated, it will not affect the equity value assessed for the life of the loan.

Cons

One down side to reverse mortgages is that the loans have higher up-front fees than other types of financing. Borrowers have to pay not only an origination fee and closing costs, but mortgage insurance costs as well. These initial costs can be several thousands of dollars.

Unlike a traditional mortgage, where the balance gets lower and lower over time, with a reverse mortgage, no payments are being made on the loan. This means the loan balance simply gets larger over time depending on how much money is drawn from the home's equity. At the end of the loan, when the homeowner moves from the property or the premises is vacated upon the borrower's death, the value of the estate decreases based on the pay-off value of the reverse mortgage loan. Heirs will pay off the mortgage by selling the home and will only inherit the remaining money after the reverse mortgage lender has the loan satisfied. This means seniors will be leaving less money for their heirs, but those heirs will not be personally liable if the home sells for less than the value of the mortgage.

A reverse mortgage is a long-term solution. People who are looking for a short-term fix will find that this type of loan probably doesn't meet their needs. Furthermore, it is hard to be approved for reverse mortgages on newly purchased homes. Lenders usually like to see at least six months or a year chain of title on a property before issuing a reverse mortgage.

Many seniors often find reverse mortgages confusing. Seniors may unwittingly agree to a loan without fully understanding the scope of the reverse mortgage. It is advisable to seek counseling on reverse mortgages before applying for one.









Fall 2014

focus on real estate

Changing times in real estate

Gone are the days of putting up a 'For Sale' sign and it's sold! Like the dodo bird, fixer uppers are, for most buyers, passé. The new generation of home buyers generally feel that they do not have the time, inclination, or financial ability to renovate a home.

There is now a higher standard, a higher set of expectations of what these new buyers want in a home. The good news is that they will pay for it... but... it must be modern, clean, move-in ready, and connect with the buyers on a gut level!

For this new generation, carpets are out! Wallpaper that is not of the most modern trend is a definite no-no! Oppressive colours will scare some of them away and pink pastels are not hip anymore! Damp or musty smelling basements will make buyers disappear really quickly! Buyers will hire inspectors to check out the whole house from the structure to the shingles, windows, wiring, wood systems, heating systems, septic systems, wells and water systems, and everything else. Many buyers will no longer gloss over differed maintenance.

The new buyer can buy, and with interest rates at an all time low, their buying power is greater, but they are also very discerning and will usually view many homes before settling on one and working with the Realtor® to negotiate an offer.

These buyers shop on-line and want many pictures to view the house, and they often choose to view homes based on the on-line presentation – those with good pictures and curb appeal make the cut, while it is often the Realtor® who makes sure that the buyers don't miss a good home that may not photograph well. That is why, as a seller, you should position your home to show its very best in all media types.

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Features that may actually lower a home's value

Home improvements are typically made to improve the functionality and look of a home, but renovations also can increase the value of a home. Certain changes to a home can make it more attractive to prospective buyers, while other renovations may make a home less appealing. For example, a complete overhaul of an outdated kitchen is often a smart financial move, while installing a pool or hot tub may not be worth the cost to homeowners. Separating the good from the bad renovations makes smart financial sense, and homeowners looking to improve their homes' resale values may want to avoid the following projects.

• **Bedroom and garage conversions:** Changing a room's traditional function often turns off buyers. For example, turning a garage into a home gym might seem like a great idea for you, but it may not be so appealing to prospective buyers. Buyers can certainly reconvert the space, but they would consider the costs of such a conversion when making their offers on the home.

• **Stylized colours on trims and rooms:** Painting over unappealing colours is a project many homeowners can handle. However, some may be discouraged by a home that has too many bright colours or textures on the walls and trims. Buyers often want homes that are move-in ready, meaning they can get settled in before undertaking large projects. A living room painted in purple or zebra print may not fit the design scheme of many buyers. Dark colours do not easily disappear, and taping off and painting trimwork or changing it entirely can be equally time-consuming. Stick with neutral colours when selling a home, even if this means giving rooms a new coat of paint before putting your house on the market.

• **Removing closets:** Closet space is often high on buyers' priority lists. Turning closet space into an office or removing a closet to make a room bigger may be fine for those who are staying put. But these modifications can be a turn-off to prospective buyers.

• **Too many features:** In an effort to "keep up with the Joneses," some homeowners will over-improve their home to the point that it outshines all others on the street. There is a case for having nice things, but homeowners may struggle to sell a home that is disproportionate to other homes in the area. Practice moderation when making improvements to attract more buyers.

These suggestions are merely guidelines and should not replace the advice of a reputable real estate agent when marketing a home.

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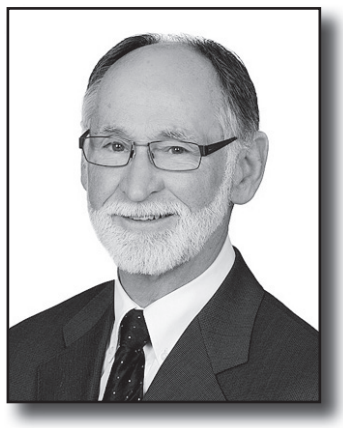

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Fall 2014 focus on real estate

How to pay off your mortgage early

Though it might seem impossible in those first few months after buying a home, paying a mortgage off early can be accomplished in a variety of ways.

Increase monthly payments

Any type of loan, be it a traditional credit card or a mortgage, will disappear faster when borrowers pay more than the bare minimum. By paying just a little more each month, more of your money is going to the principal on the loan, lowering the amount of interest you will pay over the life of the loan at the same time. For example, a $200,000 30-year mortgage loan at 7 percent interest will cost borrowers $1,330.60 per month (costs may vary depending on taxes), and that loan will be paid off in 30 years. But borrowers who increase their payments by just $50 per month can pay off the loan in 26 years and nine months. What's more, borrowers who only make the minimum payment each month will have paid $279,017.80 in interest charges over the life of the loan, while those who increase each month's payment by just $50 will have paid just $242,588.80 in interest over the life of the loan. That means that extra $50 per month saves borrowers $36,249 in interest charges.

One thing borrowers must be certain of is that any extra money they send in each month is applied to the loan's principal, and not just set aside for the next month's payment. Talk to your lender to verify this, and when doing so, make sure you don't have to pay any prepayment penalties if you do, in fact, pay the mortgage off before it reaches full maturity. Such penalties can be significant, but they might be worth paying for the peace of mind of knowing you will be paying your mortgage off several years early.

Consider bi-weekly payments

Bi-weekly payments, in which borrowers make half-payments every two weeks instead of one full payment once per month, are another way to pay your mortgage off early. A typical mortgage agreement has borrowers making payments once per month, meaning they are making 12 annual payments. But a bi-weekly payment system takes advantage of the fact that there are 52 weeks in a year. So by the end of one calender year, you will have made 26 half-payments, or 13 full payments. Such a payment system enables some borrowers to pay off their 30-year mortgages in as little as 24 years.

When looking into bi-weekly payments, consult your lender to determine if there are any penalties to such a system. Some lending institutions charge customers who change their payment structure. In addition, confirm with your lender that each extra payment is going toward the principal and not toward your first payment next year.

Refinance your loan

Refinancing to a shorter-term loan often earns borrowers a smaller interest rate, which can offset the higher monthly payments that accompany shorter-term loans. A shorter-term loan means you won't have mortgage payments hanging over your head for as long as you would on a 30-year mortgage, and it also means you won't pay nearly as much in interest over the life of the loan. Many homeowners find a 15-year mortgage forces them to be more disciplined. Homeowners who find their 30-year monthly mortgage payment is well below their means should consider a shorter-term loan, especially if their 30-year mortgage would penalize them for paying the loan off before it reaches full maturity.

Mortgage payments have a way of dominating homeowners' thoughts. But those homeowners who want to get out from under their mortgage payments without selling their homes have a handful of options at their disposal.



How to earn a more affordable mortgage

Home ownership remains a dream for many people. But on the heels of the recession that began in late 2008, prospective home buyers are finding it far more difficult to secure a mortgage than it was in the years before the economy took a turn for the worse. Stricter guidelines now govern both borrowers and lenders alike, and the process can quickly frustrate prospective homeowners.

But strict guidelines and more diligent lenders do not mean prospective borrowers will not be able to secure a loan to finance their home purchases. It just means those borrowers might want to take every step possible to ensure their loan applications are approved and their mortgages are affordable.

• **Address credit concerns before beginning the process.** Poor credit is a prospective borrower's worst enemy, and it's an instant and glaring red flag to lenders. And thanks to inaccuracies on their credit reports, some people may have poor credit and not even know it. Before they even begin the process of applying for a home loan, would-be applicants should go over their credit reports with a fine tooth comb, ensuring there are no potentially harmful inaccuracies. Inaccuracies or poor credit histories can bring down individuals' credit scores, which lenders use to determine home loan interest rates. So prospective applicants should have any errors to their credit reports corrected and/or work to improve their credit scores before applying for loans.

• **Pay down debt.** Even if an applicant's credit score is solid, lenders may scoff at applicants with substantial amounts of debt. Credit card debt should be paid down before beginning the process, and it also may benefit applicants to pay off any additional loans, such as car or student loans, before applying for a home loan. The less debt an applicant has, the more attractive that applicant becomes.

• **Avoid overusing credit cards.** Using credit too frequently also can make it more difficult for prospective home buyers to secure a home loan. Credit card holders each have a maximum limit on their credit cards, and financial experts recommend using less than 20 percent of available credit to maintain a strong credit rating.

• **Don't bluff on loan applications.** Some borrowers might be tempted to inflate their earnings on loan applications, including counting overtime or bonuses they haven't yet earned when listing their income. Borrowers can expect lenders to request documentation of any extra income. Applicants also must avoid hiding past issues on their applications. Banks will eventually discover any past problems, so applicants should be straightforward from the start.

• **Make a substantial down payment.** Lenders look fondly on borrowers who can afford hefty down payments, feeling that such borrowers are less likely to default on their loans. In addition, the larger the down payment, the less the monthly mortgage payment will be, saving borrowers a significant amount of interest fees over the course of the loan.

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Clear Cut Installations owner Steve Caza has been named president of the Siding and Window Dealers Association of Canada for 2015 and 2016.

Press File Photo

Clear Cut owner Caza named SAWDAC president

SOUTH MOUNTAIN

The Siding and Window Dealers Association of Canada (SAWDAC) has announced its new president for 2015 and 2016.

Clear Cut Installations owners Steven Caza has been appointed to the position, and will oversee the association of mainly window dealers from across Canada with more than 200 members.

Siding and Window Dealers Association of Canada

Caza has been a director for three years, and at SAWDAC's September meeting was elected for the two-year term.

The organization has as its mantra to be the best in the industry, with a mission statement related to building consumer confidence in the association by creating, developing, and delivering consistently high standards of products, installations, and business ethics.

Every SAWDAC member is committed to integrity, honesty, fairness, and responsibility in their business conduct. This commitment covers each of the following aspects of the industry:

• Materials – manufacturers will produce and dealer contractors will sell and install only those products that meet generally accepted industry standards.

• Advertising – all advertising and sales literature shall be truthful and accurate. No misleading statements or claims shall be made.

• Contracts – all contracts shall be free of ambiguities or omissions that may obscure or confuse either party's obligations.

• Responsible conduct – members shall avoid all conduct or practice likely to discredit or do injury to the home renovation industry. Members will deal with customer complaints in a fair, reasonable, and prompt manner. Members will honour their obligations and commitments to customers, employees, and suppliers. Member shall co-operate to extend the effectiveness of SAWDAC by interchanging information and experience, and encourage research on materials and techniques in order to provide higher quality products and installations.

As well, every SAWDAC member must provide a five-year installation guarantee. When consumers call with a problem, it is up to SAWDAC members to listen and respond.

Clear Cut Installations has been a member of SAWDAC since 1994, and the firm is one of 40 who participate in the Window Wise Program, which is an installation certification-training program the association created 15 years ago.

According to Caza, the program is "one of the best kept secrets in the industry," with participating dealers and manufacturers agreeing that it is probably one of the best things to have happened to the industry. SAWDAC has three full-time employees that work at their Cambridge office in a building owned by the association.

For Caza, he said he is happy to take on the voluntary presidential role, as it will give him the opportunity to exchange experiences with industry peers, and contribute to improving the industry as a whole.

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Lannin's has what customers want

WINCHESTER

"Our customer service, I think, is above and beyond." Lannin Home Building Centre owner J.D. Van Noy said he and his staff are dedicated to providing customers with the best service, along with the products and materials they need and want.

In addition to continuously adding to the store's inventory of building, hardware, and houseware supplies, Lannin's now offers online shopping (www.homehardware.ca).

Sam Wade, a long-time Lannin employee, said the new service allows customers to peruse roughly 50,000 items, finding and ordering what they want in as little as 10 minutes. While some items can be found in stock at the Winchester store, others are sent from Home's main storage facility and arrive in Lannin's weekly shipment.

Van Noy said he was surprised at how well the online shopping has been received by his customers. They had three orders in the first week, he added, and now there are many who use the service regularly. (Online shopping became available in late March.)

Shopping at Home online is easy, Wade said. Customers can search for specific items. Those that have an "add to cart" option are available, and can be ordered with a simple click of the mouse. Wade noted that those items labeled "add to wish list" are currently out of stock.

"It really is that simple," he said.

If Lannin employees notice a particular item being requested again and again by numerous individuals, Van Noy said they have been instructed to add it to the store's regular stock in an effort to keep those products customers want most on hand and readily available.



Lannin Home Building Centre makes shopping for what you need easier with a continuously expanding on-site inventory, as well as its new online shopping service. Owner J.D. Van Noy is pictured at one of the in store computer terminals.



In keeping with Van Noy's policy of stocking those items customers request most, Lannin's now carries MicroPro Sienna Treated Wood.



Lannin's has what every do-it-your-self homeowner (or professional contractor) needs when it comes to building homes, renovating rooms, or creating additions, including Cabinetsmith's In-law Suite Kitchen, which Van Noy refers to as "a kitchen in a box."

In keeping with Lannin's policy of stocking the most sought-after items, the Winchester store now carries MicroPro Sienna Treated Wood. In fact, the demand for the "brown wood" is so high that it now outweighs the amount of green wood kept on site.

The main difference, Van Noy said, is in the material's appearance. It is more aesthetically appealing when first installed, unlike the green wood. However, he added, they both age and weather the same, and both must be finished and maintained.

Lannin's carries informational literature outlining the unique qualities of the new product: "The innovative colour technology gives MicroPro Sienna Treated Wood a rich, finished look that complements today's deck furniture and finishings [and] the technology used in MicroPro Sienna Treated Wood is setting a new benchmark in environmental standards for wood preservation."

Visitors to Lannin's County Road 31 store are certain to find what they are looking for one way (on site) or another (online), whether it is building supplies, such as lumber and tools, hardware supplies ranging anywhere from plumbing and electrical to paint and varnish, or houseware supplies, which includes the most common small appliances and cookware. Lannin's even offers do-it-your-self "kitchen in a box" with Cabinetsmith's In-law Suite Kitchen that comes complete with granite countertop, undermount double bowl sink, cabinets, and hardware for roughly $1,750.

Whatever the product or service, Lannin's team is ready to help customers get what they want.

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