A Supplement To The
Athol Daily News
Home improvement projects for your fall ‘to-do’ list

Homeowners know that maintaining a home can be a year-round job. No home is immune to wear and tear, and homeowners who want to protect their real estate investments should try to stay two steps ahead to ensure their homes do not succumb to the elements or become outdated and unappealing to prospective buyers.

Fall has become a season that’s synonymous with home improvement, but homeowners need not wait until the leaves begin changing colors to start planning their next projects.

The following are a few items homeowners can add to their fall home improvement to-do lists.

**Roof inspection**

Less precipitation tends to fall during the warmer months than during the late fall and winter. As a result, homeowners may not be aware of leaky roofs until autumn has come and gone. But waiting until winter to inspect the roof can prove disastrous, as weather conditions will not be conducive to inspection and increased precipitation may result in potentially costly damage. Leaky roofs can be easily identified by looking for water stains on interior ceilings. Once you see a stain, you can climb onto the roof to identify the location of the leak and fix it before winter rains and snowfall turn the problem into something much larger. Inspect your ceilings for signs of leaking after a strong rainfall, and then address any leaks immediately.

**Gutter cleaning**

While some homeowners prefer to delay their gutter cleaning projects until late fall, those whose homes are surrounded by trees may need to schedule two such projects. Gutters clogged with leaves and other debris can cause serious roof damage, and that damage can extend all the way inside a home. In addition, clogged gutters make great nesting areas for insects or critters. Always stand on a ladder when cleaning gutters, wearing gloves to remove items by hand and dropping leaves and debris into a trash can below. Standing on the roof and leaning over gutters can cause serious roof damage. If the gutters are clear when you first examine them in early fall, you can wait until later in the season to give them a complete and thorough cleaning. Once you have finished clearing the gutters, you can use a hose to run water through them and the downspouts to confirm everything is functioning properly.

**Window and doorway inspection**

Before temperatures start dropping once again, homeowners will want to inspect their windows and doorways for leaks. Over time, cracks can develop around windows and doorways, and while such cracks are rarely noticeable when the weather outside is warm, they can be quite obvious and very costly if they remain unsealed come the start of winter. Cold air can enter a home through cracks around windows and doorways, and many homeowners who don’t suspect leaks may respond by turning up the thermostats in their homes. That can prove quite expensive over a full winter. Choose a windy autumn day to place a hand by windows and external doorways in your home to see if you can feel drafts. If you can, seal these cracks as soon as possible.

**Patio cleanup**

Patios are popular hangouts during spring and summer, and that can result in a lot of wear and tear. Once you store patio furniture for the winter, inspect your entire patio to determine if it needs any refurbishing. While certain patio projects may be best left for spring, you can still clean any stained areas around the grill and look for cracks in the sidewalk that need to be addressed.

Preparing for fall home improvement projects ahead of time can help homeowners complete projects in a timely manner and ensures they won’t be forced to brave the winter elements when refurbishing their homes.
Storage solutions for shop, home and job sites

Bringing order to a daily routine often requires creative solutions. Let Woodcraft lend some assistance with handy products for storage and transport that make organizing shops, kitchens, bathrooms, craft rooms, and even job sites that much simpler.

**Versatile Storage and Transport**

“One of the most versatile storage products in the Woodcraft line is the Tanos systainers® family of containers,” said Woodcraft product manager Jessica Douglas.

“The basic unit, the systainer T-LOC, comes in five sizes and eight colors and is stackable and lockable, with easy access to even the middle container through the T-LOC mechanism. Add the Caster SYS-Cart, and you can easily transport your stored tools and materials whenever necessary without the need to pack.”

Other systainer® options include the SYS-Combi II and III units that offer the T-LOC to other systainers, Tool-Box, Storage-Box and systainer® Classic Line to make the ultimate storage system.

**Racks & Shelves**

Keep long material — lumber, PVC/copper pipe, molding, millwork and similar items — handy but out of the way with the Lumber Rack Storage System. System includes all the uprights (24” and 55”) and brackets (10”, 14” and 18”) needed to efficiently store a variety of 8’ lengths of material.

The 18” bracket will support a 300-lb. load at the tip. Shorter brackets will support even more weight. Add a board and use the system for general storage.

Another option for expanding storage space is to build shelves for all the “empty” spaces along walls or in corners with Baltic Birch Plywood. This finished plywood comes in 34” x 12” x 60” pieces and features a clear durable topcoat on both sides that resists scratches and chips, making it perfect for building custom shelving in rooms, closets, garages and shops.

Customize your lumber, pipe and accessory storage with six shelf brackets included with the WoodRiver HD Shelf System. Moving them in 6” increments on the upright supports accommodates a wide range of long materials. Add a flat board to store boxes, bins, cans of finish and more.

Other ready-made racks include the Akro-Mils 24” Tool Storage Rack that holds up to 96 tools, and Monkey Bars Racks that are available for just about everything, from garden tools to coats to bikes to camping gear.

**Other Handy Storage Options**

- Heavy-Duty Casters mobilize shop machines and even furniture for easy storage and use. Castors have easy rolling, non-marking polyurethane wheels that will not “flat spot” from remaining stationary.
- A Grip Magnetic Bit Holder will keep 36 driver bits 1/4”-shank router bits or CNC bits organized.
- The WoodRiver Blade Keep 10” Red Silicone Saw Blade Cover protects saw blades.
- Wrap N Strap Adjustable Straps for Cords and Cables come in 5-Piece Sets. The adjustable cord organizer consists of a rubber strap (available in 6”, 7” and 9” sizes) and a plastic fastener for attachment. Straps will corral power and extension cords of all sizes, organize computer cables and bundle and carry everything from quarter round to water pipe, including dust collection hose.
- The Rotating Bur & Tool Holder, set on a lazy Susan mechanism, will keep all your small tools, burs and drill bits within easy reach.
- Woodcraft’s 30-Pocket Tool Roll and 21-Pocket Tool Bag provide portable storage and transport to keep tools or other similar items safe.
- Pick & Pluck 10mm Rigid and 25mm Smooth Foam, closed cell foam specially designed for Systainer® T-LOC 1-5 (I, II, III, IV & V), fits snugly into the base of the systainer. Each unit features a grid of perforated cubes, 15mm x 15mm, so you can customize the inside shape of just about anything you wish to store or transport.
- FastCap Kaizen Foam peels away in layers, creating a perfect fit for all your tools in drawers and on walls. The inexpensive, high performance, super tough foam is easy to peel in 1/8” layered sections. Great for shop, home, office, vertical applications and toolboxes.

To learn more about these and other products, visit your local Woodcraft store, call 800-535-4482 or visit www.woodcraft.com.

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Lawn and garden enthusiasts should prepare their lawns and gardens for the colder months ahead. Here are some tips for caring for your lawn during fall:

- Keep mowing, but adjust how you mow. It's important that homeowners continue to mow their lawns so long as grass is growing. But as fall transitions into winter, lower the blades so the grass is cut shorter while remaining mindful that no blade of grass should ever be trimmed by more than one-third. Lowering the blades will allow more sunlight to reach the grass in the months ahead.
- Remove leaves as they fall. Much like apple-picking and foliage, raking leaves is synonymous with fall. Some homeowners may wait to pick up a rake until all of the trees on their properties are bare. However, allowing fallen leaves to sit on the ground for extended periods of time can have an adverse effect on grass. Leaves left to sit on the lawn may ultimately suffocate the grass by forming an impenetrable wall that deprives the lawn of sunlight and oxygen. The result is dead grass and possibly even fungal disease. Leaves may not need to be raked every day, but homeowners should periodically rake and remove leaves from their grass, even if there are plenty left to fall still hanging on the trees.
- Repair bald spots. Summer exacts a toll on lawns in various ways, and even homeowners with green thumbs may end up with a lawn filled with bald spots come September. Autumn is a great time to repair these bald spots. Lawn repair mixes like Scotts® PatchMaster contain mulch, seed and fertilizer to repair bald spots, which can begin to recover in as little as seven days. Before applying such products, remove dead grass and loosen the top few inches of the soil of sunlight and oxygen. The result is dead grass and possibly even fungal disease. Leaves may not need to be raked every day, but homeowners should periodically rake and remove leaves from their grass, even if there are plenty left to fall still hanging on the trees.

Spring and summer may be the seasons most often associated with landscaping and lawn care, but tending to lawns and gardens is a year-round job. If lawn and garden responsibilities dip considerably in winter, then fall is the last significant chance before the new year that homeowners will have to address the landscaping around their homes.

Fall lawn care differs from spring and summer lawn care, even if the warm temperatures of summer linger into autumn. Homeowners who want their lawns to thrive year-round can take advantage of the welcoming weather of fall to address any existing or potential issues.

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Corral entryway clutter

The entryway to a home is the first thing guests experience when coming inside. It also can be the first place residents drop their belongings after long days at school or work. As a result, entryways can quickly be consumed by clutter. Taming such messes takes a mixture of ingenuity and planning.

Homeowners hoping to clear their entryways of clutter must first decide what they want to get out of the space. Will it simply be a decorative spot with photos and other home décor on display? Or is functionality the primary goal?

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

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

• Create a command center. Create a central location where items are neat, orderly and within reach. Use a bulletin board, dry-erase calendar or something that can house schedules and important notices. Hooks can hold keys, chargers and more.

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

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

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

• Go vertical. An easy way to keep things neater is to remove items from the floor and embrace vertical storage. Shoe racks, hooks for purses and a cabinet for coats may do the trick.

Clutter can accumulate in entryways. But some simple adjustments can quickly revamp the space to make it neater and much more functional.

Fall lawn care provides a great reason to spend some time in the yard before the arrival of winter.

POLISHES are oil-based to condition the wood in the process. Whenever making one’s own solution, test a small amount in an inconspicuous spot to make sure it will not damage the flooring.

Another way to prolong the life of flooring is to protect it from wear and tear. Removing shoes before walking indoors can help. Avoid high heels and athletic cleats, which can create divots in hardwood and some other types of flooring.

Place indoor and outdoor mats at the entrances of the home to catch any dirt that would be ground into the flooring. Furniture protectors will help prevent scratches from furniture feet while moving pieces around a room.

Remember to wipe up spills when they occur to prevent the formation of stains.

These steps can keep floors in top form and prevent premature aging or damage. Floors that are in especially bad shape may need professional restoration or replacement.

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Create greater storage for smaller items

Closet space is at a premium in many homes and apartments. Many older homes were not built to accommodate large wardrobes, while rental properties are often designed to maximize living space at the expense of storage.

Closets vary depending on the size of the home, but many tend to be a minimum of 24 inches deep so they can store garments without the clothes brushing against the walls.

Bedroom and hallway closets can be four feet in length or more. Walk-in closets are the largest options, but such spaces tend to only be available in modern homes or custom-built properties.

It is not always practical or possible to undergo renovations to create more closet space. Apart from moving to a new residence, homeowners or renters must evaluate the space they have and make some more efficient choices in how they utilize available areas.

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

Upgrade hangers and rods
Replace existing hangers with slimmer, more uniform alternatives that more easily fit into your closet. In addition, remove empty hangers, which are likely just taking up space.

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

Stack taller
Many closets are as tall as the ceilings of the rooms where they’re located. However, the upper area may go unused because if it is not easy to reach. Install shelving above the closet rod with items that won’t need to be accessed. Consider using two-tier closet rods or a two-tiered design. Grouping short items together also can free up valuable floor space.

Antimicrobial tiles help create sanitary spaces

Tiles can be a worthy addition to rooms with potential moisture issues or areas in a home that may routinely necessitate quick cleanup. Because they are not damaged by constant contact with water, tiled floors and walls are often found in bathrooms, kitchens, laundry rooms, and entryways.

Although tile is resilient, it is not impervious to the microorganisms that tend to proliferate in areas where moisture and humidity are commonplace. Microbes can grow rapidly in warm areas, especially if food is present. Mold or mildew issues also can become problematic seemingly over-night. But certain modifications can help homeowners alleviate the proliferation of microorganisms.

Various manufacturers have developed their own innovative tile that contributes to cleaner, and some...
Three potential trouble signs for driveways

Though they are often easy to overlook, driveways are durable parts of a home that can greatly impact a home’s curb appeal. Driveways endure quite a bit of wear and tear over their lifespans, and homeowners who have not given their driveways much thought may want to start looking for potential trouble signs that indicate a need for some driveway maintenance.

According to the online home improvement resource HomeAdvisor.com, the average cost of a driveway installation in 2015 was just under $3,700. Those costs are influenced by a host of factors, including the size of the driveway and the material it’s made of. Damaged driveways do not necessarily need to be replaced, as some may just need minor repairs. But homeowners who see any of the following trouble signs in their driveways may want to consult a professional contractor to determine what their next steps should be.

1. **Potholes**
   - Potholes might be most often associated with heavily trafficked roadways, but even driveways are susceptible to potholes. As the ground beneath the driveway expands and contracts, the pavement above that ground weakens and becomes more susceptible to damage. That damage may ultimately lead to large chunks of the driveway breaking down, creating holes as a result. Homeowners who live in areas that experience heavy snowfall may see their driveways develop potholes after they are shoveled or plowed. Potholes that are not fixed may damage vehicles that drive on the pavement, and potholes may even expand over time.

2. **Accumulation of water**
   - Puddles that form during a rainstorm may not be indicative of anything other than a rainy day. But water that pools or runs down the middle of the driveway may indicate drainage problems. Such problems may be the result of structural problems with the slope of the driveway, which can cause bigger issues down the road. When water is not absorbed into the ground or directed away from your home, it can then flow into the house, potentially making your garage or home susceptible to water damage.

3. **Cracks**
   - Cracking is one of the more noticeable issues that can plague driveways. Many driveways experience cracking as materials inevitably succumb to the elements. Driveway cracks may develop for various reasons, including poor initial installation. Tree roots that grow beneath the driveway surface may also contribute to cracking as the driveways ultimately succumb to the pressure created by the growing roots. Some cracks may prove less problematic than others, but homeowners should still speak with a contractor if they notice their driveway is starting to succumb to cracks.

   Driveways may not draw the attention of homeowners too often, but damaged driveways that go ignored may ultimately lead to very costly problems.

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**Tiles** From Page 6A

Tiles are often associated with heavy traffic, but driveways endure quite a bit of wear and tear over their lifespans. The application of certain treatments can make ceramic tiles even more impervious to water and moisture. Some tile may help reduce the spread of certain strains of bacteria, such as E. coli and staph, without requiring the application of potentially harsh chemical detergents. Others treatments may protect against yeast, molds and fungi that can cause stains and odors and result in the degradation of tile. Antimicrobial products inhibit the growth of microorganisms and suppress their reproduction. For example, tiles with Microban® protection employ an antimicrobial agent built into the product during the manufacturing process. When microbes touch the product surface, the agent penetrates the cell wall of the microorganism.

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**Did you know?**

Paving stones are used around the house in many different applications, including walkways and patios. Sometimes, however, paving stones are beyond homeowners’ budgets. Fortunately, there’s another alternative that may look just as attractive and save homeowners money. Stamped concrete, also called textured or imprinted concrete, is a design element that replicates the look of stone, brick, wood, slate, or other materials in concrete. Stamped concrete can be used for patios, sidewalks, driveways, and pool decks. Stamped concrete also may be incorporated into interior flooring designs. Homeowners can explore their options with regard to stamped concrete by speaking with a masonry expert or landscape architect.
Homeowners looking to renovate often see room for improvement in their kitchens and bathrooms.

The National Association of Home Builders’ Remodeling Market Index Survey, which measures conditions in the remodeling market, indicates that, in 2015, the two most common remodeling jobs were bathroom remodels (81 percent) and kitchen remodels (79 percent).

According to HGTV and Statistics Brain, a new kitchen remodel for a kitchen measuring 12 by 12 feet may cost homeowners anywhere from $17,000 to $37,000.

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

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

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

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

**Bottoms up**
People likely spend more time raiding the refrigerator than the freezer on any given day. Rather than having to bend down to seek out that favorite flavor of Greek yogurt, choose a model with the fridge on top and freezer on the bottom, especially if anyone in the household has mobility issues. When shopping for refrigerators, French-door style units may offer even more access, making it easy for everyone.

**Must-have kitchen remodel features**
Kitchen remodels are a sizable investment, and renovations can be customized to make the kitchen more hospitable for all in residence.

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

The term “smart home” refers to a residence that has appliances, HVAC, lighting, entertainment systems, security, and many more devices that communicate with one another. Such devices can be controlled remotely, according to SmartHomeUSA, an automation product retailer. Proponents of smart home technology say features can help people save money on utilities and conserve natural resources, all the while providing peace of mind to homeowners.

In 2016, 80 million smart home devices were delivered worldwide. That marks a 64 percent increase from 2015, according to the research data firm IHS Markit. The smart home trend is only expected to grow in com-
Create drama with bold paint colors

Painting is one of the easiest and least expensive ways to transform the look of a space. Paint colors can dramatically change the mood and the design of a home. And depending on a homeowner’s goals, paint can make a statement or blend into the background.

Many people are now looking to bold colors to make spaces stand out. But choosing a paint color can be challenging. Homeowners looking to update walls and complement decor may want to look at some of the more impactful colors that Pantone indicates will be popular for the 2017 season. Primrose Yellow, Lapis Blue, Flame, Pink Yarrow, and Greenery are some of the more eye-catching selections.

Once colors are selected, consider these guidelines for using bolder colors in room designs.

• Decide how big an impact you want to make. Are you looking for color overload or just a small focal point of vivid color? Remember, using bold color doesn’t mean every wall must be lathered in that hue. Instead, select one wall to serve as an accent point and use that spot as your bold color display. Otherwise, rely on bold colors to dress up otherwise mundane areas, such as the back wall of a cupboard or moldings and trim.

• Try bold in a small space. Many people are surprised at how well bold colors work in small spaces. Powder rooms can be an ideal spot to experiment with paint colors. Try deep colors that can make the area seem intimate and even exotic. Dark, bold hues can be toned down by different accents, such as neutral colored fixtures and towels.

• Go bold in the kitchen. Incorporate a splash of color in the kitchen without going overboard. Try an appliance or design fixture in a bright shade. Or paint the inside of the cabinets in your favorite color and install glass inserts in the cabinet doors so that everyone gets a peek of the color beyond. A neutral kitchen also can be brightened up with the use of silverware, dishes, pots and pans, and other kitchen items featured in bold hues.

• Stick to boldness on interchangeable items. Those who like to experiment with color may find that they like to switch out the colors now and again. Instead of having to repaint every few months, use decorative items in bright shades to make swapping out color that much easier. For example, replace area rugs, throw pillows and draperies. Paint over terra cotta flower pots when the mood strikes.

• Establish balance. Rely on neutral furniture, rugs, moldings and baseboards if you decide to take bold colors up a notch. This will help create a sense of balance in the room.

Painting is a fun way to experiment with color. Many homeowners are not hesitant to use bold shades of color when they learn the right techniques. And because paint is an inexpensive option for making over a room, homeowners who find they do not like a particular color can easily paint over it with a new color.

Using bold color doesn't mean every wall must be lathered in that hue. Instead, select one wall to serve as an accent point and use that spot as your bold color display.
Did you know that, according to the National Fire Protection Association, most people have a false sense of security regarding house fires, believing that they would have approximately six minutes to evacuate their home in the event of a fire?

In reality, smoke and fire spread rapidly and can overcome occupants in less than three minutes.

When a fire occurs, there’s no question that time is critical. The good news is there are several important steps you can take to maximize your escape time.

With the following measures in place, you’ll create critical protection for what matters most — your home and family.

1. Install smoke alarms. You should have one in every bedroom, outside each separate sleeping area, and on every level of the home, including the basement. For the best protection, make sure all smoke alarms are interconnected. When one sounds, they all sound.

2. Inspect and clean smoke alarms monthly. Replace batteries in spring and fall. To clean the alarm, open the cover and gently vacuum the interior.

3. Prepare and practice a fire escape plan. Draw a floor plan of your home, marking two ways out of every room — especially sleeping areas. Discuss the escape routes with every member of your household, and agree on a meeting place outside your home in case of emergency. Practice your escape plan at least twice a year.

4. Select building materials that provide passive fire protection. Passive fire protection is part of the core of the building and helps control fire by limiting its spread. One very effective form of passive fire protection is the installation of insulation. When adding or upgrading insulation, look for products made from naturally fire-resistant, inorganic materials. A favorite among builders, contractors and homeowners is a stone wool insulation called Roxul Safe ‘n’ Sound, which offers fire resistance up to 2,150°F. Its melting point is higher than the temperature of a typical house fire, which means it will stay in place longer to provide passive fire protection when every second counts, allowing more time for safe evacuation and for first responders to arrive.

— (MS)
Growing trends in today’s homes

Although the heydays of the real estate boom of the early 2000s have not quite returned, things look positive. In the United States, 1,226,000 new homes were built in 2016, according to data from Consumer Reports. That was the most since 2007.

Resales also have been more promising. The National Association of Realtors® says the median number of days a home was on the market in April 2017 reached a new low of 29 days. However, low supply levels did stanch existing home sales somewhat. By mid-2017, the market was a seller’s market, with more people in the market for homes than properties available. But sales during that time were still outpacing sales figures from a year prior. In fact, in May 2017, home sales in Canada increased to their highest level in more than five years, according to the Canadian MLS® Systems.

Low interest rates on mortgages and more confidence in the economy has driven many people to make improvements to their existing homes. As is typical, the things homeowners are looking for in 2017 have evolved from years past. The following are some trends that are helping to steer the real estate market further.

• **Smaller homes**: Home sizes in the United States steadily increased for decades, eventually leading to an average of 2,453 square feet in 2014, according to U.S. Census figures. However, Realtor.com reported in 2015 that new construction homes have already begun to shrink by 40 square feet. There seems to be a slight trend toward more modest homes as people consider affordability and maintenance on larger properties. The National Association of Home Builders states buyers are now looking for smaller, more livable homes with flexible floor plans, energy-efficient appliances and plenty of storage space.

• **Matte finishes**: Stainless steel and luster have been popular for years. However, the next big thing is matte finishes on faucets, appliances and even in countertops. These less flashy finishes are prized for their warmth and elegance. While some high-end models with matte finishes have been available for several years, even less expensive models are now available.

• **Smarter technology**: Many homeowners are embracing smart technology throughout their homes, but it’s not just lights that turn on with voice command or more efficient thermostats. Innovative technology includes toilets that can autonomously stay clean and sanitized, refrigerators equipped with cameras so homeowners can see the contents inside and indoor food recyclers that can turn food waste into fertilizer.

Staying abreast of the ever-changing trends in home improvement and real estate can help consumers make the best choices with regard to buying and building their homes.
How building permits protect homeowners

You are thinking of making a major renovation to your home. Perhaps it’s time to create that master bedroom suite you long have admired or install that wrap-around porch? What is the first thing that should be done before getting down to business?

The correct way to begin a home remodeling project is to obtain the necessary permits for the job. Many municipalities require individuals to obtain permits for a range of work on homes or other structures, such as office buildings. Permits are generally required for all new construction as well as specific modifications that will affect structural, plumbing, mechanical, and electrical systems. It’s important to check with the local building office prior to beginning work to see which permits you will need before the project can begin. Permits are necessary whether a homeowner is doing the work or hiring an outside contractor.

Due to the cost and time involved with securing permits, some homeowners skip this step so they can begin a project promptly. However, this can end up being a costly mistake. Permits might seem like a nuisance, but they actually protect homeowners in various ways.

Permits ensure safe workmanship

Permits provide a blueprint by which contractors and do-it-yourselfers must complete renovations. Because inspections will take place, there is no wiggle room. Shortcuts often translate into subpar work that may lead to malfunction and injury in the long run. Safeguarding against poor workmanship means homeowners can feel confident in the work being done.

Permits reduce the likelihood of costly mistakes

As inspectors go through their checklists, they may notice things that were done incorrectly and will offer advice about how to mend the problem before it becomes a larger headache. If left unchecked, an electrical error could lead to a fire and another dangerous situation. Repairs that are not structurally sound may pose problems or deteriorate more quickly than structures that are constructed correctly. Furthermore, catching improper technique early on eliminates having to tear down and redo work, which can be costly and time-consuming endeavor.

Permits protect against fines

Sometimes work goes as planned even for homeowners who did not obtain the necessary permits. However, years later, when other work needs to be done, inspectors may discover homeowners never secured proper permits and inspections years earlier, leading to fines.

Furthermore, if work is done without a permit and an accident occurs, any damages or injuries may not be covered by a homeowner’s insurance policy.

Permits are an important part of the home improvement process. Homeowners should not skirt the responsibility because the permit and inspection process is in place to protect the public and occupants.

Obtain the proper permits before beginning construction.

Creative uses for fallen leaves

Millions of leaves fall from tree boughs each fall. Homeowners and landscaping professionals will spend countless hours removing leaves from lawns and driveways so they can be collected and ultimately added to compost piles or removed by local governments. But leaves do not necessarily have to meet with the same fate each year. In fact, there are many creative ways to use leaves gathered from lawns and gardens.

- Scarecrow: Gather a decent pile of leaves and the makings of a scarecrow, which include hay, old clothing, string, and canvas. Use the leaves to help stuff the body of the scarecrow and make him a bit more plump.
- Vases: Fill an empty flower vase with different leaves that you have gathered. This makes for an engaging centerpiece when entertaining.
- Pressings: Press leaves between two pieces of paper to make a leaf silhouette. Some of the pigment will transfer to the paper, and these natural pieces of artwork can be displayed or shared.
- Laminate: Laminate leaves so they can be used as place cards when hosting guests for holiday feasts. Put these ideas to the test to make fallen leaves part of your unique home decor.

Prime time for bulb planting is now

The arrival of cooler weather marks a prime time to plant bulbs that will bloom come spring and summer. Bulbs should be planted as soon as the ground is cool, ideally when temperatures average between 40 and 50 F. Just be sure to plant bulbs at least six weeks before the ground freezes for optimal success. Always follow the bulb distributor’s guidelines for planting, including suggestions regarding spacing and soil depth. Remove any weeds and loosen the soil to get started. In addition, think about mixing in compost or other organic matter to enrich the soil if it lacks nutrients.

The DIY Network notes that loadbearing walls of a house, as well as supporting their own weight, carry some of the load of other parts of the building, such as the roof and floors. Non-loadbearing walls support only their own weight, and are not structural components of the house. Always assume that all exterior walls are loadbearing (even though, in the majority of cases, it is only the internal leaf of a cavity wall that is loadbearing).
**Five tips to make an older home more energy efficient**

While new homes are being built to be more energy efficient than ever before, thanks to a growing green building movement and increasingly strict building codes, the age of existing dwellings continues to present challenges. More than 40 percent of the housing stock in the United States was built before 1969 and simply wouldn’t stand up to today’s standards. Yet, much can be done to help homeowners improve their building envelope to reduce energy use and increase efficiency.

Improving your home’s energy efficiency can help save money, keep you more comfortable, reduce pollution, and prevent global warming. Try these five simple measures to maximize the energy efficiency of your home:

1. **Seal cracks and gaps around your home’s windows, doors, and vents.** These can be a considerable source of energy loss, allowing conditioned air to escape and unconditioned air to infiltrate your home, placing stress on your furnace and air conditioner in the process. An easy DIY solution is to caulk around windows, doors, and vents, and install or replace worn weather-stripping. An average home loses up to 30 percent of its energy through air leaks, so sealing your home is a worthwhile exercise.

2. **Top up or replace old insulation in your attic.** A poorly insulated attic is a primary source of energy loss. Also, over time, some types of insulation can settle and compact, allowing heat to escape through gaps. Experts recommend installing a dimensionally stable batt insulation like a Roxul product called Comfortbatt.

3. **Install basement headers.** Uninsulated basement headers are common, especially in older homes. They can act as a gateway for heated air to escape. Fixing the problem is fast and easy. Simply cut Comfortbatt stone wool insulation to fit the cavity and compress into place. Doing this throughout your basement will prevent heat loss and can potentially save hundreds of dollars each year.

4. **Switch to LED light bulbs.** Some LED light bulbs have a lifespan of up to 10 years, and are 80 to 90 percent more efficient than incandescent bulbs. They are generally more environmentally friendly than CFLs and safer, too, since they produce less heat. The return on investment is excellent, as LED bulbs often pay for themselves through energy savings within the first year.

5. **Consider a home energy audit.** This will help you identify and target specific problematic areas of energy loss. A professional home energy audit will also provide a list of recommended solutions to help you maximize your energy-efficiency strategy. — (MS)

**Tips for novice composters from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency**

The United States Environmental Protection Agency notes that food scraps and yard waste account for between 20 and 30 percent of what we throw away. But thanks to composting, such waste can be put to work rather than discarded.

Compost is organic material that helps plants grow when added to soil. Benefitting the planet in myriad ways, compost enriches the soil by suppressing plant diseases and pests. In addition, when homeowners compost, they inadvertently reduce methane emissions from landfills, thereby lowering their carbon footprints.

Homeowners who do not know how to compost can consider the following tips as they start compost piles on their properties:

- **Choose an accessible spot on your property.** When looking for a spot on your property for your compost bin, choose a location that’s easily accessible. The less accessible the bin is, the less likely you are to stick with composting over the long-term. The EPA also recommends placing a compost bin or pile in a dry, shady spot near a water source.

- **Add the appropriate materials.** Animal waste, cooked foods, diseased plants, and fresh weeds from perennial plants should not be added to a compost pile. The EPA recommends moistening dry materials as they’re added and adding brown and green materials as they are collected. Examples of green waste include grass clippings, weeds from annual plants and plant trimmings. Brown materials include dead leaves and shredded cardboard. Chop or shred large pieces before adding them to the pile.

- **Give the pile structure.** Layering materials can give compost piles better structure. The EPA suggests burying fruit and vegetable waste under 10 inches of compost material, including brown and green waste.

- **Turn and aerate the pile.** Using a garden fork, periodically turn the compost pile. This aerates the heap and provides oxygen that can accelerate the decomposition of the pile. Piles that are not periodically turned and aerated may grow malodorous, which can be unpleasant for homeowners who hope to add materials to their piles on a regular basis. In addition, without the heat produced by aeration, composting piles will break down very slowly.

- **Recognize when the material is ready.** The EPA notes that compost is ready to use when materials at the bottom of a pile are dark and rich in color. According to the EPA, this can take anywhere from two months to two years, so composters must be patient. More information about composting can be found at www.epa.gov.
Many homes do not have space for guest rooms, kids’ play areas and home theater lounges that are possible in homes with substantial square footage. But they may not be missing out at all.

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

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

Living room/guest room
Entertaining guests is easier when there’s a dedicated space where visitors can feel at home. When furnishing a living room, keep the guest room in mind. A sofa that opens up to a bed or a convertible sectional can be a comfortable place for guests to lay their heads. Side tables provide guests with places to store their belongings, and an empty storage chest can house bed linens or guests’ clothing.

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

Outdoor entertaining has never been more popular. As more and more homeowners turn their homes into their own personal oases, extending the party outdoors has become a bigger priority.

According to the American Home Furnishings Alliance’s 2015 Outdoor Furniture Trend Report, out-of-doors areas on a property are the favored venues for celebrations with family and friends.

While outdoor entertaining was once relegated to the warm weather seasons, advancements in technology have now made it more comfortable and enjoyable to entertain outdoors for much of the year. But hosts who want to extend the outdoor party after summer has come and gone should consider a few important entertaining tips.

• Start the party early. Summertime backyard barbecues and pool parties benefit from late-evening sunsets that illuminate patios and pool areas well into the evening. In addition, many hosts prefer to start such parties later in the day to avoid the sun during the early afternoon when it is at its most blazing.

However, start the party earlier in the day when hosting in fall or early winter. Temperatures can drop considerably once the sun begins to set, so starting early can save hosts and their guests from cold air.

• Heat things up. Summertime hosts might employ canopies to protect themselves and their guests from the heat, and it’s important for hosts to take similar steps when the weather is chillier.

The AHFA report found that 38 percent of homeowners intended to purchase fire pits for their outdoor entertaining areas, and such fire pits can keep guests warm as the sun goes down and the night air gets chilly.

Fire pits have become must-have items for outdoor entertaining areas, and hosts can surely find one that suits their needs.

• Change the menu. Grilling hot dogs and hamburgers might still work when entertaining outdoors in fall and winter, but hosts may want to stray from other summertime fare like watermelon or pasta salad. Embrace the cold weather by roasting some nuts and making s’mores over an open fire. In lieu of summertime beverages like lemonade and beer, serve hot chocolate or wine to keep guests warm.

• Ensure there is adequate lighting. Mother Nature won’t offer much lighting when you host a party outdoors in late fall and early winter, so make sure your patios and sidewalks are well lit.

Guests will want to see one another and what they’re eating, and well-lit walkways will reduce the risk that guests take a tumble or turn their ankles when walking to and from the house.

Outdoor entertaining need not end because summer has come and gone. But hosts must take a different approach to hosting when throwing outdoor gatherings in late fall and early winter.

Learn to expect the unexpected when renovating a home

According to projections released in 2015 by Harvard University’s Joint Center for Housing Studies, a growing number of people in the United States planned to renovate their homes in 2016. The report estimated that spending on remodeling and repairs in 2016 would climb 8.6 percent to $310 billion, a figure that is close to the peak reached in 2006.

While it is still too soon to tabulate all of the figures from 2016, a quick glance at the data indicates renovations have increased across the country. And one only need travel through communities to see a greater number of contractors and homeowners working on homes.

Tackling any renovation project is an exercise in patience. Renovations can impede on daily activities and cause a certain level of upheaval in homeowners’ lives. Homeowners planning renovations also may find that they must have some wiggle room when it comes to both their budgets and their expectations. Remodeling, particularly with regard to older homes, may unveil unforeseen issues that only arise in the face of the renovation.

So what can homeowners expect during a renovation? The following are a few issues that might arise during home improvement projects.

• Dirt and noise: Homeowners can count on dust, debris and noise throughout the renovation process. Dust appears when walls come down or go up, and construction teams typically erect temporary walls or tarps to contain the debris. Air filtering systems also can limit dust particles. Noise is unavoidable. If it becomes troublesome, arrange to be outside of the home when the bulk of the construction is taking place.

• Delays or schedule changes: Even the best contractors cannot control every aspect of the job. They rely on subcontractors and vendors to do portions of the work. Materials may not always arrive on time, or they may fall short of homeowners’ expectations.

This can push back the project schedule. Homeowners should hope for everything to be done on time, but it can be less stressful if homeowners anticipate delays and be a pleasant surprise if there are no delays.

Hidden issues: Contractors may uncover all sorts of issues that need to be addressed before a project can progress. Examples include the presence of asbestos (common in older homes), plumbing problems, incorrectly wired electrical systems, and leaks or moisture issues. These problems also can impact the cost of the project, so set aside some money in the budget for unforeseen expenses. Chances are you are going to need some extra money to handle a few surprises during the project.

It’s important to expect the unexpected when embarking on home renovations. Budgeting for hidden costs, expecting delays and coping with the upheaval to daily schedules are par for the remodeling course.

However, the end result is often well worth the time and effort.
With shorter days coming, make lights shine brighter

As days get shorter and natural light is less abundant, interior lighting becomes ever more important. Chandeliers, pendant lamps, recessed lighting, and tableside lamps are most effective when they are clean. HGTV experts say dirty lights can give off up to 20 percent less light than clean ones. Dirty fixtures also waste energy.

Lighting fixtures that are within reach are easy to tackle, but what about those fixtures that hang or have multiple crystals, globes or bulbs? These tips can cut down on the time needed to give lights a thorough cleaning.

• Stock up on the right cleaning supplies. Microfiber dusting clothes are smart choices because they can help trap grime and tend to be machine-washable and reusable. Extendable static-charged dusters are another handy item to have around, particularly for fixtures that are hard to reach.

• Dust regularly. Dusting regularly can prevent the buildup of grime that’s difficult to wash off. Try to dust light fixtures weekly or biweekly. The more frequent the fixtures are dusted, the less time each cleaning session will take. Soft cloths can remove the dust from most bulbs and exterior surfaces. Lamp shades may need more attention.

• Deep-clean at table level. Deep-cleaning at table level is more manageable. Remove any glass accents and set them out on a cushioned surface so they do not break. Soft cloths dampened with a vinegar solution should remove most of the dirt on chandelier crystals and the globes or outer glass coverings of other types of fixtures. Take a photo of the lighting fixture prior to cleaning so you’ll know how to replace removed parts correctly once everything is clean and dry.

If you cannot remove a fixture for cleaning, use a sturdy stool, a spray bottle with your cleaning mixture and a soft cloth to wipe away the dirt. Remember to place something absorbent beneath the light to catch any drips. Do not spray liquids directly onto light bulbs; otherwise, you can damage the bulb and the electrical components.

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

Chandeliers, pendant lamps, recessed lighting, and tableside lamps are most effective when they are clean. HGTV experts say dirty lights can give off up to 20 percent less light than clean ones.

Use a lamb’s-wool duster to attract dirt so it doesn’t leave a residue on the lampshade.

Did you know?

Lead is a naturally occurring element found in the earth’s crust that can be toxic to both humans and animals. Lead can be found in air, soil and water, and human exposure to lead can often be traced to human activities, such as the one-time use of leaded gasolines and previous use of lead-based paints in homes.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency notes that lead also may have been used in ceramics, pipes, plumbing materials, and even some cosmetics. Perhaps the most troubling aspect of lead is its potential effect on children. The still-developing brains and nervous systems of children are more sensitive to the harmful effects of lead because their bodies absorb more of it than the bodies of adults. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes that the use of lead in house paint, on products marketed to children, including toys, and in dishes or cookware was banned in the United States in 1978.

However, lead may still be found on toys imported from countries that have not yet banned lead. In addition, toys and collectibles that were produced prior to the ban in the United States may contain lead that can be harmful to children and adults. Parents who suspect their children have been exposed to lead can speak with their youngsters’ pediatricians, who may order blood tests to check for lead exposure.

Adding paving stones to a property may look like a daunting task but it is actually a simple way to add some extra appeal to the outside of a home.

Simplify installation of paving stones to enhance appeal

Paving stones can add beauty to walkways, driveways and backyard patios, providing that eye-catching finishing touch to a property while enhancing its curb appeal.

Even though the installation of pavers can be a labor-intensive process, with the right tools and tips, this can be a do-it-yourself project for homeowners with renovation experience. Consider these tricks and how-to tips courtesy of The Home Depot, DIY Network and Unilock.

Get your supplies

To begin a paver project, homeowners will need to stock up on some supplies. Depending on the project, the area, or the number of bags of sand, paver base and paving stones needed for the project depends on the size of the area. For example, according to the Home Depot, for 60 square feet, homeowners will need just 40 bags of paver sand, 12 x 12-inch paver stones, and 12 bags of paver leveling sand.

Spray or mark the area where the paving stones will be laid. Measure carefully so you can order exactly how many stones you will need. Have the materials delivered to reduce heavy lifting and trips to the store. Be sure to have all utility lines marked prior to excavation to avoid damage.

Prepare the base carefully

One of the most important aspects of paver installation is ensuring the base is stable and level. A plate compactor.

Measure the area

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Stones 18A
Upgrade your tool collection for autumn home improvement projects

When the last cookout is history and it’s time to move indoors and on to fall home and shop projects, Woodcraft suggests that you consider adding some new tools to your collection for easier home improvements and repairs.

Change the look of your decor with new hardware in every room, and try out some new jigs from Kreg — Drawer Slide, Concealed Hinge, and Cabinet Hardware Jigs, along with the Kreg Shelf Pin Jigs (1/4” and 5 mm).

“Kreg Hardware Installation Solutions make it easy to add the perfect final touch to your projects by allowing you to confidently install knobs and pulls, concealed door hinges, drawer slides, and adjustable shelves,” Woodcraft senior product development manager Peter Collins said. “These durable, adjustable jigs position your hardware and guide your drill so you get accurate, repeatable, professional-quality results every time. These jigs are an essential part of the Kreg ‘Kitchen Makeover Series’ that provides a helping-hand for those folks that aren’t building new but rather changing hardware and paint colors.”

Installation of hardware, shelving, cabinets, doors and windows and many building projects require a driver, like the Bosch PS31-2A 12V 10” Single Bevel Compound Miter Saw will do the job. It has a 15 amp, 5,000 RPM motor and tall sliding fences that support 41/2” of crown molding vertically nested.

Sanding is a necessary part of many home and shop projects. For hand-sanding, the Preppin Weapon is an ergonomically-shaped ABS plastic sanding block that fits comfortably in your hand to reduce fatigue. Use wet or dry and load as many as four sheets of sandpaper at one time, removing each one as the abrasive wears out. For power sanding, the Norton 5” Random Orbital Sander features a 2.0-amp motor that generates 12,500 orbits per minute and provides a 332” orbit that helps make quick work of most sanding projects. Ergonomic, rubber palm grip is comfortable and eliminates fatigue. An 8-hole, hook-and-loop pad face offers increased versatility in abrasive selection.

For cutting, grinding, sanding, carving and polishing, the Dremel 3000 Rotary Tool with 24 accessories is a good choice. The upgraded tool features an integrated wrench that allows the nose cap to function as a wrench to tighten accessories. A more efficient fan design and side vents for a cooler running tool make it comfortable for extended use.

Once a project reaches the finishing stage, the new HOMEIGHT Finish Max Fine Finish HVLP Sprayer is a good choice for application. The Finish Max will handle any solvent- or water-based product — latex paint, milk paint, chalk paint, furniture paint, stains and finishes. It is easy to set up, use and clean. Features include precision volume control and an adjustable spray pattern. HOMEIGHT Small Spray Shelter and Large Spray Shelter will help contain overspray and drift when using the sprayer.

Brighten your workspace with the lightweight, portable Keystone 1200 Lumen Work Light that can be set nearly anywhere the 6’ cord will reach. Light can pivot 360° around its axis.

Products for working safely and in a clean environment are always important. FastCap Safety Glasses offer UV protection and have clear anti-fog lenses to allow maximum light transmission. Six-mil-thick Powder Free Nitrile Gloves in three sizes provide inexpensive protection for your skin, keeping your hands free of stain and glue. Deluxe Neoprene Gloves in three sizes are designed for heavy-duty tasks such as stripping paint or finish. Lightweight, muff style SAS Hearing Protectors can be your first line of defense against hearing loss. They are rated of NRR 23.

Keeping a clean work area is safe and healthy. The 6.6-gallon Karcher WD5/P Wet/Dry Shop Vacuum has a powerful, 1800-watt, variable-speed motor. The onboard power outlet allows the vacuum to come on and go off automatically when the tool is turned on or off.

To learn more about these and other products, visit your local Woodcraft store, call (800) 535-4482 or visit www.woodcraft.com.
The benefits of hiring professional contractors for improvement projects

The DIY movement has inspired many homeowners to tackle home repair and remodeling projects on their own. DIY projects can be rewarding, and many homeowners who have embraced the DIY movement have discovered talents they never before knew they had.

But no matter how simple popular home renovation television shows make remodeling projects appear, homeowners should know that such undertakings are far more difficult than they appear on television. Homeowners who overestimate their abilities and the time they have to complete projects can cost themselves substantial amounts of money. In fact, there are a variety of reasons homeowners might want to work with professional contractors when tackling home improvement projects.

Experience

A trial and error approach can work with various projects and problems. But applying such an approach to home improvement projects is risky and potentially dangerous, not to mention costly. Experienced professional contractors with strong track records (seek recommendations from friends or neighbors) won’t have to go through trial and error and are therefore more likely than DIYers to complete a project on time and on budget.

Inspiration

One oft-overlooked benefit of working with professional contractors is the likelihood that they can draw up ideas for projects that homeowners might otherwise never have thought up on their own. Homeowners without specific ideas in mind can ask contractors to come up with various scenarios before committing to a particular one. Veteran contractors can draw on years of experience to create designs that DIYers might be incapable of coming up with and/or incapable of seeing through to completion.

Cost

Conventional wisdom suggests it’s less expensive to do something yourself than to hire someone else to do it for you, but that’s not necessarily true of home improvement projects. Labor costs typically account for a substantial amount of professionally contracted projects, but homeowners can cut those costs by volunteering to do some of the simpler tasks themselves. In addition, contractors often purchase materials at a much lower cost than individual homeowners because contractors buy in bulk. So while labor costs might be lower on DIY projects, the cost of materials can offset those savings.

Resale value

Many homeowners renovate their homes with eyes on improving the resale value of those homes. But if homeowners want to showcase a newly remodeled kitchen when selling their homes, they should be prepared for prospective buyers to ask who worked on the project. Fearing potential problems down the road, some buyers might be put off by homes that were remodeled by DIYers and not professional contractors.

Renovating a home on your own can be a rewarding project for homeowners. But it’s important that homeowners recognize the many benefits of working with professional contractors before making any final decisions with regard to who will tackle their next project.

Making the most of limited spaces

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

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

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

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

• Discard some items. Homeowners who are downsizing from large homes may need to part with some of their furniture to make their transition to smaller homes go more smoothly. For example, if they no longer need a bulky dresser, consider turning it into a storage unit or a bookshelf.

From Page 16A

Stones

Installation

Use edge restraints and a string line to keep the design straight. Do not hammer the pavers together. Paver sand will need to be swept over and settled between the stones to help set them in place.

It helps to read tutorials and watch videos on paving stone installation prior to beginning the project. With practice, the installation will go more smoothly.

Renovating a home on your own can be a rewarding project for homeowners. But it’s important that homeowners recognize the many benefits of working with professional contractors before making any final decisions with regard to who will tackle their next project.

Spaces Page 20A
Homeowners are discovering that architectural accents can go a long way toward improving both the look and value of their homes. When renovating a space, the term “millwork” may be mentioned by designers and contractors. While it might be a mystery to some, millwork can give rooms unique looks.

Millwork refers to items traditionally made from raw lumber in a sawmill. Examples of millwork include crown molding, base trims, door frames, window casings, chair rails, and paneling. Cabinets may also classify as millwork.

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

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

Homeowners looking for ways to enhance their properties can embrace millwork to achieve a luxury feel without a sizable investment.
Winter weather can be harsh, especially on lawns. Homeowners who spend much of spring and summer tending to their lawns may fear the impact that winter will have on their once-lush landscapes, making the fall a great time to fortify lawns against any harsh conditions to come. Homeowners must take grass type into consideration before taking steps to prepare their lawns for the winter. Some grasses are best fertilized in late-summer, while others should be fertilized in autumn. Cool-season grasses, including fescue and bluegrass, are best fertilized sometime between the months of September and November. Warm-season grasses, such as Bermuda or zoysia, should be fertilized between July and September. Once homeowners have gained a greater understanding of their lawns, they can begin exploring the various ways to prepare their lawns for whatever winter has in store.

Winter is rarely easy on lawns, but homeowners can take several steps to prepare their lawns for potentially harsh winter weather.

Spaces From Page 20A clutter. Surfaces such as dining tables, coffee tables and kitchen counters tend to accumulate clutter. While such clutter might not feel overwhelming in a large home, in small spaces crowded surfaces can make it feel as though the walls are closing in. Make an effort to keep surfaces free of clutter, resolving to discard or put items away each night before going to bed. Many people wish they could live in homes without as much square footage as their existing homes. For those who have downsized, there are many ways to make the most of less living space.