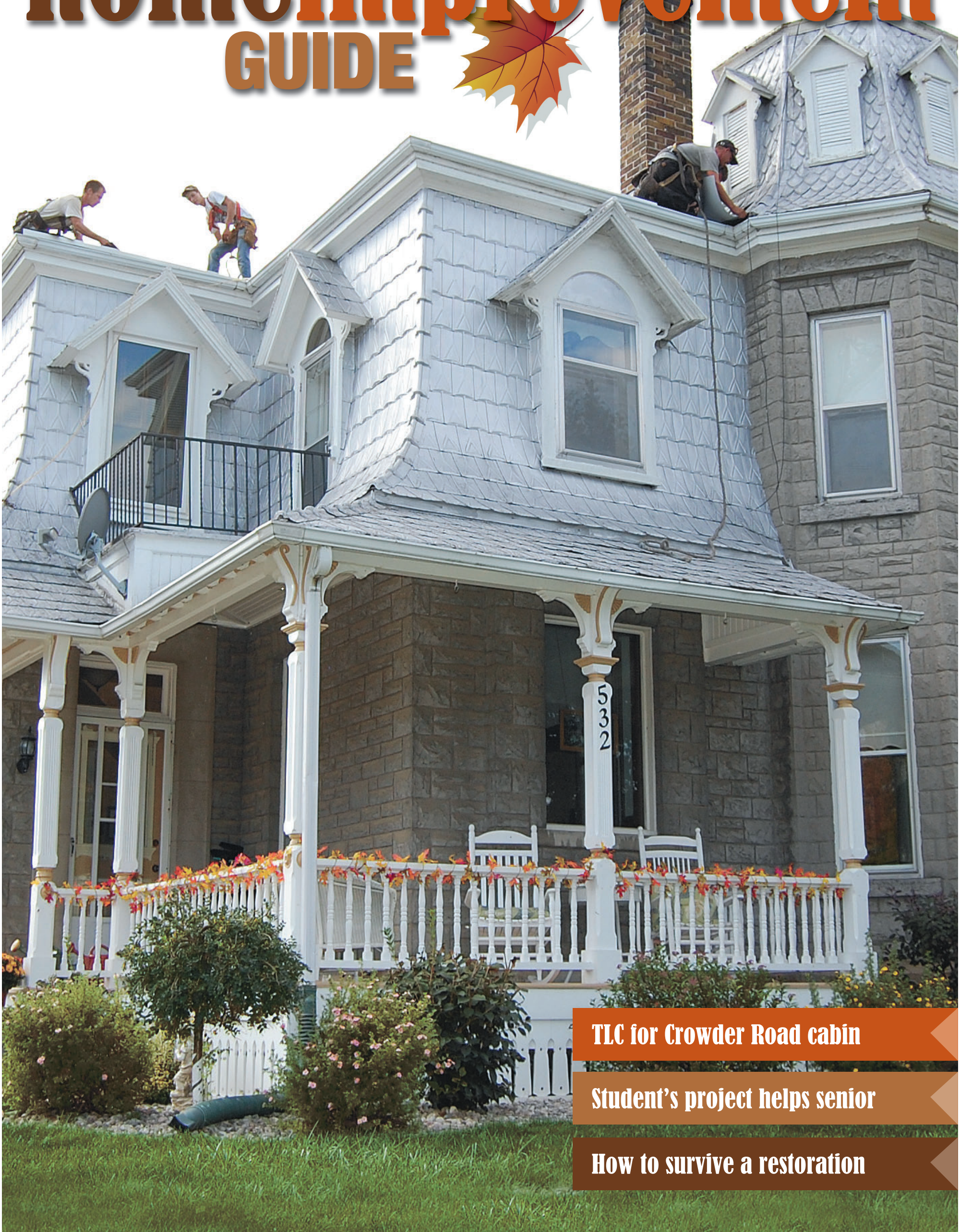
Special Supplement to the Winchester Press

fall home improvement GUIDE



TLC for Crowder Road cabin

Student's project helps senior

How to survive a restoration

Wednesday, October 19, 2011

Log cabin restoration a labour of love

by Amanda Smith-Millar

WINCHESTER

Rebecca van Noppen dreamed of living in a log cabin long before she and her husband, David, finally moved into one five years ago.

Enamoured with a quaint two-storey cottage they'd spotted on Crowder Road, the van Noppens had been eyeing the near-sequestered house for years, keeping their fingers crossed that some day, it would go up for sale when the time and price were right.

"I actually put [a picture of the house] on my fridge!" she recalled with a laugh. "We've always wanted to live in a log home, but never thought we could ever afford it."

However, when the previous owners decided to move out, everything fell into place for the van Noppens. Before they knew it, they'd packed up their possessions and waved goodbye to their Victoria Street house in Winchester, trading town life for a more rural home only a few kilometres away.

The log structure was almost perfect – right down to the homey atmosphere, open-concept design, and cosy basement (that was promptly converted into a colourful classroom – complete with a chalkboard – where the children now receive their homeschool lessons). Twenty-five acres of property – mostly bush – and a spacious yard provided room for a garden, trampoline, and even the family's homemade treehouse, which survived its relocation from Victoria Street.



Pictured here is an original conceptual drawing of the cabin. The home now closely resembles its intended design.

But, there was one problem.

The van Noppens soon discovered that rot had started to eat away at the exterior wood of their home, especially on the west side. The cottage had changed hands many times since it was constructed back in the 1980s. At one point, somebody had made the blunder of painting the lower half of the house, as well as using silicone to fill cracks in the wood. As a result, moisture was trapped inside, and decomposition had set in with a vengeance.

To put it mildly, the van Noppens were never fans of the grey vinyl siding that obscured the natural beauty of the wood exterior on the gable ends. Nor did they appreciate how the conservative shade clashed with the cheery red roof. The couple always planned to remove the siding and paint, then restore the wooden exterior – but, as it turned out, they suddenly were forced to renovate for entirely non-cosmetic purposes.

"The rot was starting," van Noppen said. "Much to our chagrin."

They called in the help of an expert – Myles Harrigan, a log home maintenance and restoration contractor from Perth who specializes in chinking, stripping, and staining wood materials. He agreed to take on the job despite the commute.

"We're very lucky Myles travelled the distance," van Noppen said.

The process ended up being a highly labour-intensive one. Friends helped to sand-blast the original wood, and the kids spent their fair share of time picking away the paint and silicone in the cracks. Chinking was put in place following the staining of the wood exterior.

A new addition to the family added strain, too.

"I'd just had a baby," van Noppen said. In fact, the birth of Baby Number Five, Serena, made things complicated – although the eight-week-old newcomer didn't cry much throughout the renovations. Mom didn't fare as well.

"If I wasn't laughing, I was crying," van Noppen said, but, "You don't have much of a choice. In the end, we are glad we've done it."

The van Noppens estimate that the entire project cost between $20,000 and $25,000, a price that could have been much higher, were it not for the assistance of friends and loved ones. More work remains, but much of the hard part is done and over with. "Our friends helped sand the house by hand, following the sandblasting which removed 80 per cent of the paint on the lower half of the house," said van Noppen.

As for Harrigan, he was happy to do the work ("It's almost an avocation for me, as opposed to a vocation!" he said). Plus, removing the grey siding helped give the log cabin quite a boost, in terms of aesthetic appeal: "It wasn't as attractive as it could have been," Harrigan said diplomatically.

A log home requires a special sort of TLC. Homeowners need to keep a close eye on the exterior and stain it every four or five years. That being said, factors such as shelter, weather, and exposure to the Canadian elements are likely to affect the lifespan of a stain.

"If you get to the point where wood starts to rot, you haven't been vigilant enough," he said.

However, he noted that many people love living in log houses. It can be nice and cozy during the winters, yet cool in the summers. But, the structures require sufficient care and support.



David and Rebecca van Noppen recently restored the exterior of their log cabin. It's pictured here before the siding and paint were removed, and after.





***Above:** Expert restorer Myles Harrigan (pictured here at work) was brought on board.*



A close-up of the west side before it was improved. Thanks to friends and family members (such as their daughter, Mercedes, pictured at right), the structure appears to be saved from the rot that had started to set in.

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Above: *North Dundas District High School student Edward Findlay spent 10 weeks creating a sturdy table for Winchester resident Dorothy Strader.*

Right: *Strader, whose eyesight is deteriorating, was provided with a ClearView Device Reader. The weighty object now sits on the table built by Findlay.*

Press Photo – Uhrig

Connecting generations, one table at a time

Student's school project helps Winchester resident rekindle joy of reading

by Matthew Uhrig

WINCHESTER

Close your eyes for a second. Now, imagine all that you would miss if you lost your vision.

That's the predicament Winchester resident Dorothy Strader finds herself in these days. Well into her 90s, her sight is failing, and she's beginning to miss out on the joy of reading.

Be it Strader's daily copy of the *Ottawa Citizen,* or the weekly *Winchester Press,* she likes to know what's going on in both her immediate community, and the one at large.

For assistance, Strader contacted the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB)'s Cornwall office, and before long, she was provided with a hand-held magnifying glass.

"It [made] the print bigger," she said. "But, soon [my vision] got past even that."

Before long, Strader was back in Cornwall to have her eyes examined again. The doctor found that, with Strader's sight continuing to deteriorate, Strader was relying heavily upon her peripheral vision, seeing things in broad view, rather than directly in front of her.

"I was beginning to miss more and more words and letters while reading and writing," she said.

This time, Strader was given a more promising offer – the use of a ClearView Device Reader.

"It's just wonderful to be able to read again," she said. "I was getting to the stage where I wasn't able to."

Strader's husband, Gordon, said the device came with a roughly $6,000 price tag, but thankfully the couple was only required to pay $600 out of pocket. The remainder of the cost was covered by investments from the federal and provincial governments, as well as the CNIB.

"You just have to have patience to work with it," Strader said wryly.

The reader features a platform in which any reading material can be placed. From there, the article is transmitted to an attached screen, where letters and words are magnified on a colour screen.

With the device in her home, Strader needed something for the weighty object to sit on. That's when her sons, Doug and Paul, got involved. The two men began a search for a sturdy table fitted with wheels so that their mother could move the device from room to room.

Paul then phoned North Dundas District High School (NDDHS), and was quickly transferred to Ray Bougie, a construction technology teacher at the local secondary school.

"He told me what they needed, and asked if it was something our students could take care of," Bougie said.

From there, the teacher took the idea to his senior class, in the hopes that one (or more) of them would take on the task as a required project.

"Edward [Findlay] volunteered right away," Bougie said. "It's great, because it gave him the opportunity to design and build something."

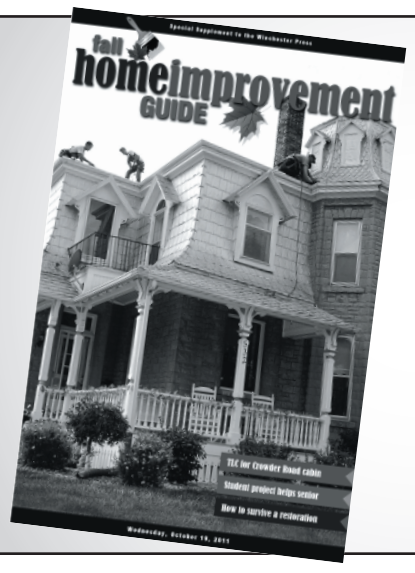
Findlay, a Mountain-area resident, said it was his own love of reading that inspired him to get involved with the work.

"Plus, I've always liked working with tools," he said.

The end result of his roughly 10 weeks of work, totalling more than 50 hours, was exactly what the family had requested.

For Strader, she said the design – and the fact that someone would take on such a project to benefit just one person – is amazing.

"[Findlay] did a beautiful job, and he should be really proud of it," she said. "It's so remarkable that he would be so kind and open hearted."



Featured on our cover

Handsome historical house

Fall is a great time to spruce up the house, and take on an improvement project. One of the elegant historical homes of Winchester, owned by the Churchill family, had some work performed on its exterior this fall, keeping the stately structure looking beautiful for many more years.

Press Photo — Smith-Millar

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Guide to surviving a HOME RENOVATION



Confessions of a Country Convert

by Adele Eyman

When we moved into our 200-year-old heritage home, the sun shone brightly throughout that first blissful week. Then, it rained steadily for three days. That's when we discovered how badly our heritage roof leaked. Water poured from the ceiling, water ran in sheets down the wall edging our basement stairs, and water splashed in fat droplets on my paper-littered desk as I frantically called every roofer in the Yellow Pages.

The good news is that we had a contractor arrive the next day to assess the situation and give us a quote on a new roof. The bad news? Once the shingles came off, we discovered how rotted our heritage wooden sub roof was. The entire roof had to be replaced with new plywood before the shingles could be installed.

With the new roof came dust, dirt, and grit. Who knew that replacing a roof would produce this much crap? It coated the front porch and everything outdoors. It covered the furniture, the dishes, and the sink indoors. I had grit in my hair and in my teeth; still I remained determinedly cheerful, vacuum in hand.

But soon I felt my sanity slip. As I crawled into bed that first night, I realized that grit had somehow worked its way between the sheets, too. Fortunately, my other half was able to keep things in perspective. He encouraged me to keep my eye on the prize – a water-tight roof for generations to come. He pointed me towards the shower, and replaced the bedclothes with clean ones. He even took out the vacuum cleaner, meaning that I could actually get some sleep and be ready for the next gritty day.

Although installing a new roof hardly qualifies as a home renovation project, my experience living through a new roof made me realize how distressing living through a major home renovation can be. Here are some tips and techniques to avoid that distress.

Reno survival 101

Prepare physically before your renovation begins: Remove all furniture, pictures, and other items from the renovation area to other parts of the house. Large items of furniture should be thoughtfully relocated, to keep them convenient and functional – who wants to dash into the garage for socks every morning? Do not cram extra furniture into your remaining living space; things will be hard enough without having to manoeuvre around the extra furniture. Consider storing the larger pieces with a neighbour, family member, or friend.

Many experts recommend putting your stuff temporarily into storage. This ensures that your valuables are kept clean, dry, and far away from any on-site accidents. And, things will get broken during the renovation, even if they aren't in the area being worked on, according to freelance writer Brian Simkins, sharing his 14 years of home improvement experience (www.doityourself.com). According to Simkins, everything on your property will potentially be in harm's way, so moving things elsewhere helps the owner protect his belongings. But if you cannot relocate your furniture, cover them with a good-quality plastic sheet or tarp.

Plan with your contractor before your renovation begins: Ask to have all tools and materials stored in a specific area. Establish any house rules for the workmen, such as which areas of your home will be strictly off-limits during work hours. Identify where all workmen will enter and exit your home. Set the times for work to begin and finish each day. Determine who will clean the work area each day. Establish a smoking area with ashtrays outside. Finally, ask your contractors to ensure that workers meet any special requirements; for example, if you have a toddler or an indoor pet in the house during work hours, everyone needs to keep the house's main doors shut.

Tell your neighbours about your impending reno project: Your neighbours deserve to know what things will change in the neighbourhood: less available parking, more activity, loud noises, and more people coming and going around your property. Your front lawn may sport a dumpster and a portable potty during the renovation. As Liz Bagley and Chris Flynn note (www.thisoldhouse.com): "Be nice to your friends, family and neighbours. They feed you." They also can lend you their bathroom and their support, which might come in handy during your reno.

Prepare psychologically before your renovation begins: Renovating can disrupt family life. So, psychological preparation is an important – but, usually ignored – aspect of reno planning, according to blogger J.B. Bartkowiak in his recent post, "Home Remodeling Sanity, Part 1: Dastardly Ds" (blog.builddirect.com). Bartkowiak, living through the fifth year of a whole house renovation, said that remodeling always brings the unavoidable Dastardly Ds – namely, Decisions, Dollars, Disruption, and Dust. No designer, architect, or handyman can save you from these, or from the ultimate source of renovation stress: *you,* the homeowner. Bartkowiak recommends considering carefully the Dastardly Ds and then asking, "Am I ready for this? Are we ready for this?" In any case, be prepared "for the untidy, the unruly, the chaotic."

Here are some ways to prepare psychologically:

• **Expect surprises.** Construction surprises are one reason why remodeling projects stall, according to Renovators Place (www.renovatorsplace.com). Project stalls drag out the reno process, increasing the family's discomfort and stress. Taking care to find a contractor who gets to know how your house works before diving into the reno will help avoid construction surprises. As well, your contractor should know the local process for getting permits, materials, and other essentials, and have these ready before swinging a sledgehammer at your walls.

• **There will be dust, lots and lots of dust.** As Simkins writes in the do-it-yourself website, "You will find dust in places you didn't know existed." Hang plastic sheeting from doorways to curtain off the construction zone from other areas of the house. Drape cupboards, cabinets, and the pantry with plastic to minimize the amount of dust getting into dishes and food. Vacuum the construction area's entrance frequently, to decrease the amount of dust being tracked through the house. Get a box of dust masks for you and your family to use.

• **Understand that renovation is all about the process of change and not being in control.** Under these circumstances, most people have strong feelings of anger, despair, and frustration. It's no wonder that living through a renovation puts homeowners on edge, as they navigate through daily chaos and stress.

But there are ways to manage the stress, according to Renovators Place: Plan ahead to avoid unpleasant surprises. Ask the contractor what to expect; then, consider how this affects your family's daily routine. Even though there will be disruptions, try to work within the family's normal schedule. For example, if the workers arrive during the family's normal breakfast time, then avoid this disruption by moving breakfast to an earlier time. Consider how this would affect the rest of your morning schedule – getting the kids off to school, walking the dog, leaving for work. How can you minimize further disruptions?

• **Exercise control wherever possible.** Learn about the renovation process, check in with your contractor each day, and discuss your needs and issues as these occur.

Instead of thinking about how long things are taking, mark each small step along the way. Celebrate as each small stage gets done. Finally, keep your eye on the prize. Picture the end result, remind yourself that this renovation project will someday be over, and your home will be beautiful with these new changes.

Adele Eyman is a South Mountain resident and volunteer opinion writer for the Winchester Press' *main section, as well as the newspaper's various supplements. Her column, "Confessions of a Country Convert," examines the quaint, quirky, and sometimes contradictory realities of the rural lifestyle.*





Easy ways to winterize your home

During autumn, homeowners must place a priority on readying their homes for the winter months ahead. Often referred to as "winterizing," the process is meant to ensure a home can withstand harsh winter weather while proving a safe haven from the elements.

Homeowners can take several steps to get their homes ready for whatever winter has to offer with the following tasks.



Routinely cleaning gutters throughout the fall and early winter can help reduce the risk of roof damage caused by winter weather.

Fix the leaks

A leaky home will prove to be an expensive home during the winter months. A home with many leaks will be much colder to inhabit, and homeowners typically turn up the heat to counter drafts that can make a home feel like a meat locker. But turning up the thermostat isn't the answer. Instead, fix leaks in the fall before the cold weather arrives.

Leaks should not be very hard to find. On a breezy autumn afternoon, walk around the house in search of any drafty areas. These drafts will be noticeable and often occur around doors and window frames, electrical outlets and even recessed lighting. Homeowners have a host of options at their disposal to plug leaks, be it door sweeps that block air from entering under exterior doors to caulk applied around leaky windows. When using caulk outdoors, be sure to use a weather-resistant caulk or, if sealing brick, use masonry sealer.

Add insulation upstairs

Homeowners who have an attic in their homes might want to consider adding some insulation up there. Experts recommend a minimum of 12 inches of insulation in the attic. That might prove costly, but a poorly insulated attic is akin to opening the front door and letting the heat out. It might be best for less-than-handy homeowners to hire a professional to insulate the attic. But do-it-yourselfers might find it good to know that if the ceiling joists, which are often 11 inches or less, are visible, then the attic is in need of additional insulation. Such joists won't be visible in an adequately insulated attic.

Put up the storm windows

It's nice to open the windows in the spring and summer and let the warm air waft in through the screens. But when summer is over, it's time to put up the storm windows once again. Storm windows add an extra layer of protection from the elements and are especially valuable in homes with single-pane glass windows. Homeowners who don't have storm windows should consider upgrading their existing windows. Such a project isn't cheap, but newer windows will almost certainly lead to lower heating costs, meaning the project will essentially pay for itself over time. Homeowners who can't afford to replace all of their windows don't have to replace them all at once. Instead, replace them a few at a time and make the rooms where you spend the most time each winter the first on the list to receive new windows.

Be diligent with the gutters

Leaves falling from trees is an idyllic image associated primarily with autumn. Unfortunately, when leaves fall they often fall into the gutters. Routinely clean the gutters once the leaves start to fall. Clean gutters will allow melted snow and rain to effectively drain through. If the gutters are clogged, snow might have nowhere to go when it begins to melt, and roof damage might result. Such damage is costly but preventable in most instances. One of the easier preventive measures to take is to routinely clean the gutters of leaves and other debris that accumulate during the fall.

When cleaning the gutters, make sure they are properly aligned. Poorly aligned gutters can lead to a host of problems. One such problem is flooding. If downspouts are not properly aligned with the rest of the gutters, then water might not be directed away from the home as it's intended. Instead, water might be directed toward the home, resulting in flooding or additional water damage.

Have the furnace cleaned

Experts recommend an annual furnace cleaning. Before cold weather arrives, turn the furnace on to make sure it's still working. An unpleasant odor might appear when first turning on the furnace, but it shouldn't last very long. If the odor sticks around, turn the furnace off and call a professional. Once winter arrives, routinely replace the filters. This makes the furnace operate more efficiently and can also reduce the risk of fire.

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Downsizing unearths new opportunities, forgotten responsibilities

Rural Reflections

by Carrie Fawcett



I don't own a home, but I own stuff; and, by default, it must live somewhere. Throughout the years, most of my possessions have taken up residence in the basement of my parents' farmhouse in Winchester (though my belongings have a habit of packing themselves up and going on trips, where they establish colonies and sometimes continue to expand).

Recently, I decided to conduct a home improvement experiment: What would happen if I downsized?

Memories: Do not open?

I began the process using two sorting methods: sifting and "non-opening." In sifting, I reviewed the items in question two or three times before deciding their fate. A pair of shoes, for example, didn't land in the "to go" pile until I looked at them for a second time, with renewed determination.

The sifting process was certainly a trip down Memory Lane – especially when I unearthed items like high school yearbooks. (One picture reminded me of the day my friends and I decided to celebrate paisley clothing by wearing this particular pattern.)

The "non-opening" method involved simply not opening boxes – and giving them away with, at times, only a general knowledge of what was inside. (This method, I find, is particularly useful if one wishes to avoid trips down Memory Lane.)

Basements banished

My experiment had two rules: (1) respect space limits, and (2) do not store anything in basements.

Before moving from Thunder Bay to Winchester, I limited the quantity of personal items I would include to what would fit, loosely packed, in a car. Not everything that had come to Thunder Bay a couple of months earlier in two carefully packed carloads would return to Winchester.

Because of the basement rule, when a relative in Thunder Bay offered to store, below ground level, what would not fit in the car, I declined.

> ***...I have freed up energy to focus on something else – on other responsibilities.***

Store or sidewalk?

As I dropped off items at a local second-hand store, a woman bought a mop I was donating, and mentioned that she'd use it to keep the floor clean, now that her baby was becoming more mobile. Sometimes, I discovered it was best to simply release items to "the universe" via the sidewalk – although, unlike the mop, shedding your stuff this way means there's little to no chance you'll know its fate. One evening, I left my two-wheeled friend, unlocked, leaning against a lamppost. The following morning, the bike was gone.

Responsibilities revealed, rebuffed

The experiment has officially ended, with years of stuff no longer occupying the farmhouse basement.

My findings? When you downsize, you can actually accumulate responsibilities, or become aware of existing responsibilities you did not previously acknowledge.

Neglected music books I owned, for example, actually represented not only the responsibility to store them somewhere, but use them, too. I no longer wanted to focus my energy in this way; no longer wanted to be the person who held onto the books, thinking she might use them eventually. I donated the books and feel that I have freed up energy to focus on something else – on other responsibilities.

Raised on a small dairy farm outside Winchester, Carrie Fawcett is an educator and volunteer columnist for the Winchester Press' *special supplements. She has taught locally, within Canada and abroad, but regularly returns to the farm to reconnect with the community where she grew up.*

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Prepping the fireplace for the season

People looking to embrace the cold-weather season often find snuggling up in front of a roaring fire is both relaxing and warming. Fireplaces are popular components of homes across the country. Ensuring fireplaces are prepared for a season of use is important from a safety standpoint and for personal comfort as well.

One of the most important steps of fireplace maintenance and preparation is having the entire thing cleaned by a professional. A chimney sweep will clean out the entire chimney. Many use a high-powered vacuum so that there is no soot or dust entering the home. Depending on the range of services, some sweeps also offer a series of inspections of the chimney, interior flue and checks of attic spaces for any damaged areas that will need repair.

The next step will be securing your source of fuel. Many homeowners contract with a provider of seasoned firewood. A delivery of one or two cords of wood may take the average fireplace user through the season. Wood can also be purchased at supermarkets or picked up free in different areas. It's not advisable to use wood that has just been cut down. It likely contains high levels of moisture that will result in more smoke than burn power, and could lead to deposits forming on the inside of the chimney. Synthetic logs are also available, but use caution because they may burn unevenly and put out higher levels of carbon monoxide. Follow directions on the packages of these products carefully.

It is important to inspect a fireplace screen or guard to ensure it can safely protect against embers escaping the fireplace. In homes where there are young children, an added barrier may be needed in front of the fireplace to prevent little hands from touching the hot screen.

It is vital to open up the chimney flue before starting any fire. This allows fresh air to feed the fire and will enable smoke to exit the home. Failure to open the flue can result in smothering, dirty smoke filling the home quite quickly. The flue should be closed after the fire is completely extinguished so that animals and outside debris don't enter the home via the opening.



A room with a fireplace is a welcome retreat on a cold, windy day.

Be sure to have a metal container for removing and storing hot ashes handy. Embers and ashes can stay hot for quite some time, so they should be placed outdoors, ideally far from the home so they don't set anything ablaze.

Educate household members about the rules of fireplace use. They should be aware that no items should be discarded into the fire to avoid the emission of toxic fumes or dangerous embers. All it takes is one stray ember to start a huge fire. Also, improper fuel materials may lead to the buildup of flammable creosote on the chimney.

A fireplace can be a focal point, a source of home heating and just a nice place to which to retire when the weather is cold. Preparing the fireplace for use and maintaining it properly are the keys to a safe season of use.

Fire extinguisher know-how

Fire extinguishers are an important safety component in any home or building. They can mean the difference between a devastating fire or a minor incident. Although a fire extinguisher in the hands of a trained adult can be a life- and property-saving tool, many people are not properly skilled in the use of fire extinguishers.

A large portion of the public has not received training on fire extinguisher use and when to use them. Sometimes the use of the wrong extinguisher can exacerbate a fire, as there are different fire extinguishers for different types of fires. Learning when and where to use an extinguisher can be a matter of life and death.



Type of extinguisher

Not all fires are alike, and fires started from different materials require the use of different extinguishing agents to safely and quickly put the fire out. There are five different types of extinguishers, and generally each will feature a symbol to show the applicable fire on which they can be used.

Class A: These are used on ordinary substances, like cloth, wood, paper, and plastics.

Class B: These extinguishers are used on fires that feature flammable liquids, such as oil-based paints or gasoline.

Class C: These extinguishers are used on electrical equipment, such as tools or appliances that are plugged in.

Class D: Commonly found in specific factories, these extinguishers are used on flammable metals.

Class K: Combustible cooking materials, like animal oils and fats, can be extinguished with this agent. They are commonly found in commercial kitchens, but are now infiltrating residential markets as well.

Multipurpose: Some extinguishers combine different agents so they are applicable for a range of fires.

When to use a fire extinguisher

Small fires may be smothered with an extinguisher. If the fire has spread or is already large in size, it's likely only a trained firefighter can handle the blaze. Only use a fire extinguisher in these circumstances.

1. The fire is small and contained.
2. You have already called the fire department.
3. There is little chance of being consumed by toxic smoke.
4. You can escape safely if necessary.
5. The fire is not between you and the escape route.
6. You are physically able to carry its weight and exert the necessary pressure to operate it.

Fire extinguishers should be routinely inspected and maintained to ensure they will be effective. Some need to be shaken to keep the dry chemicals from settling. Others need to have the pressure at the correct level.

An extinguisher may need to be recharged or replaced if it is damaged.

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Top ten ways to maximize indoor comfort during the winter

Home-heating bills can pack a punch into household budgets as Canadians prepare for the cold winter months ahead. Hiring a licensed contractor to inspect your furnace and clean your filters is a top priority before the temperature dips down, but be sure to consider the following elements that help maximize indoor comfort when the weather outdoors becomes too much to bear.

With frosty temperatures on the horizon, The Heating, Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Institute of Canada (HRAI) offers 10 simple suggestions to help Canadian homeowners make the most of their home heating system and keep the costly energy bills at bay during the colder months.

1. Audit doesn't have to be a bad word

Have a licensed professional conduct an energy audit of your home to help assess the efficiency of your current heating system. This audit will show you how and where your home loses energy, as well as it will help you save on your monthly bills and increase your home's re-sale value. An official ecoEnergy evaluation may also qualify you for some healthy government incentives to make energy-saving home improvements.

2. Your heater needs a jacket, too

Wrap your hot water heater in an insulating jacket, preventing standby heat losses.

3. Spring cleaning

Clean or replace filters on forced-air furnaces every three months.

4. Let the light in

Open your curtains or blinds so the light from the sun can help heat rooms that receive direct sunlight.

5. Install a humidifier

Moist air feels warmer than dry air and can help you feel comfortable even though your thermostat is set at a lower temperature. Hire a licensed contractor to install the humidifier to ensure it is done correctly.

6 Book a tune up

Schedule an annual tune-up for your boiler, furnace or heat pump to ensure that your heating equipment is operating at peak efficiency. Visit the HRAI website to locate the appropriate professional in your area.

7. Turn it down

Install a programmable thermostat that can be set to lower the temperature when you are away from the home or at nighttime, helping your family save on energy costs. Hire a licensed professional to install one of these thermostats so you can start saving on your monthly energy bills.

8. Pick your favourites

Close off heating vents in rooms that are not regularly occupied to maximize the heat in those rooms which are used most.

9. Don't let heat escape unnecessarily

Keep your doors and windows shut and make sure they are properly sealed so you keep the heat in when you need it.

10. Clear the way

Make sure all of your heating vents and baseboards are clear of obstructions and furniture to allow for maximum output from your heating system.

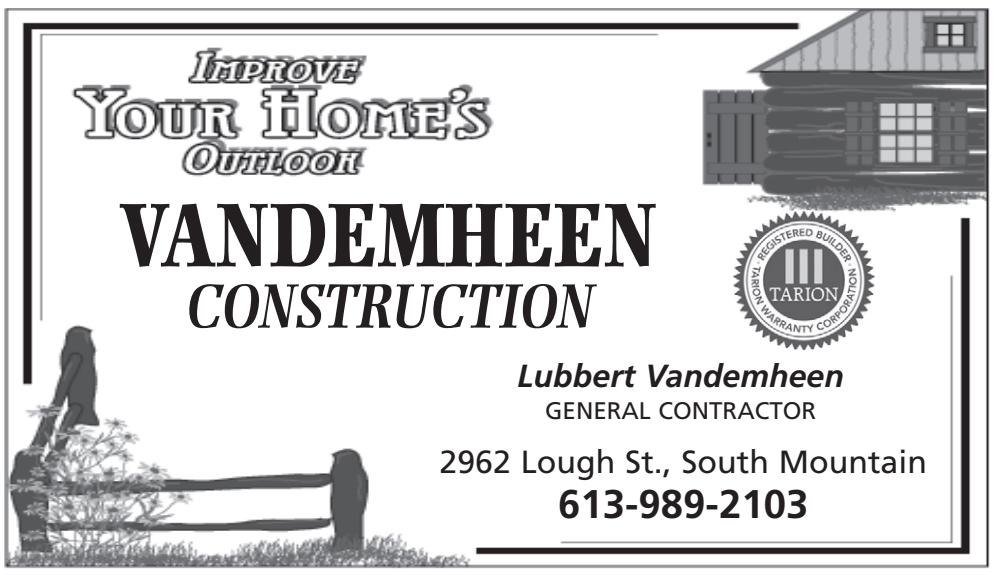
You can find a licensed heating contractor in your area who can help ensure your indoor comfort is maximized (and your energy bills minimized) this season online at www.hrai.ca.

— News Canada



Did you know?

Though ceiling fans are most associated with warm-weather seasons, most can be effective throughout the winter months as well, helping circulate warm air throughout a room in much the same way they circulate cool air during the warmer weather. Most of today's fans have a switch near the motor housing that alters the direction in which the fan's blades turn. When a ceiling fan is used in the summer, its blades push the air downward, moving cool air around the room. The air blowing around the room is what cools people within the room. When the blades' direction is altered, the blades then push the air upward toward the ceiling. This drives the hot air, which typically rises to the top, down toward the edges of the room. This helps circulate warm air throughout a room, making for more even heating. What's more, this improved heat circulation helps combat window sweating that results from condensation on the glass when hot air is not effectively circulated throughout a home.









Renovate your diet

Streamline a convenient, organized setup

The kitchen is considered the "heart of the home," and many folks consider a kitchen renovation essential to get a great working space for preparing family meals. In the *Winchester Press'* last supplement about home improvement (published in spring 2011) we "renovated" our kitchens for a healthier cooking space. This time, we are going to do a different sort of kitchen renovation, one that can improve our health.



The Lighthearted Vegetarian

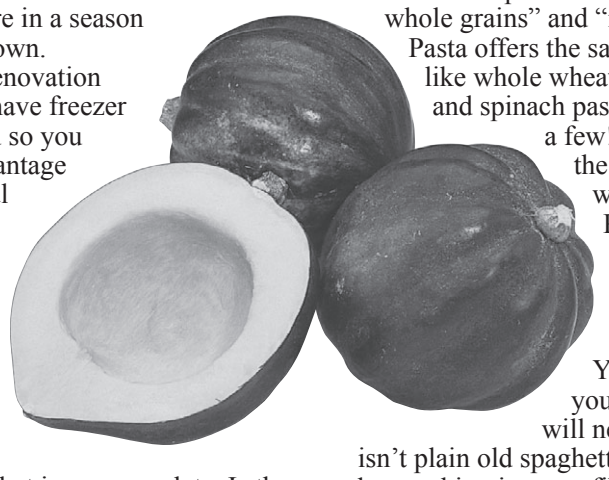
by Janice Atkey Videto

We've all been there. The doctor peers at you over his glasses and, in a vaguely disappointed tone, tells you that your cholesterol is high. Or you're too heavy around the middle. Ugh! What a pain! You know your diet isn't the greatest. You want to do something, but what? "Renovating" your diet may be easier (and tastier) than you think! Here are some basic tips:

Eat seasonally, shop locally

This is a concept where you try to eat what is currently in season in your area. We are blessed to have tropical fruits and vegetables available to us in the dead of winter, but the question to ask is, how far did they travel to get to your plate? All year long, try to choose items that have come the shortest distances from places that are in a season close to our own.

Kitchen renovation tip: Always have freezer bags on hand so you can take advantage of fresh, local produce in season and freeze it while it is plentiful.



Colour me healthy

Look at what is on your plate. Is there a good selection of colours? Deep greens, reds, oranges? Increase your vegetable intake by making your plate a feast for the eyes as well as the palate. Stick to fresh or frozen and keep the cooking light – a quick steam or fast sauté is all most veggies need to reach that crisp, tender stage where the nutrients and flavours are at their peak.

Kitchen renovation tip: A stainless steel steamer is a great, inexpensive investment that will fit into the cooking pots you already have and make healthy steaming a quick and convenient option.

Eight a day

Yes, I know! The dreaded eight glasses of water a day. You will feel like you are a bit "awash" at first, but soon your body will respond very positively. Your mental faculties may sharpen, your range of joint motion may increase, your digestion may improve, you may avoid kidney stones as toxins are flushed from your system, and your skin may be softer. There are even claims that being properly hydrated can help regulate your blood pressure. And don't worry, you won't be running to the washroom every five minutes. We are made of water and we do best when we are well hydrated! As an added bonus, those of us on well water get the benefits of naturally occurring trace minerals.

Kitchen renovation tip: Find a glass jug that holds eight cups of water. Fill it in the morning and make it your goal to drink it over the course of the day.

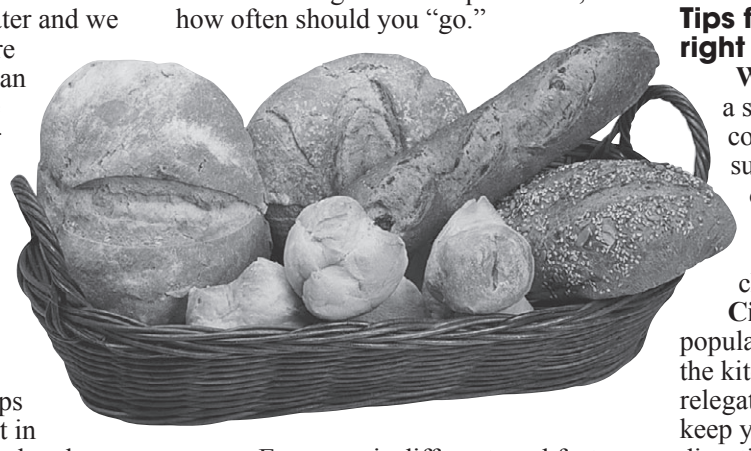
Brown is better

In most cases, with grains, breads, rice, and pasta, brown is better. Choose whole grains over processed white. With the ready availability of wonderful breads, making good choices is easy. Don't be fooled by brown bread which is white bread coloured with a little molasses. Look for the phrases like "100 per cent whole grains" and "includes the germ." Pasta offers the same upgrades like whole wheat, brown rice, and spinach pasta, just to name a few! Not happy with the texture of whole wheat spaghetti? President's Choice offers a great Blue Menu Omega-3 spaghetti that is made with lentils. You can serve this to your family and they will never know it isn't plain old spaghetti and you will be sneaking in more fibre, protein, and a ton of nutrients! Some rices, such as basmati and jasmine, are naturally white, not processed to be white. Otherwise, brown is better. Brown rice is a staple of most vegetarian diets and gets a bad rap for being hard to cook, soggy, and tasteless. Not so! The "recipe du jour" features an Easy Baked Brown Rice recipe that will make you a willing convert!

Kitchen renovation tip: Grab some pretty storage tins and large glass mason jars, fill them with healthy dried pasta, beans, and rice, and line them up on a shelf. They look homey and attractive, and they serve as a reminder to add whole grains into your menu.

Increase your fibre

Ah Yes! The Forbidden Topic of fibre! Constipation is a prevalent problem in today's society, causing a variety of health issues, as toxins are held in the body longer than they should. Health issues can range from lack of energy and headaches to more serious issues like diverticulitis. This topic needs to come out of the closet... err... washroom... and into the light. So the question is, how often should you "go."



Everyone is different, and factors such as amounts and types of food eaten and activity levels can play a role in your digestion. For some, once a day is their "norm," while for others, three times a day is normal.

There is a theory that if you eat three meals a day, you should "go" three times a day. The general rule of thumb that most naturopaths agree on is this: Whatever you eat should have passed through your digestive system in 24 hours. If it hasn't, you may need to up the fibre in your diet. Drinking eight glasses of water a day will help with this, too. Psyllium husks, another natural gentle product, can be used in place of pectin and gelatin to thicken pie fillings, jams, jellies and preserves. A tablespoon can be stirred into your morning orange juice. And that old joke from the dried fruit aisle, prunes, are also very effective. Three or four prunes every morning can assist regularity and give you an added boost of magnesium, calcium, and potassium.

Kitchen renovation tip: Get a shaker jar (like that used for parmesan cheese) and fill it with wheat bran and keep it close at hand. Sprinkle some over your pizza, toast, cereal, casserole, stew, or any sauce to give your digestion a needed boost.

The Healing Kitchen - Tips for natural healing right in your own cupboards!

White vinegar: Put white vinegar in a shaker bottle and use it to disinfect countertops, stovetops and cutting surfaces. Just sprinkle it on then wipe over with damp cloth. Proven to kill bacteria and germs as effectively as anti-bacterial cleansers without the chemicals and the added cost.

Cinnamon: This is one of the most popular but most underused ingredients in the kitchen. This amazing spice, usually relegated to baked goods, actually helps keep your blood sugar in balance, soothes digestion, and is an ancient remedy for nausea. Tip: Expectant mothers with morning sickness, try sucking on a cinnamon stick to ease your queasiness. Pull it from the back of the cupboard, put it in a shaker jar and use it more frequently.

Until next time...

In the October Fall *Car Care* supplement, we will be looking at our transition into winter, both from a food and from a natural healing perspective. Until then, get "going" on that diet renovation!

Janice Atkey Videto is a Winchester-area resident, volunteer columnist for the Winchester Press supplements, and long-time vegan ready to pass on her experiences with the "veg life" to two-legged omnivores, herbivores, and carnivores alike.

Now try it on your plate

Vegilicious recipe du jour

Easy Baked Brown Rice

2 cups brown rice
3½ cups water
½ tsp sea salt (if desired)

Rinse rice in a colander before using. Combine all in a casserole dish, cover tightly with a lid or tin foil, and bake at 350F for 45-50 minutes. Let it sit, covered for 10 minutes. Uncover and serve.
Variation for added fibre: Reduce the brown rice by ½ cup and replace it with ½ cup bran, kasha, or bulghur.

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Twelve green improvements

Making home improvements doesn't have to mean compromising environmental ideals in the process. There are numerous jobs that a person can do that fit with a green lifestyle. While these improvements help protect the planet, they'll also help keep a few extra dollars in your wallet.

1. Conserve water

Turn off the tap between brushing teeth or rinsing off dishes. Better yet, install low-flow faucets, showerheads and toilets that reduce the consumption of water in the household.

2. Motion detection

Motion-detector lights can be installed in different rooms of the home and outdoors. Lights will automatically turn on and off depending on the activity in the area, reducing the chances of a light being left on inadvertently and wasting money and energy.

3. Solar panels

You may have been toying with the idea of solar panels for years. They can be installed on the roof or in the yard to power various components of the household, like lights during a traditional power outage or the swimming pool filter. Today it is possible to buy used solar panels, many of which still have a lot of life left to them and are considerably cheaper than new ones.

4. Aluminum-clad storm door

Insulate the entryway of your home with a storm door that will buffer against harsh weather conditions. While you're creating a more air-tight space, caulk around windows and doors.

5. Replace air filters

Your HVAC system likely has filters inside that trap dirt and contaminants. Replacing the filters leads to cleaner indoor air and helps the unit run more efficiently.

6. Power strips

Stock up on power strips and plug all of your peripherals and computer equipment into these strips. This way when you want to power down everything completely, you simply turn off the power button on the strip. This ensures no devices are drawing power even in the off position, which many do.

7. Install fans

Fans aren't just useful in the summer. In the winter, the blades can be set to rotate in the opposite direction and help draw warm air into the room, heating more efficiently.

8. Rainwater barrels

Set up rainwater barrels at the downspouts of your home's gutter system. These barrels collect water that can be used to water indoor and outdoor plants, or even wash the car. Some feature a spigot to which you can directly connect a garden hose.

9. Plant trees

Trees are good for the environment in many ways, producing necessary oxygen for life and offering food and living areas for wildlife. Trees can also shade a home during the warm weather, helping reduce energy consumption.

10. Glass fireplace doors

Install glass fireplace doors, which are safer than fireplace screens. They'll also help protect against heat loss up the chimney when there isn't a fire lit.

11. Buy a solar cover

Warm up your spa all season long with a solar cover, which helps keep debris out of the water, too. Solar covers reduce the need to fire up the heater to warm the water.

12. Dog waste composter

Create a method to safely dispose of dog waste without having to toss it in plastic bags in the trash. There are devices that can be buried into the ground to serve as a dog waste receptacle. Or you can make one of your own by placing a container with a lid that seals on top but has an open bottom. Sprinkle a natural bacteria septic tank product, such as Rid-X(R), down the hole routinely and it will break down the waste and turn it into soil fertilizer.

There are a variety of ways to go green with home improvements, whether extensive projects or small fixes.

Older mercury thermostats pose threat to the environment

While many Canadians have switched to environmentally preferred transportation alternatives and are drinking from eco-friendly water canteens, Canadian families and businesses should also be considering the environmental implications of their everyday behaviours within their homes and offices. Something as small as a thermostat can have a negative environmental impact if it is not disposed of properly due to the highly toxic levels of mercury contained within some of these units.

Switch the 'Stat program

Mercury is a potent and hazardous neurotoxin, which is dangerous to the health of people and wildlife. Older mechanical thermostats can have one to four mercury switches, each containing approximately 2.5 grams of mercury. Just one gram of mercury is enough to contaminate an eight-hectare lake to the point where the fish in that lake are inedible for one full year.

A mercury-containing thermostat is not a direct threat to your health and safety as long as the glass housing for the mercury switch is intact. The risk to the environment and human health comes when end-of-life mercury thermostats are not disposed of responsibly. If an old thermostat is thrown out with regular household or business waste, the mercury ends up in landfill and contaminates our soil water.

In order to prevent mercury-containing thermostats from causing distress to the environment, The Heating, Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Institute of Canada (HRAI) has developed a thermostat recovery program called Switch the 'Stat to encourage Canadians to replace their old thermostats with energy-efficient, programmable units to help reduce energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions, while ensuring that their old devices do not end up in landfills.

Together with their network of registered contractors and wholesalers, HRAI ensures that old thermostats are properly disposed of to keep mercury from leaking into our environment.

Since the program's inception in 2006, Switch the 'Stat has recovered more than 45,000 mercury-containing thermostats, which contained over 71,000 mercury switches.

The mercury reclaimed to date would have been more than enough to contaminate all the fish in some of Canada's favourite lakes including Lake Simcoe in Ontario, Kootenay Lake in British Columbia and Lake Manitoba.

You can find a technician in your area who can help ensure your thermostat is responsibly recycled online at www.switchthestat.ca.

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Things to consider when budgeting for home improvements

Home improvement projects have become de rigueur for today's homeowners. Be it a kitchen remodel or the ever popular man cave project, home improvement projects remain a goal for many homeowners.

As enticing as a home improvement project might be, no project can be successful until a budget has been established. The right budget will keep homeowners from going deep into debt when improving their homes, ensuring that, upon the project's completion, they can fully enjoy their revamped castles without the specter of significant debt hanging ominously over their heads.

Before beginning a home improvement project, homeowners can take the following things into consideration.

• **Personal finances:** It sounds simple, but homeowners must examine their finances before starting a home improvement project. Just because a bank will loan out money for a project doesn't mean the project is affordable. Homeowners should compare their monthly expenses with their incomes, and then determine what's left that might be able to go toward a project. Monthly expenses include everything from groceries to mortgage payments. When the comparison between monthly expenses and monthly income has been made, homeowners can get a grasp of just what they can and cannot afford.

• **Credit score:** Many homeowners finance home improvement projects with loans from the bank. Particularly in the current economy when banks are being forced to tighten lending requirements, securing such loans isn't easy. Homeowners with significant credit card debt should eliminate such debt before beginning a project. Doing so serves multiple purposes. First and foremost, eliminating outstanding debt will free up more money to allocate toward the project. Eliminating debt will also make loan applicants more attractive to prospective creditors, increasing their chances of securing a loan and a lower interest rate.

• **The project's priority:** Budgeting a home improvement project also involves being honest as to just how necessary the project is. For example, a man cave might be a dream project, but should it be a priority over other things around the house? If wear and tear is taking its toll on the roof, for instance, the money going toward the man cave should probably be allocated to replacing the roof instead. If a project is low on the priority list but high on the want list, re-examine those projects higher up on the priority list to determine if they are more deserving of immediate attention and funds than vanity projects.



Before beginning home improvement projects, homeowners should construct a budget to ensure the project is a success.

• **Overrun costs:** Not every home improvement project will come in at or under budget. Many, in fact, go over budget due to a host of factors. Homeowners should not be caught off guard when a project goes over budget. Instead, plan for the project to go over budget and expect such frustration. Allocate extra money in the original budget for overrun costs. This will reduce stress and frustration, and if the project comes in under budget, then there's extra money when the project is completed.

Cutting costs on your next project

With the economy still on the mend, homeowners must monitor their spending carefully. Such frugality is necessary across the board, even when it comes to home improvement.

While it's important not to cut too many corners when it comes to home improvement projects, there are ways homeowners can save money without sacrificing safety and quality.

Save money without sacrificing safety, quality

Scale things down

A full-scale kitchen remodel might be a dream project, but homeowners wary of committing too much money to a project might want to consider a smaller scale project. For example, instead of revamping the entire kitchen, address a single part of the kitchen, such as replacing vinyl flooring or refacing the cabinets. Such projects don't require the financial commitment of a full-scale remodel but can give the kitchen a whole new look.

Chip in

Many home improvement projects are best left to the professionals. However, much of the cost of such projects goes toward labor, including preparation before the project and cleanup once it's finished. When interviewing contractors, ask if there is any prep work you can do to reduce labor costs and if there's a way to handle cleanup yourself. Cleanup might be somewhat tricky, as certain materials might need to be disposed of in accordance to local laws. But prep work might be easily handled by homeowners and garner substantial savings.

Shop around

In the current market, homeowners looking to make improvements must recognize the market benefits them. Shop around for a contractor and get some competitive offers. While it's not always best to choose the contractor who submits the lowest estimate, the nature of the current market suggests all contractors should submit competitive offers and be flexible. Flexibility might come with a few conditions, such as more time to complete the project, but those conditions might be worth it if it means saving money.

Make sacrifices in other areas

Safety and quality should always trump cost when it comes to home improvement projects. If there aren't too many ways to save money on a project, make sacrifices in other areas and factor those sacrifices into the budget. Instead of a summer vacation at a resort, visit somewhere nearby that provides the same R&R but for a fraction of the cost of a more expensive resort. Such sacrifices don't have to be permanent, but they can help weather the financial storm until the project is successfully completed.

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Branching out with BMR

Ken Boje's County Road 38 hardware store recently became affiliated with BMR. As a result, the business is offering more products, especially lumber and other building supplies. Boje is pictured here in the BMR storage facility, and below, outside the store.

Press Photos – Smith-Millar

Store enters first autumn season under new parent company

BMR owner excited about expanded line of home improvement materials

WINCHESTER

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

The store – which switched over to join BMR this year after decades of being a Home Hardware – is midway through its first autumn under the BMR brand.

Owner Ken Boje said he is pleased with the selection available as a BMR store dealer/member.

His Winchester facility is expanding upon the previously available selection of lumber and related inventory, essential building materials, lighting, and more.

BMR's official brand of paint – Sico – is also ready for sale. "We have a colour-match system capable of matching to whatever colour you desire," said Boje.

Boje added that he's impressed with the aesthetic appeal of the home improvement products available through BMR.

"It's more fashion oriented," observed Boje.

He also noted that BMR aims to work with local contractors, and provide quotes on materials for various projects.

"We are growing the relationships with the contractors," said Boje. "With BMR warehouse capability on building materials, we have quick turnaround on many more items – we have two regular BMR lumber trucks [arriving] per week, along with the regular hardware truck."

Despite its home improvement specialization, BMR will continue to focus on other markets and customer demographics. For example, the agricultural industry is a priority for BMR, and items like bale twine are readily available to producers and other customers who work in the farming industry.



Another perk of being a BMR location, Boje noted, is the coupon promotions and related flyer opportunities made available to stores like his own.

"There's a whole different mix," said Boje of the promotional programs available through BMR. "I've been pleasantly impressed with the flyer."

Winchester BMR will price match identical or similar products from competing retailers. "So bring in your flyers," said Boje.

Part of the BMR switchover will involve Boje and his staff taking stock of items available and deciding what to focus on, based on customer demand.

The size of other departments within the Winchester store may be increased.

"The giftware, we'll expand as we move forward," he added. "We will be expanding the decor area of the store as part of the Inspiration Boutique."

Overall, Boje noted, the switchover from Home Hardware to BMR has gone relatively smoothly.



"There are always challenges with it," said Boje.

However, he noted that despite the change, many familiar – and even identical – products continue to line the shelves of a store that has been serving the area and community for decades.

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Marking a milestone

Winchester's Guy Fuels celebrating 25 years

WINCHESTER

What do you do when you're 20 years old and suddenly find yourself as the sole operator of an up-and-coming business?

If you're Chris Guy, you don't run and hide. You meet the challenges before you head on.

"You know, I've made mistakes, and every one I have made has cost me money," he said with a laugh. "But, I have tried not to make that single mistake more than once."

Today, it seems clear that despite the hurdles crossed along the way, and despite receiving his business acumen "on the fly," Guy Fuels is still running strong.

"I really can't believe it's been 25 years," he said. "It seems to have gone by just like that," he continued, snapping his fingers.



Silver anniversary

Winchester's Guy Fuels is celebrating 25 years in business this year. Owner Chris Guy (third from left) is marking the achievement with a new product – propane. Company employees include his wife, Martine Thurler-Guy, (second from left), as well as Nancy Ace, and Jason McNaughton. Also pictured are the Guy children, Sophia (left), Nicholas, and Margot.

Press Photo – Uhrig

Achieving independence

It was Chris's parents, Don and Rita, who first got the family into the fuel business.

Between the early 1970s and mid 1980s, Don worked as a sales agent for Petro-Canada. For roughly 15 years, he ran the local roads, providing homeowners with heating oil, or visiting the large number of area farms with the diesel required for operation.

By 1986, however, both Don and Rita began looking for a change, hoping to release themselves from the strings attached to working with the former crown corporation. (Prior to 2004, Petro-Canada operated by the federal government. Today, the company is owned by Suncor Energy.)

"Dad wanted to go independent, and he launched Guy Fuels in the fall of 1986," Chris said.

Yet, things weren't as easy as they expected, he said. Petro-Canada imposed a one-year court injunction on Don, fearing that, not only would the upstart business become competition, but much of the customer base would change sides also.

"I guess they thought [the injunction] would stop us," Chris said. "I know [Petro-Canada] was very aggressive in trying to keep us."

But, despite the courts keeping Don at bay, Chris, along with Rita, stepped to the plate in an attempt to get the new venture off the ground.

"Mom and I pretty much ran the business for the first year," Chris said.

Up and running

When year one was over, and Don was free to operate Guy Fuels, he instead decided to sell the business to his son, and move on.

"I then had to sit down with the banks, and my parents, and learn it all," Chris said. "But, I've been fortunate that my parents did have such a good name in the fuel business."

At the moment, Guy Fuels has three tandem trucks on the road, making daily runs to help serve the business' more than 1,500 customers. As well, outside of the traditional products, the local company will soon be offering complete propane service, which will require a fourth truck on the road.

"I guess you can call that our 25th anniversary product," Chris said. "A lot of people are getting away from heating oil [because of the cost], and propane seems to be the choice they're making."

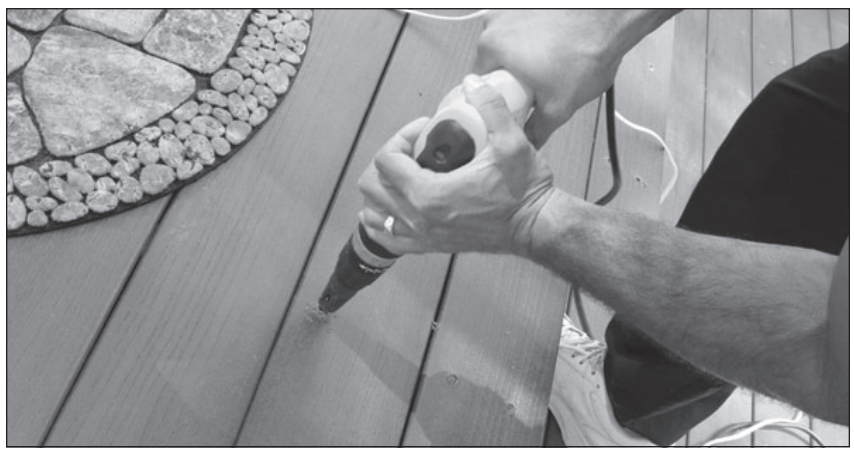
The business also has seven employees, split between office staff and drivers. One of the key players in the company is Chris' wife, Martine Thurler-Guy, who serves not only as a business partner, but as the shop's financial guru – thanks to her 15 years of experience with the Bank of Montreal.

Currently, Guy Fuels services both North and South Dundas, as well as southern portions of the City of Ottawa, and heading west toward Kemptville.

"I have to say that the success of this business is because of the support of both family and friends, and all of the customers in the community," Chris said.







Installing a deck may be a project best left to the professionals because of the skill level required.

Is DIY a recipe for saving money?

Many homeowners or renters wrestle with the question of whether to tackle a project as a do-it-yourself venture to save some money or simply leave it to a professional. Each situation is unique, but there are certain factors that must be considered regardless of a homeowner's particular situation.

On the surface, a DIY task can seem a very good way to save some money. After all, a large percentage, sometimes as much as 50 percent, of the cost of hiring a contractor goes toward labor. For a DIY job with no such costs, the final financial tally can be substantially less.

Although labor can be expensive, that cost is often justified. People who hire carpenters, electricians, plumbers, and the like are paying for the workers' experience. They're also paying with the expectation that the job will be done correctly. With jobs that require a building permit or must be done to specific code, the contractor often puts his reputation on the line and will be held accountable if the work doesn't meet requirements.

That isn't to say an untrained individual can't tackle a specific job around the house. There are some guidelines that may make such projects go more smoothly and, as a result, more affordable.

• Read up and learn as much as you can about the particular work to be done. It's easier to make mistakes if you do not know where to start.

• Talk to others who have also done the work. They may have some tips or advice that can save you time and money. You may also want to ask if they can help and show you the ropes.

• Be sure to obtain all necessary permits before starting any work. Don't risk a fine for doing work without permits or having work inspected.

• When applying for permits, find out if there is a list of code-specific requirements that you can follow – a cheat-sheet of sorts. It may list rated materials required and any techniques. See if you can speak to an inspector who will be visiting your property later on to find out what he or she looks for specifically.

• You must feel confident with the endeavor. If you are unsure about anything, you may risk injury or make a significant mistake and be forced to hire someone to clean up your mess.

• Consider reputable sources for information. While it's easy to go online and scour message boards for pointers on certain tasks, not all of the information is accurate. Trust only content from sources that are licensed or backed by certification in a certain area.

These things being said, there are a number of DIY projects that regular people can try. Starting off small and building up as skills are developed are good ways to begin. For example:

• Tile a small kitchen backsplash before tackling an entire bathroom shower enclosure or floor.

• Build an outdoor potting stand before attempting furniture or cabinetry work in a main room of the house.

• Change out a ceiling fan or lighting fixture before re-running electrical lines through the home.

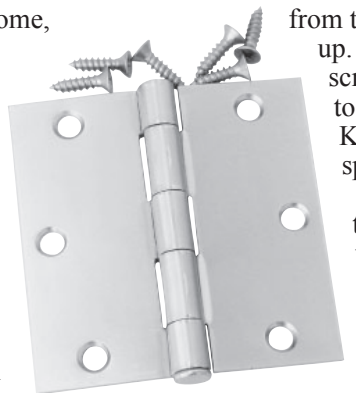
• Succeed in repairing a leaky drain pipe before taking on a more advanced plumbing issue.

• Use regular painting techniques first before experimenting with a trendy faux finish or plaster application.

Dress up a home with an interior door remodel

With minimum remodeling savvy and a modest budget, it's possible to change some items in the home to be more in tune with personal style.

Although many homeowners gravitate toward new paint colors or furnishings to revamp the look of different rooms in the home, replacing tired-looking doors is another affordable option.



The switching out of doors can be a high-impact project for little cost. Think about the room in the house where the door(s) add little appeal. Perhaps a bathroom door has been marred with holes from a former towel rack.

A bedroom with simple, flat doors may lack panache. Some doors have been warped by moisture or have been damaged. These eyesores can be replaced.

A trip to the hardware or home improvement store can yield a number of options in new doors. Hollow core doors are typically more affordable than solid wood doors. If cost is a factor, select among the various styles in hollow designs.

Switching out a door can be a challenging endeavor and is often easiest as a two-person job. Some people simply use the old door as a template for the new door. Remember, not all doors are the same size (width and height) as the existing door opening. Therefore, some cutting and fitting will be necessary.

Here are some steps to follow:

1. Measure the width and height of the old door. Many doors are a standard width, though older doors may be different.

2. Doors are sold as pre-hung doors or door blanks. Pre-hung ones are surrounded by a jamb. When using these doors, measure accordingly taking the jamb under consideration. Blanks are simply the door with no holes for hinges or locksets already included.

3. Remove the old door by taking out the hinge pins, starting from the bottom and working up. You may need a screwdriver and a hammer to tap out stubborn pins. Keep the pins in a safe spot.

4. Lay the old door on top of the new door and trace the dimensions for cutting. Be sure to line up the lockset edge so things will line up. There should be $1/8$ inch clearance on the sides of the door and $5/8$ inch clearance on the bottom.

5. Use a circular saw to cut the door accurately. If only a little needs to be removed from the door, consider using a hand plane instead. If you need to remove more than one inch, take half off the bottom and top of the door so it will be even.

6. Place the old door back on top of the new. Mark the location of the hinge mortices (the recessed area and holes where the hinges will fit) with a utility knife and straight edge.

7. Lightly chisel out the hinge mortices so that they are the right thickness to house the hinge hardware. Test the hinge in the mortice.

8. Test the door's fit within the opening to ensure all cuts are accurate. Plane areas if there is anything that is off or if the door rubs.

9. Mark and drill the space for the lockset and doorknob. Test the fit.

10. Attach the new door and interlace the hinges. Have a helper put in the hinge pins.

11. Put in the knob and be sure the entire set up works correctly.

12. Enjoy the new door.

Paint and primer



Painting is a job that requires preparation and the right equipment. Oftentimes homeowners are unsure about whether they need to use primer before painting or if just paint will do the trick. Although there are no firm rules, there are certain cases where one or the other will be adequate.

Consider a room where the walls have been heavily stained, either by moisture infiltration, rust or another factor. Deep-set stains may bleed through regular paint, therefore a primer should be applied to help block and lock-in the stain. When a room had previously been painted in a very dark color, like red or purple, a primer can help cover the color quickly without the need for multiple applications of regular paint. There also are specialized primers that can be used in rooms such as kitchens and bathrooms that often contain a lot of moisture. These primers inhibit the growth of mold and mildew on painted surfaces. Primers also may be used on materials, such as metal or plastic, to help the colored paint stick to the surface of the item. If a room is only to be painted white or tinted slightly with color, then a primer alone can be used. Certain primers seal porous wall surfaces so they do not absorb paint, requiring more coats for coverage.

Rooms that are being painted that are already white and free of stains or other surface abnormalities may be painted sufficiently with just a coat of regular paint. If skipping primer, look for a high-quality, thick paint that boasts good coverage in one or two coats.

There are new products today that offer primer and paint all in one combination. The jury is still out on the efficacy of these new items, but homeowners can experiment with these paints to see if they work for them. Keep in mind that the cost of a combination product may be more than traditional paint and primer.

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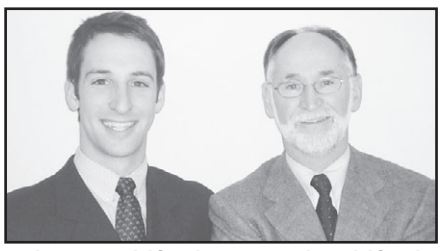

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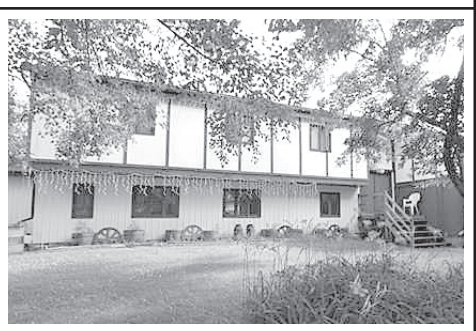

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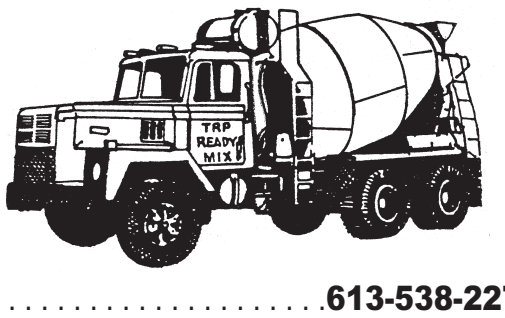

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MORRISBURG AREA: 28-acre country property with Custom Executive Cape Cod home situated 50 minutes from Ottawa just off Highway 31 (Bank Street) at Highway 401. Features 3 bedrooms & 2 bathrooms. The living room features a fieldstone fireplace, bow window & sliding doors to deck. The kitchen has been upgraded with lovely dark oak cupboards & features all the conveniences. The sunny eat-in area has sliding doors to deck. The dining room is elegant & private with french doors & bow window. Spacious master bedroom offers walk-in closet & direct access to main bath. **$600,000**



MORRISBURG AREA: Good space in this 4-bedroom country home just minutes from Morrisburg. Older home with upgraded services, detached garage, aboveground pool and large lot. Many renovations done, add your personal touches to make it your own. Lots of upside, seller motivated. **$139,900**

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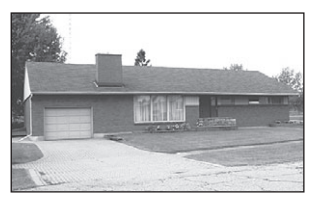
MORRISBURG AREA: This exceptional property includes a large modern barn, 1/2 mile regulation track & chainlink fenced fields. The property also features a private 7-acre spring-fed pond that is stocked. The barn (84 x 34) offers 15 box stalls plus bath stall, laundry room, office, powder room & is electrically heated. Also included are a large machine shed (48 x 40), 2 run-in sheds (30 x 25), one is in the interior track & 1 in fenced field. **$350,000**



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Get a home inspection before you buy

When you are buying a home, it can be easy to get caught up in the excitement of it all and not see any flaws the house may have. A home inspection can give you the peace of mind of knowing what to expect and can help you make an informed decision about the value of the home and its future upkeep.

In its free booklet, "How to Buy Your Home," The Ontario Real Estate Association (OREA) recommends homebuyers hire a professional home inspector to thoroughly check out a property before buying.

Not only will a home inspection help you determine the condition of the house, its structural soundness, and its mechanical systems, but it also brings any problems to the seller's attention at a time when they can be resolved before closing a sale. If you are making an offer on a house before it's inspected, talk to your realtor about including a clause that the sale is contingent upon a satisfactory structural inspection, and specify when the inspection is to be carried out.

A typical inspection includes an examination of the structure from top to bottom, including the heating, air conditioning systems, the interior plumbing and electrical systems, the roof and visible insulation, walls, ceilings, floors, windows and doors, the foundation, basement and visible structure. A home inspector will go through the property and perform a comprehensive visual inspection.

Your realtor will likely accompany you and the inspector during the process. This can give you an opportunity to learn about any problems first-hand and become more familiar with your new house at the same time. The inspector may also be able to share some valuable maintenance tips with you during the inspection.

Following the examination, the inspector will provide a report that not only points out possible defects or areas of concern, but also the positive aspects of the structure as well as the type of maintenance that will be necessary to keep the home in good shape. The home inspector should be willing to answer any questions you have as well as clarify any limitations of the inspection to avoid misunderstandings. Avoid firms that issue only a verbal report. The report should be more than just a checklist of items inspected. The home inspector should also issue a written report with accurate cost estimates for any major defects discovered during the inspection.

A professional assessment will provide complete information about the condition of the property you are considering and will help avoid any unpleasant surprises after the sale. In addition, a home inspector can remain totally objective, while you as the prospective homebuyer may be emotionally involved.

When interviewing potential home inspectors, carefully inquire about the specifics of their work and company. Ask how long they have been in business, and ask for references from previous customers. Find out what type of insurance they carry and if they guarantee inspections. Inspectors should be licensed in building-related fields; architects, contractors, and structural engineers are good examples.

It's a good idea to choose a home inspector who is a member of the Ontario Association of Home Inspectors (OAHI) and/or the Canadian Association of Home and Property Inspectors (CAHPI). To become a member of these associations, inspectors must meet professional and educational requirements, successfully complete comprehensive written exams and practice professionally during a trial period followed by a review. Members must also meet annual education requirements to maintain their membership.

A home inspection before you buy can be a worthwhile investment which could save you money down the road. Ask your realtor to recommend a few home inspectors or you can contact the OAHI for a list of members at www.oahi.com. To obtain a free copy of How to Buy your Home, contact OREA at 1-800-265-HOME or visit us online at www.orea.com.

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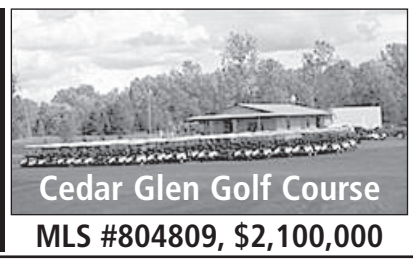
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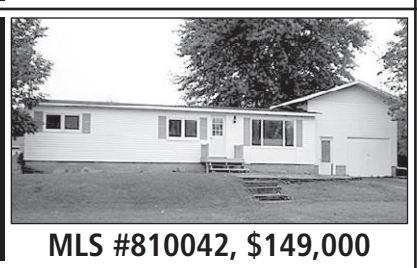
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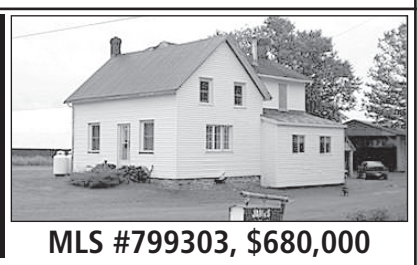
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Renovate in a lead-safe way

Homes that were built prior to 1978 may have the presence of lead. Homeowners thinking about home improvement renovations may want to consider taking extra safety precautions to prevent lead contamination.

Consumption of lead can result in many health problems, affecting the nervous system and kidneys and possibly interfering with fertility and reproduction. High doses of lead can cause mental retardation, behavior problems, brain damage, and even death.

Older homes may contain a good deal of lead. Lead used to be added to paint to make the product last longer and flow easier. Water pipes used to be made from lead, as was the solder used to connect the pipes. Lead may even be in the soil surrounding the home.

Because of the dangers lead presents, many homeowners are interested in retrofitting their homes to remove traces of old lead, or at least prevent future contamination. Homeowners who are just doing minor renovations may actually stir up lead and introduce it into the environment. That is why caution must be taken with older homes.

It is not always in your best interest to remove lead-based paint. In some situations, leaving the painted surface alone, (as long as it is not chipping or within the reach of children), is safer than trying to remove it. Covering the painted area with vinyl wallpaper, wallboard or paneling can provide extra safety. Painted items, such as doors, can be replaced. Homeowners should not try to remove a large area of lead-based paint on their own. If a lot of debris will be generated, consult a professional.



Before you renovate

There are several ways to find out whether the paint in your home is lead-based. Some independent contractors have special x-ray equipment that can detect lead on paint surfaces. Another option is to send paint chips to a lab that specializes in analyzing lead in paint. The two organizations that certify labs for this purpose are: The Standards Council of Canada (www.scc.ca); and The Canadian Association for Laboratory Accreditation (www.cala.ca). Be sure to contact the lab first, and follow all directions for gathering and sending the paint chips.

Precautions

It is not safe to use sanders, heat guns or blowlamps to remove lead-based paint. These methods create lead-contaminated dust, chips, flakes and fumes that can be breathed in or swallowed.

You should consider hiring an expert to do the job. However, if you decide to do it yourself take the following precautions:

• Keep children and pregnant women away from the work area.

• Remove furnishings from the work area. Use plastic sheeting to completely cover anything that cannot be moved.

• Cover entryways, venting, ductwork, flooring and other items in the room with an impermeable covering to prevent the release of lead dust outside the work area.

• Use a chemical paint stripper, preferably one with a paste that can be applied with a brush. Chemical paint strippers may contain potentially harmful substances themselves, so always read the warning labels and instructions carefully before each use.

• Before starting work, make sure the room is properly ventilated. Set up a fan so it blows air out through an open window. Start by applying paint stripper near the fan and work your way back, so the fumes are always blowing away from you. Be sure all workers are wearing appropriate safety equipment, such as ventilators, masks, gloves and eyewear.

• Make sure tools, personnel and other equipment are cleaned before exiting the room so that dust is not spread.

• Use containers to securely store waste and debris so it can safely be removed from the house.

• Follow applicable laws for the proper disposal of lead-containing materials.

• Use HEPA-equipped vacuums to remove dust in a final clean-up of the work area. Wash down areas with water and an all-purpose cleaner so that settled dust is removed.

Nine ways to rodent-proof your home

One of the best ways to reduce the need for rodenticides (pesticides to control rats or mice) is to stop rodents from getting inside your home in the first place. Here are some tips:

1. Inspect the outside of your home for cracks or holes. Mice can squeeze through cracks as small as a dime; rats the size of a quarter.

2. Use metal weather-stripping under doors and weatherstrip your windows.

3. Cover dryer vents, attic vents or soffits with fine mesh, metal screening.

4. Cut tall grass and weeds back from the house.

5. Secure garbage in containers with tight-fitting lids.

6. Raise woodpiles about one foot off the ground and place them away from the house.

7. Understand the difference between rats and mice; each requires different control methods. Deer mice often invade buildings near fields and woodlands in the fall, while Norway rats prefer damp areas like crawl spaces or building perimeters.

8. Roof rats are agile climbers and prefer to live in trees, vines and other dense vegetation –they can infest attics, rafters or roofs, and upper stories.

9. If all else fails and you see signs of an infestation inside your home, you can bait or trap mice and rats with food or rodenticides. Be sure to read all product labels carefully and follow instructions to the letter.

The Health Canada website (www.healthcanada.gc.ca) has a Pest Note called "Rats and Mice—What are they?" that details ways to prevent disease-carrying critters from infesting your home, as well as an Information Update on recent changes to the packaging requirements for rodenticides.

— News Canada

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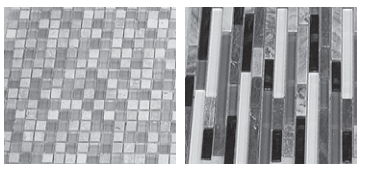
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How to maintain your whirlpool tub

When remodeling bathrooms, some homeowners prefer to add special features that give the room a spa-like feel. A whirlpool tub is one such feature that can help transform an ordinary bathroom into a relaxing oasis.

Whirlpool tubs have many benefits, which have helped the industry become a billion-dollar business. Massage and water therapy can be instrumental in reducing stress and easing tired muscles. Some people depend on a soaking bath with rejuvenating water jet propulsion as part of a sports rehab regiment or to alleviate pain associated with arthritis.

Whirlpool baths come in different dimensions and shapes to fit just about every bathroom. The common shapes include corner size, recessed, platform, or freestanding. Whirlpools can also be sized to fit two people or just one person. Many people prefer a corner style or a platform bath because they are easier to fit than most.

Although the installation of an all-in-one whirlpool tub may be similar to a standard bathtub, with the addition of electrical hookup, the maintenance of the tub is somewhat different. There are certain products that should be avoided when cleaning or using the whirlpool bath to prolong its life.

• One of the plagues of any appliance that houses water is hard water. This can form scaling that may damage the internal components of the motor and water jets. Testing to see the hardness level of water may be a wise decision. This way a water softening system can be added to the home, which will also benefit when doing laundry or running the dishwasher.

• Many whirlpool tubs list items that should not be used in the water while bathing. These may include sudsing bubble bath powders or scented oil additions, each of which may form a film inside of the system, causing it to malfunction. Be sure to read the users' manual prior to first use or before introducing anything foreign to the tub.

• Tubs will require routine cleaning as well. Use a dampened sponge to rub off any grime and other deposits that can form an unsightly ring around the tub. Some whirlpool manufacturers will list recommended products for cleaning. In general, a mild, low-suds formula or a diluted bleach-and-water solution will be effective for routine cleaning.

• For tough grime, fill the tub just above the jets with water. Place about a capful of bleach into the water. Let the tub run for at least five minutes to agitate the solution. Let the water drain and then rinse out the whirlpool bath afterward. Bleach can also kill bacteria and pathogens that may have been left behind in jet plumbing that did not completely drain out.

Whirlpool baths can be a prized addition to a bathroom and add resale value to the home. However, a whirlpool can quickly become ineffective if not properly maintained and used.



Undermount sinks growing in popularity

Undermount sinks are quickly becoming the most popular type of sink in today's kitchens, likely because undermount sinks usually go hand-in-hand with solid-surface countertops. Since homeowners are choosing solid-surface materials, such as granite, quartz and even manufactured stone for their kitchen counters, the need for an undermount sink becomes evident.



Here's why: Undermount sinks create a seamless surface that works well with solid-surface countertops while maintaining the counter's aesthetic appeal. They are installed so the top of the sink is flush with the edge of the counter. When solid-surface counters are cut to accommodate the sink, exact measurements are needed so that the hole is essentially custom made for the particular sink so it fits like a glove. Cutting hard materials is not easily done by a do-it-yourselfer. As a result, the project is often handled by the countertop manufacturer.

Unlike undermount sinks, the alternative is a drop-in sink. These are traditional sinks that do not require an exact cut of the countertop material. That's because the sink has a lip that overhangs the counter and can cover up inexact holes.

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Prevent clogged gutters

Faced with the prospect of another season spent precariously climbing a ladder and reaching inside to clear out debris and leaves, many homeowners are considering the installation of a gutter protection system. And with so many different types available, finding the right fit is easy.

A gutter protection system is a cover or barrier that prevents leaves and large items, such as twigs or blown-around matter, from lodging in a home's gutters and eventually preventing rain runoff from draining effectively.

Clogged gutters and downspouts have been known to contribute to rainwater pooling around the foundation of a home, potentially causing seepage issues. Blocked gutters can also be a haven for stagnant water, which breeds mosquitoes and other insects and potentially harmful bacteria.

To combat these issues, manufacturers have come up with a series of protection systems that allow water to enter the gutter while keeping debris out of it. Gutter protection systems range from do-it-yourself options to professionally installed products. There are a few different styles, and each offer their share of pros and cons.

Screen

A mesh or screen system consists of a screening material that fits inside or over the gutter. It serves as a sieve, allowing the water through but blocking leaves and debris. This system is affordable and can be a DIY project. But over a period of time the mesh itself can be blocked with a build-up of debris and will need periodic cleaning. Also, in some screened systems water can freeze up in the screen openings, causing ice dams.

Aluminum covers

There are many different aluminum options. Some work with a small crevice along the top that is narrow enough for the rainwater to enter but not allow debris inside. They may not allow as much water to enter as a mesh system because they cover a greater surface area over the gutter. Closed systems also may provide an area for insects to make nests.

Number of options on the market

Foam inserts

A relatively inexpensive protection system is a foam insert. These pieces of porous foam are fitted inside the gutter, allowing water to flow through (albeit a little more slowly) while keeping leaves out. Foam inserts are an easy do-it-yourself project and can serve as a test of the efficacy of gutter systems before a more expensive system is purchased.

Surface tension products

These are closed plastic or aluminum products where the water entry holes or channels are on the bottom and sides of the product. This way nothing can ever get clogged from above. The system works by water surface tension; the rainwater will adhere to the product and then flow into the bottom or side holes. The nose of these products may have to be kept clean or the surface tension may not occur.

When it comes to gutter protection systems, there are a number of options to consider. Homeowners can experiment with different low-cost systems to see if one works before contracting to have a permanent guard put in place.

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New horizons at Lannin's Home Building Centre

WINCHESTER

It's a time of change at the longstanding lumber yard south of the village.

Lannin's Home Building Centre has become Winchester's only Home Hardware-affiliated business. (Prior to Winchester Home Hardware's transition to the BMR brand earlier this year, the two shops operated, down the road from one another, under the St. Jacob's, Ont.-based corporation's umbrella.)



Lannin's Home Building Centre employees, including: Albert Schaafsma (left), J.D. Van Noy, Kevin Skov, John Wilkie, Sam Hummel, Terri Lee Tilley, and Sam Wade. Missing: Caroline Barkley, Gail Van Noy, and Dan Reaney.

Press Photo – Uhrig

Inventory expanding

"Right now, we're taking baby steps, and going slowly as we go along," J.D. Van Noy, Lannin's owner, said. "It's different, but interesting, the different doors and avenues [opening] for us."

Since 2009, when Lannin's became associated with the familiar red, yellow, and white branding of Home Hardware, the local shop has gradually expanded. With wide aisles, high shelves, and more products, the hardware store is becoming better equipped to serve the demands of its many customers.

"There are more things we're being asked for now," Van Noy said. "But, we're taking notes. If people want Christmas lights, something we've never done before, we can get a nice selection of stuff."

Outside of the traditional expectations, such as lumber, plumbing, electrical materials, and building supplies, Lannin's is also increasing its paint stock (switching from Pittsburgh Paints to strictly Beauti-Tone), while at the same time bringing in a new line of drywall.

"Plus, Home Hardware has like 50,000 items in their warehouse," Van Noy added. "I'm not saying we'll have everything, but if a customer sees something they want, we can probably get it for them."

Then and now

It was 1945 when Van Noy's grandfather, Harold Lannin, purchased the M. F. Beach Company, and sold building materials while continuing operation of a truss plant, moulding mill, kiln, and feed store.

Van Noy worked at the store when his parents took over in the 1970s, and he continues his family's ownership as a third generation representative today.

"We have a lot of grassroots building centre information available here," he said. "The real key is having the right staff... This store is really fortunate to have the contacts it does with contractors and building officials."

Moving forward, Van Noy said, he will be looking to add more staff, both in the yard and on the sales floor, in an attempt to keep up with the increased customer demand, and the addition of new products.

"As I said, we're going to slowly add more, but I won't narrow my aisles," he said. "We'll look to utilize the space we have better, and if we have to get bigger, we'll take it step by step. Down the road though, that's definitely part of our vision."

Right now though, Van Noy said Lannin's will stay the course, and deal with the changes as they present themselves.

"It's fun and exciting to put in the new products," he said. "I look forward to continuing to do what we do best."

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Ready your lawn for winter

Though spring and summer are often seen as the primary seasons for lawn care, fall is the time to ready a lawn for the cold weather ahead. The following tips can help a lawn withstand winter weather and might even make spring lawn care that much easier once the warm weather returns.



Fertilize

Fertilizing in the fall actually helps the lawn come the early spring. Nutrients remain in the soil throughout the winter months, and the lawn will utilize those nutrients once the snow melts and the sun and warmer weather return.

Aerate

Lawns typically become compacted by late summer, making it difficult for the grass to thrive. When fall arrives, aerating the lawn can relieve that compaction by removing plugs or cores of soil from the lawn. Once a law is aerated, the grass roots can spread out and thicken the lawn. It's good to aerate in the fall when grass roots grow.

Edge the property

Homeowners who live in areas that experience heavy snowfall in the winter might want to edge their lawns in the fall. Edging can eliminate the risk of damaging grass that hangs over curbs and sidewalks when shoveling snow. What's more, an edged lawn adds aesthetic appeal to the property.

Seed

Fall can be a great time to seed a lawn as well. Overseeding in the fall can help a lawn resist diseases throughout the winter.

Rake the leaves promptly

Don't allow leaves to accumulate on the grass before finally dusting off the rake. If you allow leaves to sit on the lawn too long, they can smother the grass. Don't allow leaves to reach ankle length.

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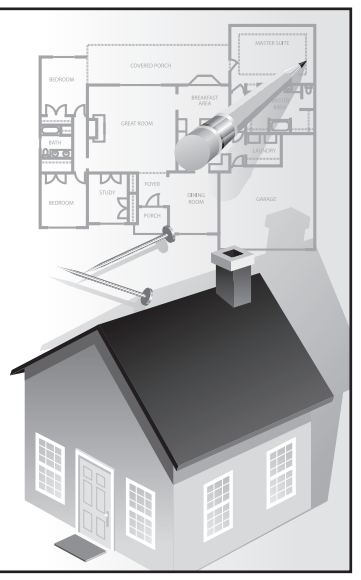

Flowerbeds and shrubs need attention in fall

Just a few thoughtful steps in the garden right now will lighten your load significantly next spring – and all your plants will benefit too.

"Many homeowners think there's nothing to be done once the weather turns chilly, but any extra care and nourishment you can give your property in the fall will help them thrive immediately once the snow melts away," says Syd Pell, a gardens specialist at Scotts. Here's his handy checklist to assist with the job:

• Clean up the garden: Remove debris and weeds from the ground.

• Prune: Shape trees and shrubs and cut off any dead wood.

• Plant: Autumn is the best time to plant new shrubs and trees. It gives them time to anchor and establish new roots and it's a great time to save money since many garden centres are clearing out their stock at substantial savings. Plant bulbs (pointy end up) in groups of three or five; about two-and-a-half times deeper than the size of the bulb.

• Fertilize: To promote root growth on transplants, use a high phosphate fertilizer, like Miracle-Gro Quick Start.

• Rake: Create a warm blanket of protection for your plants by raking autumn leaves onto flowerbeds and around shrubs. Or add a layer of mulch.

• Mulch: Apply two to three inches of it around new plants especially. It protects your entire garden from harsh cold weather and the best mulch delivers nutrition. A product called NatureScapes is a natural wood chip mulch that slowly decomposes into beneficial organic matter, and it is guaranteed to keep its colour all season long.

• Discourage nesting: Eliminate a winter home for garden pests by tightly closing sheds, porches and clear away any items that provide shelter.

Store tools in perfect condition:

• Empty the bin of your fertilizer/seed spreader; repack leftover products and seal the packages tightly. Wash the spreader thoroughly with hot water to remove all clinging material and stubborn residue. Allow the spreader to dry thoroughly; lubricate the axle bushings with light oil and store it in a clean, dry location.

• Clean the gardening tools and sharpen all cutting edges, including your lawn mower blade. Lubricate all pivot points and spray bare metal and cutting edges with penetrating oil to prevent rust. Wipe wooden handles down with linseed oil.

• Store garden hoses by removing any attachments (like Miracle-Gro LiquaFeed or Garden Feeder) then drain the water thoroughly; coil and hang hoses so they won't sag or kink.

More information is available at www.scotts.ca.

— News Canada

