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Home Improvement 2024



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Top home improvements to make before summer

I. APPLY FRESH PAINT

Paint doesn't last forever, no matter how expertly applied. Paint typically lasts between three and 10 years depending on the surface it's applied to, its type and quality, and the environmental stress it must withstand. Usually, this means a new paint job every four to six years, and spring is the perfect time for this. Here are some signs that it may be time to repaint.

result. Painting the interior of a home, or even just a single room, got a perfect score of 10. Painting exterior siding was close behind with a 9.8.

Painting - particularly interior painting - can also be a fun and satisfying do-it-yourself (DIY) job. It requires no heavy equipment and has very few safety hazards. With some brushes, rollers, and painter's tape, the whole family can



Stucco and trim are painted White Dove. Front door is stained walnut. Always have a welcoming entry and change your door decor seasonally.

Cracking, peeling, or bubbling paint
Cracked or missing caulk
Faded colors
Grease or water stains
Mold or water damage
Scuff marks

You may also just feel like making a change, and a new coat or color of paint is an excellent and relatively easy way to refresh your home's appearance. A 2023 survey by the National Association of Realtors (NAR) calculated a score out of 10 for various home improvement projects based on how happy homeowners were with the

contribute. Since you'll want to open the windows, spring is an ideal time for interior painting. Mild weather is also good for exterior painting, especially in areas where humidity rises in the summer.

2. REVAMP YOUR LAWN

Spring is the perfect time to spruce up your yard with new landscaping. If you maintain your own lawn, you'll be doing some spring cleanup anyway, removing dead leaves or stalks from perennial plants, pruning trees and shrubs, and preparing to fertilize. Once the last frost of the season has passed, you can



Keeping the room light and bright with the walls painted flat White Dove and the trim is semi-gloss.

plant trees, shrubs, and flowers.

You can also refresh your turfgrass by overseeding or planting new patches as needed. Both soil fertilization and preventative weed control work best when applied in the spring. "Weed and

feed" fertilizers can simultaneously inhibit crabgrass growth and nourish your new plants throughout the season. If you prefer organic methods, compost is an excellent fertilizer, and

| See *IMPROVEMENTS*, page 4



Added new shutters, address plaque and planted a Nellie R. Stevens Holly tree.

IMPROVEMENTS

| Continued from page 3

you won't have to worry about overfertilizing and exhausting the nutrients in the soil.

Lawn improvements are highly customizable to your taste and budget. You can do a little pruning and reseeding or renovate the entire landscape. Many of these projects are DIY-friendly, though they may require sustained effort over time to make sure new vegetation takes root. If you choose to put in new grass and plants, spring is also a great time to install a sprinkler system to help with long-term upkeep.

3. CLEAN YOUR GUTTERS

A home's gutter system is very important for directing water away from the foundation, particularly as spring and summer storms set in. If your gutters are clogged or broken, they won't be able to do their job, and you may be setting yourself up for potential flooding and structural damage. Since fall and winter tend to create plenty of debris to clog your gutters, cleaning them out in early spring is usually a good idea.

To clean your gutters most efficiently, wait until the debris has dried out. Start near the downspout and scoop debris into a waste bucket for easy disposal - dumping it into your yard only creates an unsightly problem for later. When you've removed the bulk of debris, you can flush the gutters clean with a hose. Remember to practice good ladder safety, since falling injuries are a serious hazard.

You can clean gutters from the ground with a pressure washer and a special U-shaped attachment, but take care not to use more pressure than the gutters can withstand.

4. INSPECT YOUR AC UNIT

Spring is usually the time when you'll switch off your furnace or other heater and turn on your air conditioner. Before that happens, it's a good idea to get your annual HVAC system inspection and tuneup. Start by dusting your vents and looking in your ductwork. Ducts don't typically need yearly cleaning, but if there's substantial debris or a pest infestation, you'll want to get that taken care of first.

Keeping your system free of dust and allergens can improve air quality and make



Make your home office a cheerful and a fun place to work.

spring easier for those in your home with allergies. Changing your air filter as recommended by the AC unit's manufacturer is a key part of maintaining air quality as well as ensuring the system's efficiency. Similarly, you'll want to clear any yard debris from around your AC's outdoor condenser unit.

Finally, schedule your yearly maintenance visit with a local HVAC contractor. Getting this done in spring ensures any potential problems are caught and repaired before the heat of summer when your air conditioner is most necessary. A tuneup also includes cleaning and checking many of the system's components to ensure it's running at peak efficiency and your utility bills won't be higher than necessary.

5. INSTALL NEW WINDOWS

Depending on the severity of winter and your home's age, you may have noticed that some windows have become drafty, allowing cold



A very simple way to dress up your metal garage door is to add the magnetic handles and brackets.

in and letting heat escape. Replacing drafty or outdated windows with new, efficient models is one of the best ways to improve your home's energy efficiency. Spring is an excellent time to schedule window replacement, helping ensure that air conditioned air will stay sealed inside when you need it.

Unfortunately, installing windows isn't a DIY job. Spring is the busy season for window replacement contractors, but if you book your appointment early, you may get in before the rush and before any off-season pricing specials end.

6. REPLACE SIDING

Sometimes a coat of paint isn't enough. If your home's exterior needs a facelift, consider installing or replacing your siding. Siding acts like an extra level of insulation, raising your heating and cooling systems' energy efficiency. It also helps keep water and weather away from your home's structure.

Wood siding requires painting and staining, but it provides a unique, attractive look that few other materials can match. Synthetic siding materials like vinyl and fiber cement are lower maintenance and less expensive, and they come in various colors and textures. Brick and stone veneers are another option, though these tend to be the costliest. Aluminum is somewhere in the middle.

If it's not time to replace your siding just yet, a pressure wash can remove stuck-on debris and grime, but make sure you stick to low water pressure and paint-safe cleaners. Additionally, some types of siding can be painted to refresh their look. Even vinyl siding can now be painted if you choose acrylic latex paint in a lighter color than the original vinyl.

7. UPDATE YOUR DECK

If you want to entertain guests outside when the weather is nice, spring is the time

to get your patio or deck ready. A new coat of wood stain can update your deck's appearance and help protect it from spring rains, though you may need to power wash first. You can always add new features—like a roof, screens, lighting, or furniture—depending on your needs and the number of guests you want to accommodate.

If your home doesn't have a deck, spring is when you could build one. Wood is less expensive as a decking material, though it actually has a higher ROI (64.8%) than pricier composite materials (62.1%), according to Remodeling magazine's 2023 Cost versus Value Report. The only downside is that wood requires more maintenance. Harder woods such as redwood or cedar cost more, but they're more resistant to cracking, warping, and weather damage.



Don't forget the laundry room. Just add art and a rug!

Turn your yard into a vacation-worthy oasis

Warm weather means more time to relax outdoors. For those homeowners lucky enough to have entertaining spaces outside, spring and summer provides plenty of opportunities to enjoy fresh air under the sun or stars.

Over the last few years, families have become especially familiar with what works about their yards and where there is

room for improvement.

A backyard renovation can cost anywhere from \$5,000 to \$50,000. The American Society of Landscape Architects suggests homeowners budget the cost of a major landscaping project at between 5 and 10 percent of their home's value. Large or small, here are ways to make an outdoor oasis at home.

CREATE LIVING PRIVACY

Living in close proximity to neighbors may make privacy harder to come by. Wood or vinyl fences, however effective, may not provide the all-natural look many people desire. Vertical gardening, which trains easy-care vines like English Ivy, Clematis or various climbing roses to grow on trellis or fencing adds greenery and privacy. Hedges and fast-growing shrubs also can

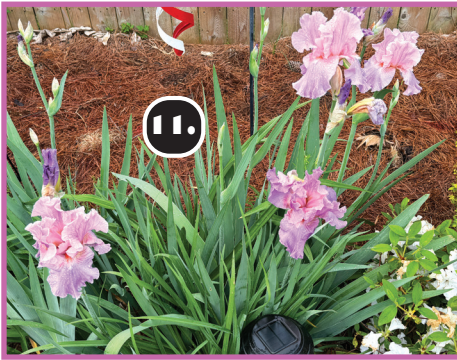
be used for natural barriers.

INSTALL A POOL

Pools are the ultimate spots to cool off on hot days. An elaborately shaped inground pool can blend in with the landscape and offer the ultimate hang-out zone. However, above-ground pools also serve the purpose

| See OASIS, page 11





PLANT PERENNIALS

All the plants seen here came back this year. Still waiting on the banana trees and giant elephant ears to come up. To make your garden easier and beautiful, just plant lots of perennials and a few annuals. Pictured - •1 Clematis on trellis •2 Salvia •3 Gerbera Daisy •4 Shamrocks •5 Knock Out Roses •6 Dianthus •7 Agapanthus •8 Clematis on trellis •9 Nandina (shrub) •10 Knock Out Roses •11 Iris •12 Phlox •13 Daylily •14 Dianthus. Perennials generally have shorter blooming periods than annuals, so gardeners often pair them with annuals or perennials that bloom at various times of the year to maintain constant color.

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• CHANGE A LIGHT FIXTURE •

Added this brushed gold pendant chandelier in the entry.



• ADD/UPDATE CEILING FANS •

Updated with this 65” black and brushed gold ceiling fan with light in the living room.



• UPDATE FLOORING •

This flooring is vinyl planks that blends with the tile in kitchen and bathrooms.



• PAINT THE FURNITURE AND CHANGE THE KNOBS •

There’s no need to throw away quality furniture when you can update with paint and knobs. Used Krylon spray paint and added gold knobs.

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Your manufactured home maintenance checklist

These are the 8 items you should check and maintain yearly on your manufactured home

FOUNDATION: Make sure the home structure is solid and level. Check your foundation or support structure for any cracks or imbalances caused by potential settling. This is one of the most important items to check each year, especially for the first few years of the home in a new location. Just like site-built homes, mobile homes can start to sink and settle over time. A manufactured home should be releveled on a semi-regular basis to account for shifting.

SKIRTING: Look for holes, avoid excess moisture. The skirting or perimeter enclosure around the bottom of your manufactured home is designed to keep unwanted moisture from getting into the underbelly of the home. Check regularly to make sure there are no holes or cracks in your solid skirting that might allow moisture (or even rodents!) to get into the home.

ROOF: Check for damage, reseal or recoat. Check regularly, at least twice a year, to make sure there is no debris and no broken or missing shingles on the roof. You'll also want to look over the flashing to make sure it is in good condition, and ensure there aren't any cracks or soft spots in the roof caulking. Any imperfections or weaknesses in the roof could lead to moisture, air, and other problematic elements or even vermin getting into the roof cavity of the home.

GUTTERS: Clean them out regularly. Checking and cleaning your gutters frequently is one of the easiest ways to prevent damages to the roof and exterior of your manufactured home. Having clogged gutters can



end up causing leaks and water damage to the home. If ignored for too long clogged cutters can become heavy with debris and break or fall off the house, causing significant external damage to the home and property. Even if you don't live near large trees, debris like dirt, leaves, and even rocks can be carried through the air and deposited into your gutters.

SIDING: Clean it, don't ignore it. Clean your siding regularly to avoid mold and mildew growing on the exterior paneling. Siding is one of the most commonly ignored parts of a manufactured home when it comes to maintenance, but it should definitely be on your list of items to address each year. If your manufactured home has vinyl siding, the most common type of siding, water with detergent is a very effective cleaning solution.

WINDOW AND VENT CAULKING: Review, reseal, and repeat. Checking the caulking around your windows and vents is always a good idea, but this is an especially important step before the winter months if you live somewhere with significant temperature changes. Extreme temperature changes can eventually cause caulking to shrink, split or break down, which can result in cracks, gaps, or warping in the seals that protect your home's climate. When airflow enters through damaged seals around windows or vents, it makes your home less comfortable and your heating or cooling costs higher.

HEATING AND HVAC SYSTEMS: Clean your filters frequently, vacuum annually. Clean out your air ventilation and heating systems frequently, at least several times each year, to improve the air quality in your manufactured home. Not only does changing your filters regularly help keep the home comfortable and in good condition, it can also help decrease the effects of allergies, asthma, and other breathing and skin problems.

SMART CLEANING INDOORS: Use gentle products and solutions. Wipe walls, surfaces and fixtures with a gentle detergent annually to avoid discoloration. Of course most of the cleaning done in your home happens more frequently than once a year, but no matter how frequently you're cleaning it's important to remember the downside of using abrasive cleaning products.



In recent years, creating outdoor living spaces with a pool have become a highly sought-after feature for homeowners. These spaces offer a unique opportunity to enjoy the outdoors while still maintaining the comfort and convenience of home. Whether it's for relaxation or entertainment, an outdoor living space with a pool provides the perfect setting to unwind and spend quality time with family and friends.



Add a pool and outdoor living space

Spring cleaning tips & tricks

Spring is a time of year when change is in the air. Trees are budding, plants are flowering, and homes laden with dark or heavy fabrics and clutter could use some lightening up.

Spring cleaning projects are popular this time of year as residents take inventory of their living spaces and aim to declutter, clean and increase efficiency. Some people find the prospect of getting organized overwhelming. Here are some tips that can help anyone master spring cleaning.

- **CREATE A PLAN.** Make a checklist and establish a cleaning plan of attack. Focus on areas that are not regularly cleaned, as they probably need a little attention.

- Assemble your cleaning kit. Spring cleaning can be slowed down considerably if you don't have all of your equipment at the ready. Items to have on hand

include an all-purpose cleaner, concentrated cleaner, microfiber cloths, paper towels, mop, vacuum, dusters, and a squeegee. Adjust your equipment based on the task at hand.

- **CURATE YOUR CLEANING PLAYLIST.** Create a playlist with songs that will get you moving and motivated to clean.

- **WORK FROM TOP TO BOTTOM.** Work efficiently by cleaning shelves, ceiling fans and other elevated items first, as dust and debris will trickle down and need to be cleaned next.

- **PURCHASE OR RENT A CARPET CLEANER.** According to the experts at Clean That Up, carpets help filter indoor air by trapping debris and allergens. By deep cleaning carpets, homeowners can improve the indoor air quality of their homes. Use a carpet cleaner on a warm, dry day so that win-

dows can be opened and cross breezes will help dry the damp rug.

- **CLEAN WINDOWS.** Wash windows inside and out and utilize their screens to help brighten indoors spaces.

- **DEEP CLEAN THE KITCHEN.** Clean out and disinfect the refrigerator by wiping it down with warm water and baking soda or a vinegar-and-water solution. While in the kitchen, set the oven to the self-clean function so it becomes cleaner as well.

Homeowners also can focus on cleaning curtains (including shower curtains), steam-cleaning upholstery, removing clutter from closets, cleaning out the dryer vent and duct tubing, wiping inside kitchen drawers, and vacuuming under beds and other furniture. Spring cleaning can bring the revitalizing nature of this beloved time of year into your home.



Spring cleaning includes a number of small home maintenance activities around the house, and it's a great opportunity to make sure everything is in good order. Keep that momentum going all year by setting a cleaning routine as the last step of your spring cleaning process. Basic cleaning tasks like dusting, sweeping, and decluttering should be added to the schedule weekly, and less frequent tasks like cleaning the refrigerator or wiping baseboards can be put on a rotating biweekly or monthly schedule. Starting spring cleaning in the primary bedroom gives you a relaxing place to crash after a long day of working on other spaces. It also motivates you to keep going with the rest of the home.



Refresh Your
Bedroom

OASIS

| Continued from page 5

and are more budget-friendly. Stock tank pools are popular among those who want minimal pool expenditure or have small spaces to work with. Stock tanks are metal vessels traditionally used as watering holes for livestock. They also can be “adult kiddie pools” when combined with some plumbing. Galvanized steel frames make them sturdy. With floats and other accessories, they can become the perfect oasis.

PROVIDE OUTDOOR ATMOSPHERE

Create a bespoke bistro vibe by using freestanding planters and posts along with hanging lights to make an intimate outdoor hangout spot at night. For those with permanent structures, like a deck or a gazebo, lights can be strung across the area or on railings or edging.

EXTEND THE LIVING SPACE

Decks and patios can help make outdoor entertaining areas more comfortable by eliminating the need to sit on the grass or gravel. Plus, they add another “room” to the home. When paired with weatherproof patio furniture, such as sofas, loungers and tables, a private seating area can be crafted and utilized for any number of entertaining desires.

HANG A HAMMOCK

Few things evoke feelings of relaxation better than a hammock. Fitted between two trees (or two posts if trees are sparse), a hammock is an ideal place to grab a nap or read a book. Additional oasis-inspired ideas include outdoor kitchens, letting up lanterns, cascading water features, and bird feeders to attract the sounds of nature.

SMALL DECORATING TIPS WITH BIG IMPACT

Kitchen

Replaced silver knobs with black and added some baskets on top of cabinets.



Added a plant in this black and white color themed bathroom and replaced the knobs and handles.

Bathroom



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