

2024

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# Fall 2024 HOME & GARDEN Guide

## How to make a home feel more cozy

The meaning of the term “cozy” varies as it pertains to home decor. For some, cozy may mean intimate spaces with lots of quilts and throws. For others, cozy could indicate bright and airy spaces enhanced by plenty of fresh foliage.

Regardless of how they define cozy, homeowners typically want their homes to be inviting and comfortable. With that in mind, the following are some ways to impart a cozy vibe to any living space.

- **Make use of a fireplace.** Flames lapping wood (or faux wood in the event of gas-powered fire-places) can put anyone in a tranquil state of mind. Fireplaces add instant ambiance and make great places for people to congregate and engage in conversation. During warmer months when the fire isn't blazing, decorative candles can be lit to mimic the same feel.

- **Cozy furniture arrangements.** Move seating closer together or near the fireplace to create a more intimate, gathering-friendly space.

- **Add texture in the design.** Texture can be anything from a raised pattern on wallpaper to a knotty area rug to a mosaic piece of artwork. A home with texture tends to create cozier impressions than one with all sleek and smooth surfaces.

- **Enjoy a soft rug.** Although many design experts say hardwood floors or laminate options are easier for allergies and keeping a home clean, a soft rug underfoot can be welcoming. Rather than wall-to-wall carpeting, place area rugs in spots that can use some cozying up, such as beneath beds and even under the dining table.

- **Light candles.** The warm, flickering light of candles adds cozy vibes in spades. According to The Spruce and Paula Boston, a visual merchandiser for Festive Lights, candles can be used through-out a home to create instant atmosphere. Exercise caution with candles and fully extinguish them before retiring for the evening.

- **Update bedding for the season.** Crisp and light cotton and linen are cozy materials when the weather is warm. But when the temperature starts to dip, flannel or jersey bedding makes a bed that much more inviting.

- **Curtains and window treatments.** Switch to thicker curtains or drapes to add both warmth and insulation, helping to keep out the cold air.



Choose curtains in warm tones like burgundy, mustard, or dark green to create a more fall or winter feel.

- **Invest in lots of pillows.** Pillows can instantly make a spot more cozy, whether it's the living room sofa or an outdoor lounging nook. Look for materials that are durable for the space in which they're being used. Use warm, inviting colors and soft fabrics like velvet or faux fur.

- **Think about warm lighting.** The transition from incandescent light bulbs to halogen and LED is beneficial from an environmental standpoint. However, LEDs illuminate with a more stark, blue light that can seem clinical in home spaces. Look for bulbs where the “temperature” can

be customized. The more the color spectrum leans toward warm light, the more cozy a space will feel. This can be enhanced by putting some lights on dimmer switches, and toning down the brightness as needed.

- **Seasonal décor.** Hang a wreath made from pinecones, dried leaves, or evergreen branches on doors or above mantels. You can also incorporate natural elements like branches, pinecones, acorns, and dried flowers into centerpieces, or use them to fill bowls and baskets.

- **Seasonal scents.** Use diffusers and scented oils like pumpkin spice, cinnamon, apple cider, or woody aromas to fill the air with the essence of fall and winter. Or boil a pot of water with cinnamon sticks, orange slices, and cloves to create a natural, cozy fragrance throughout the house.

- **Install a bookshelf.** Even for those who are strict devotees of e-readers, a shelf full of actual books interspersed with some well-placed knickknacks can make a room feel more cozy. Books add texture, the feel of hallowed halls and libraries, and visual appeal.

Making a home more cozy doesn't have to be complicated. A few easy modifications can improve interior spaces for the seasons. <

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## The latest color trends in homes for 2024

As 2024 unfolds, the world of interior design is seeing a shift toward colors that evoke comfort, serenity, and a connection with nature. Homeowners are increasingly looking for palettes that not only bring aesthetic beauty but also offer a calming environment, creating personal sanctuaries from the bustling world outside. Here are the latest color trends dominating homes this year.

### 1. Earthy neutrals and warm tones

Earthy, muted tones such as terracotta, soft browns, and warm taupe are making a huge comeback. These colors help ground a space, providing warmth and a sense of relaxation. Paired with natural materials like wood and stone, these hues can make any room feel both modern and timeless. Beige is no longer seen as bland, but rather as a versatile backdrop that enhances natural textures and accents.

### 2. Sage green and botanical Hues

Green, particularly in soft shades like sage, is dominating the color palette in 2024. These botanical hues create a connection with nature, making rooms feel more tranquil and peaceful. Sage green, in particular, works beautifully in living rooms, bedrooms, and even kitchens, offering a serene contrast to the more vibrant colors we see in accents. Forest green and olive tones are also making an appearance, espe-



cially in furniture and statement walls, bringing an organic yet refined touch.

### 3. Moody blues

While blue has always been a popular choice, the trend is shifting toward darker, more saturated blues like navy, cobalt, and indigo. These moody hues offer depth and sophistication, making them perfect for creating cozy spaces like dens, studies, or even bedrooms. When paired with metallic accents like gold or brass, dark blues evoke a sense of luxury and elegance.

### 4. Soft pinks and blush tones

Blush pinks continue to be popular in 2024 but in a more subtle and sophisticated way. Soft pink tones such as dusty rose and peach are being used as neutral alternatives, offering a soft

warmth that works well in any room. These shades are perfect for adding a delicate, romantic vibe without over-

whelming the space.

### 5. Bold accent colors

While neutral and muted tones dominate overall color schemes, bold accent colors are becoming more prominent in home decor. Deep oranges, rich reds, and even jewel tones like emerald and amethyst are being used sparingly to add pops of color to otherwise minimalist spaces. This trend allows homeowners to express their personality without overwhelming the tranquility of their surroundings.

In 2024, color trends focus on balancing calm, nature-inspired palettes with vibrant accents, ensuring a harmonious yet dynamic atmosphere in the home. <

## DID YOU KNOW?

The colors you choose for a room can significantly impact your mood and perception of space!

For example, warm tones like yellows, oranges, and reds tend to make a room feel more cozy and intimate, perfect for living rooms or bedrooms.

On the other hand, cool colors like blues and greens can evoke a sense of calm and tranquility, making them ideal for bathrooms or bedrooms where relaxation is key.

Additionally, lighter shades can make a room feel larger and more open, while darker tones create a more dramatic and intimate atmosphere.

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# Fall 2024 HOME & GARDEN Guide

## A guide to choosing the perfect flooring for each room

When it comes to home improvement, flooring is a critical decision that affects both the aesthetic appeal and functionality of your space. Choosing the right flooring depends on various factors, including the room's purpose, traffic levels, and your personal style preferences. Here's a guide to help you make informed choices for each room of your home.

**Living room:** The living room is often the heart of the home, a space where family and friends gather. The flooring here needs to be durable yet comfortable. Hardwood flooring is

a popular choice due to its timeless elegance and ability to suit various décor styles. Available in oak, maple, and walnut, hardwood adds warmth and value to your home. However, for households with kids or pets, consider a durable, easier-to-maintain option like laminate flooring, which mimics the look of wood at a lower price and can withstand more wear and tear.

For those seeking maximum comfort, especially in cooler climates, carpeting is another option. It provides warmth and a soft underfoot feel, perfect for cozy movie nights. Neu-

tral-colored, stain-resistant carpets are ideal for family-friendly living rooms.

**Kitchen:** Kitchens are high-traffic areas prone to spills and stains, so flooring here needs to be tough and easy to clean. Tile flooring, particularly ceramic or porcelain, is a top choice. It's water-resistant, durable, and available in a range of styles, from modern to traditional. You can even find tiles that mimic natural stone or wood for a chic aesthetic.

If tile feels too cold or hard, consider vinyl flooring, which has advanced significantly in recent years. Luxury vinyl planks or tiles offer a cushioned surface and come in designs that replicate wood, stone, or tile. Vinyl is also more affordable and softer underfoot, making it a practical option for those who spend long hours in the kitchen.

**Bathroom:** In bathrooms, water resistance is paramount. Ceramic or porcelain tile remains the go-to option due to its waterproof properties and ease of cleaning. These tiles come in a wide variety of patterns and colors, allowing you to create a spa-like retreat or a sleek, modern bathroom.

For a more contemporary feel, luxury vinyl is another excellent choice. It's waterproof, affordable, and available in a wide range of styles that can emulate wood or stone. If you're look-

ing to add a touch of luxury, consider heated flooring beneath your tiles for a warm, comforting experience during the colder months.

**Bedroom:** The bedroom is a personal sanctuary, where comfort should take priority. Carpeting is a popular choice, offering softness underfoot and sound insulation, which makes the room feel peaceful and cozy. Plush or cut-pile carpets are ideal for creating a warm, inviting atmosphere.

If you prefer hard flooring, hardwood or engineered wood can create a serene, sophisticated space. Adding area rugs can soften the look and feel, allowing for flexibility in design while keeping the space cozy.

**Hallways and entryways:**

Hallways and entryways see the most foot traffic, so durability and ease of cleaning are essential. Tile, vinyl, or laminate are often favored for these areas due to their resilience. Consider adding a runner or rug in hallways to soften the space and add color without sacrificing practicality.

Choosing the right flooring for each room involves balancing aesthetics, comfort, and functionality. With an abundance of stylish and durable flooring materials available, you can create beautiful, functional spaces tailored to each room's specific needs. <




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## Simple ideas to enhance the beauty of your outdoors

As the vibrant colors of summer fade and the crisp air of autumn arrives, many homeowners look for creative ways to update their home's décor to reflect the beauty of fall. A simple and charming way to embrace the season is by incorporating fall-themed flags, banners, mailbox covers, and address signs. These decorative items can instantly elevate the curb appeal of your home and create a welcoming, seasonal atmosphere.

**Flags and banners:** Flags and banners are perfect for adding a touch of personality to your home's exterior.

A fall-themed garden flag featuring pumpkins, autumn leaves, or festive sayings can be placed near walkways, driveways, or porches to create a warm, inviting look. Larger house flags or porch banners can bring color and charm to your front entrance, making it a focal point for seasonal décor. From rustic harvest scenes to



playful Halloween themes, there's a flag to match any style.

**Mailbox covers:** Mailbox covers are an often-overlooked detail that can make a big impact on your home's overall appearance. A fall-themed mailbox cover, featuring classic motifs like pumpkins, scarecrows, or colorful leaves, adds a subtle yet charming

touch to your outdoor space. Easy to install, these covers are a quick and affordable way to bring seasonal cheer to your home. Your local shop likely carries a range of designs to suit both traditional and modern tastes.

**Address signs:** Customizing your home's address sign for fall is another way to celebrate the season. Whether you opt for a decorative plaque or a more understated design, adding autumnal colors or themed accents like acorns and gourds can tie your fall décor together.

**Windssocks and spinners:** To bring some whimsy and color think about

adding a windsock, spinner or hanging hot air balloon off the deck or tree limb. This is especially appreciated in the gray and white of winter.

Flags and banners are an easy and inexpensive way to add the finishing touch to fall cleanup. Think of it as a reward for all the raking and work for winter preparation. Remember these all make great gifts as well.

Visit your local shop, *Maine Flag & Banner*, today to find all these things and more. You will have a friendly, fun experience and they can help you find all the right accents to help you celebrate the seasons in style. <

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# Fall 2024 HOME & GARDEN Guide

## What to do if you see cracks in your foundation

Discovering cracks in your home's foundation can be alarming. These cracks might be small and barely noticeable, but they can also signal potentially serious structural issues. As winter approaches, addressing these cracks becomes even more urgent. The cold weather can exacerbate foundation problems due to freezing and thawing cycles, which cause soil movement and place additional stress on your home's structure. Here's what you should do if you spot cracks in your foundation before winter sets in.

**1. Inspect and assess the cracks:**

The first step is to closely inspect the cracks to determine their size and type. There are typically two types of cracks: vertical and horizontal.

Vertical cracks, which run up and down, are often less concerning and can result from normal settling of the house over time. These are usually smaller and easier to manage.

Horizontal cracks, however, are more serious. These often indicate pressure against the foundation walls, potentially from expanding soil or excessive moisture buildup. Horizontal cracks can compromise the structural

integrity of your home.

Additionally, cracks that are wider than a quarter of an inch, zigzag in pattern, or seem to be growing quickly should be treated with caution. If you're unsure, it's best to consult a professional for an accurate assessment.

**2. Monitor for signs of worsening:**

If the cracks appear to be minor, you should still monitor them for changes. Mark the edges of the cracks with a pencil and measure their width. Take note of any shifting or widening over time. If you observe rapid growth, this could be a sign of deeper issues that require immediate attention.

Winter's freeze-thaw cycles can cause cracks to expand. Water from snow or rain can seep into the cracks, and when it freezes, it will expand, potentially widening the gaps and leading to more significant damage. This is why monitoring before winter hits is crucial.

**3. Seal the cracks:**

For small vertical cracks, you can take preventative action by sealing them before winter. Use a high-quality concrete crack filler or sealant to prevent moisture from entering the cracks and freezing. This is a temporary fix that can help protect your foundation through the winter months, reducing the risk of further damage. However, sealing is not a

long-term solution for more serious cracks or structural issues.

**4. Address water drainage:** One of the primary causes of foundation damage is poor water drainage around your home. Ensure your gutters are clear of debris, and downspouts direct water at least 5-10 feet away from your foundation. Consider adding soil around your foundation to improve the slope, ensuring water flows away rather than pooling near the base of your home.

**5. Call a professional:** If you notice significant cracks or signs of shifting, it's essential to call a foundation specialist or structural engineer. They can assess the damage and recommend the best course of action, which might include reinforcing the foundation or making structural repairs.

Addressing foundation cracks before winter is crucial for preventing further damage. By inspecting the cracks, monitoring changes, sealing small gaps, improving drainage, and consulting a professional for major issues, you can safeguard your home's foundation against the damaging effects of winter weather. Taking these proactive steps now can save you from costly repairs down the line and ensure your home remains safe and secure during the colder months. <

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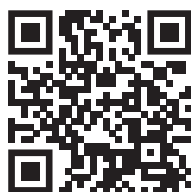
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# Fall 2024 HOME & GARDEN Guide

## Why fall is an excellent time to plant perennials and shrubs

Autumn is an excellent time to plant shrubs and perennials in Maine! The cooler temperatures and increased rainfall create favorable conditions for new plantings to establish strong root systems before winter arrives. Here are a few reasons why fall is ideal for planting shrubs and perennials:

**Cooler temperatures:** The cooler fall weather in Maine reduces stress on new plants. Unlike the hot summer months, the milder temperatures in fall allow shrubs and perennials to focus on root development rather than battling extreme heat. This helps them

establish a strong foundation before the ground freezes.

**More consistent moisture:** Autumn tends to bring more rainfall, which provides consistent moisture levels for new plantings. This natural watering helps shrubs and perennials settle in and grow strong roots. The soil is still warm enough to encourage root growth, while the cooler air prevents plants from drying out too quickly.

**Less competition from weeds:** In the fall, weed growth slows down, meaning newly planted shrubs and

perennials won't have as much competition for water and nutrients. This allows them to establish themselves more easily in your garden.

**Prepares plants for spring growth:**

When you plant in the fall, shrubs and perennials have several months to acclimate to their new location before winter. During this time, they develop stronger root systems. Come spring, these plants will be ready to grow vigorously with the warming temperatures, often outperforming plants installed in the spring.

**Fall sales:** Another great advantage of planting shrubs and perennials in the fall is that many garden centers offer significant discounts during this time of year. As the growing season winds down, nurseries often hold end-of-season sales to clear out inventory, allowing you to purchase healthy plants at a fraction of the usual cost. These discounts provide an opportunity to expand your garden or experiment with new varieties without



breaking the bank. Shopping during fall sales not only saves money but also gives you access to a wider selection of mature plants that are ready to thrive in your garden before winter arrives.

**Tips for fall planting:**

• **Plant early:** In Maine, it's best to plant shrubs and perennials by mid-fall (late September to early October) to give them enough time to establish roots before the ground freezes.

• **Mulch well:** Apply a layer of mulch around the base of newly planted shrubs and perennials to help insulate the soil and retain moisture as winter approaches.

• **Water regularly:** Keep watering your new plants until the ground freezes, especially if there's a dry spell, to ensure they stay hydrated during root establishment.

Overall, planting in the fall helps ensure your shrubs and perennials are well-prepared for a successful growing season when spring arrives. <

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## Propane space heater: the perfect backup plan

Heat pumps are becoming a popular heating choice, especially now that there are newly designed heat pumps that work in the colder climates like ours. However, just as we all need some backup time to time, so does your heat pump.

Propane space heat is the perfect backup for your heat pump system. Propane is a reliable, clean energy source that will be there when you need it. You don't need a whole home heating system as a backup source such as a boiler or furnace, as there are less intrusive space heaters that are easy to install, have a small footprint, and in many cases, add ambiance as well as cozy, instant heat.

When you think about space heating, think about the one room that you

use that you just need to take the edge off on a cool spring or fall morning. Instead of firing up the heat pump, simply use your remote to turn on your free-standing stove, or fireplace unit. In many cases, if you have multiple Heat pump heads you may not want to switch them all to "heat" if they are in "cool" mode, so having propane space heaters are a great alternative for a quick warm up when you need it.

Maine has also been seeing more power outages with our changing climate. When the power goes out, you can rely on propane space heaters to keep you warm and ensure that no



pipes will freeze. Most propane space heaters operate when the power is out and have proven to be valuable for many of our customers that do not have a generator to operate their Heat

Pumps when the power fails. Space heaters can also add gallons to your annual usage which can lower your price of propane. The more gallons you use the cheaper your price is. It could also eliminate tank usage fees if you only use propane for your generator.

To sum things up, a space heater is a great idea for:

- when the power is out.
- backup heat for your heat pump System.
- small footprint, easy installation, and quick heat.
- your garage, basement, sunroom, man cave, she shed or cabin.

*This article was brought to you by Waltz and Sons Propane. For more articles visit [www.waltzandsons.com/blog](http://www.waltzandsons.com/blog)*

## Five key facts about using propane in homes

**1. Versatile energy source:** Propane is incredibly versatile and can power a wide range of household appliances, including heating systems, water heaters, stoves, dryers, and outdoor grills. This makes it a convenient option for homeowners who want a single fuel source for multiple uses.

**2. Energy efficient:** Propane is known for its high energy efficiency. It burns hotter and more efficiently than

many other fuels, such as electricity or natural gas, leading to lower energy costs. Propane-powered appliances often heat and operate more quickly, which can reduce overall energy consumption.

**3. Environmentally friendly:** Compared to other fossil fuels, propane is considered a cleaner-burning fuel, emitting fewer greenhouse gases and pollutants like carbon monoxide.

It's non-toxic and doesn't contaminate water or soil, making it a more environmentally friendly choice for heating and energy.

**4. Reliable backup power:** Propane is a popular option for backup generators due to its reliability. In regions prone to power outages, a propane generator can keep critical systems like heating, refrigeration, and lighting running during blackouts. Unlike

electricity, propane is stored on-site in a tank, so it's not affected by power grid issues.

**5. Long storage life:** Propane has an indefinite shelf life, meaning it doesn't degrade over time like gasoline or diesel. Homeowners with propane storage tanks can stock up without worrying about fuel going bad, making it a dependable choice for long-term use, especially in remote areas. <

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# Fall 2024 HOME & GARDEN Guide

## The importance of yearly cleanings for your furnace

As colder months approach, ensuring that your home's heating systems are operating efficiently and safely is essential. Whether you rely on a furnace, boiler, or heat pump, scheduling an annual cleaning and maintenance check is one of the most effective ways to extend the life of your system, improve energy efficiency, and prevent costly breakdowns. Here's why regular maintenance is so important.

**Improved energy efficiency:** One of the primary benefits of having your furnace, boiler, or heat pump cleaned annually is improved energy efficiency. Over time, dust, dirt, and other debris can accumulate inside your heating system, causing it to work harder to maintain the desired temperature. This buildup forces the system to consume more energy, driving up your heating costs.

For example, a heat pump's outdoor unit can accumulate dirt, leaves, and other debris, which can reduce airflow and strain the system. A clean heat pump will transfer heat more efficiently, whether it's heating your home in the winter or cooling it in the summer. Similarly, furnaces and boilers with clean filters and burners will operate more efficiently, using less fuel to provide the same level of warmth.

**Prevent costly breakdowns:** An annual inspection and cleaning can also help you avoid unexpected and expensive breakdowns. During a professional cleaning, a technician will inspect various components of your heating system, such as the burners, filters, coils, and motors. They'll identify any worn parts, leaks, or potential issues that could lead to a malfunction.

For example, a dirty furnace filter or clogged boiler vent could cause your system to overheat or shut down unexpectedly. By catching these problems early, you can replace faulty parts before they lead to a total system failure in the middle of winter, saving you from costly emergency repairs and the inconvenience of being without heat.

**Enhanced safety:** Furnaces, boilers, and heat pumps rely on complex systems to safely heat your home. A malfunctioning furnace or boiler could pose serious safety risks, including gas leaks or carbon monoxide exposure. A clogged burner or flue, for instance, can prevent proper ventilation, leading to the accumulation of dangerous gases in your home.

An annual cleaning helps ensure that all safety mechanisms are functioning properly. Technicians will check for cracks, leaks, or any components that may compromise the safety

of your heating system. For systems that use gas or oil, this is especially important to prevent dangerous leaks or malfunctions.

**Prolonged system life:** Your heating system is a significant investment, and like any other mechanical equipment, it needs regular upkeep to last as long as possible. Annual cleanings can extend the lifespan of your furnace, boiler, or heat pump by reducing wear and tear on components and ensuring the system runs smoothly.

Dirt buildup, clogged filters, or malfunctioning parts force the system

to work harder, which leads to faster degradation. Regular maintenance helps keep your system in top condition, reducing the likelihood of premature replacement.

**Better air quality:** Clean heating systems contribute to improved indoor air quality. Dust, dirt, and allergens can circulate through your home if filters are dirty or clogged. By cleaning your system regularly, you help ensure that it's not blowing dust or contaminants into the air, which is especially important for households with allergies or respiratory issues. <



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# Fall 2024 HOME & GARDEN Guide

## The best cleaning tips for a sparkling home

Keeping your home clean doesn't have to be an overwhelming chore. With the right strategies, you can clean more efficiently and effectively, saving time while achieving better results.

**Start with decluttering:** Before you begin cleaning, clear away the clutter. Go room by room, putting away items that don't belong or that are out of place. Decluttering helps you clean more efficiently by reducing obstacles and giving you clear surfaces to work with. It also instantly makes your space look neater.

**Work top to bottom:** When cleaning any room, always start from the top and work your way down. Begin with dusting ceiling fans, light fixtures, and high shelves, then gradually move to lower surfaces like countertops, furniture, and floors. This way, any dust or debris that falls will be cleaned as you go.

**Use the right tools:** Investing in the right cleaning tools and products makes a significant difference. For dusting, microfiber cloths are ideal because they trap dust instead of spreading it around. When cleaning floors, opt for a mop that can handle different surfaces, and be sure to use cleaning

solutions specifically designed for the type of flooring you have. This is often a reason homeowners hire a professional cleaner instead of investing in the right tools and products for a thorough job.

**Tackle one room at a time:** To stay organized and motivated, focus on cleaning one room at a time. This approach allows you to fully complete each space and provides a sense of accomplishment. It also prevents you from jumping around and distractions.

**5. Clean as you go:** One of the best ways to keep your home clean is by practicing the "clean as you go" method. After cooking, wipe down countertops and wash dishes immediately. Pick up items as you move from room to room. By doing small, frequent cleanups, you'll prevent messes from building up, making deep cleaning days much easier.

**Use natural cleaners:** For a healthier home, consider using natural cleaning products like vinegar, baking soda, and lemon. They're effective for a wide variety of tasks, from deodorizing to cutting through grease, and are safer for both your family and the environment. <

### DID YOU KNOW?

Some "cobwebs" may not actually be spider webs but rather accumulations of dust, soot, or dirt from sources like fireplaces, heating vents, or other areas where particles are airborne. These can sometimes resemble cobwebs, especially when fine dust collects in the corners of rooms, along baseboards, or on ceilings, mimicking the appearance of a spider's web.

In homes with active fireplaces or wood stoves, soot and ash particles can become airborne and settle in these undisturbed areas, creating stringy, web-like formations. Similarly, dust from HVAC systems, vents, and fans can gather in the same manner. This type of buildup is often mistaken for cobwebs due to its similar appearance but lacks the fine, structured quality of actual spider webs.

#### HERE'S HOW YOU CAN DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN ACTUAL COBWEBS AND DUST ACCUMULATIONS:

- **Texture:** Real cobwebs are sticky and have a more defined, silk-like structure. Dust accumulations, on the other hand, tend to be more fragile, loosely hanging, and less cohesive when touched.
- **Location:** Cobwebs are typically found in areas where spiders might spin webs to catch prey, such as corners, ceilings, and windows. Dust particles and soot, however, tend to accumulate near sources of airflow, such as vents, or in areas where dirt might naturally settle, like above fireplaces or near fans.
- **Dust Buildup:** If the material you see appears more gray, fuzzy, or layered with dust, it's more likely to be dirt rather than an abandoned spider web.

If you notice a lot of these dust-like formations in your home, it may be a sign that your home needs better dusting and airflow management, especially near fireplaces, HVAC systems, and vents. Cleaning and maintaining these areas regularly can help prevent buildup, and using air filters can minimize the spread of airborne particles.

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# Fall 2024 HOME & GARDEN Guide

## Do's and don'ts of bathroom renovations

Bathroom renovations are significant undertakings that cost homeowners sizable amounts of money. According to Remodeling magazine's "2024 Cost vs. Value Report," the average cost of a mid-range bathroom remodel across the United States in 2024 is around \$25,000. Homeowners who want an upscale remodel can expect to spend around \$80,000 in 2024.

Such a large financial commitment underscores the significance that homeowners get their bathroom remodels right. Mistakes will only increase the already substantial financial commitment homeowners must make, so it can help to keep these dos and don'ts in mind.

DO work with a certified, reliable contractor. YouTube tutorials can give a false impression of renovation projects in relation to their degree of difficulty. Renovations as significant as bathroom remodeling projects require the skills and experience of professionals.

DON'T ignore return on investment (ROI). There's no denying certain projects provide a better return on investment than others. The upscale bathroom remodel with a nearly \$80,000 price tag noted above may prove awe-inspiring, but homeowners looking to get as much of their money back

at resale should know that such a renovation recovers 45 percent of homeowners' initial investment. By contrast, the mid-range bathroom remodel yields a 74 percent return according to Remodeling magazine. Though ROI may not be the deciding factor for every homeowner, it definitely merits consideration when planning a project.

DO pay attention to the details. Planning a bathroom renovation can be overwhelming, as homeowners have many decisions to make before the project even begins. For example, homeowners will have to choose a vanity, fixtures for the vanity, light fixtures, toilet, showerhead, and an assortment of additional features when planning the project. Contractors work with clients to show them all of their options, and some will offer advice on products or materials if asked. But homeowners are ultimately the ones who will have to live with the choices they make during the planning process, so these details merit ample consideration and should not be treated as trivial.

DON'T emphasize cost over quality. Homeowners should do their best to establish a renovation budget and stay within that budget, but quality materials should take precedence over cost. Many budget-friendly furnishings and accessories are durable and aesthetical-

ly appealing, so homeowners need not enter a bathroom renovation thinking high-end products are their only options. But it's important that homeowners recognize the conventional wisdom that buyers get what they pay for when it comes to home renovations. If homeowners try to cut costs on materials, they may need to update or redo

the bathroom much sooner than they would if they invest in quality furnishings and accessories the first time.

Bathroom renovations can be costly. Remembering some simple dos and don'ts can give homeowners the peace of mind that their renovation investment will result in an impressive, durable space. <



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# Fall 2024 HOME & GARDEN Guide

## Tips to help houseplants thrive over the winter

Winter can be harsh. Frigid temperatures and fewer hours of daylight can take a toll, and many people prefer to stay warm inside as much as possible during winter. Indoor air also can take a toll, leading to dry skin and increasing individuals' exposure to viruses such as those that cause the common cold. Warm and dry indoor air also can affect houseplants, which underscores how important it is to change your indoor plant care routine in winter.

Outdoor plants might not bloom or thrive once winter arrives, but houseplants can make it through the season with a few simple strategies.

• **Cut back on watering, if neces-**

**sary:** The relationship between sunlight and water in regard to houseplants is simple: the more light plants get, the more water they need. Because there's less daylight in winter, houseplants may not need to be watered as frequently as they will during other times of year. But that could depend on where the plant is located in the house. If it's near a window with substantial sunlight exposure, then it might need as much water as it requires during other times of year. Soil conditions may provide clues as to how frequently houseplants need to be watered in winter. Touch the soil before watering. If it's wet or feels damp, the plant does

not require watering.

• **Mobilize your houseplants:** Some houseplants may be too large and heavy to move. However, smaller plants may benefit from being more mobile. When moving houseplants, move them to a spot where they can get ample sunlight during the day, especially if they're typically located in areas of your home that do not get much exposure to sunlight in the winter.

• **Keep plants away from vents:** Anyone who lives in a region where winter temperatures get very cold knows that conditions sometimes require bumping up the temperature on the thermostat. That can make a home more comfortable for humans but less comfortable for houseplants. It's always best to keep houseplants away from heating vents so they won't dry out and potentially die. If the thermostat needs

to be adjusted to warm up the house, confirm all plants are away from vents to ensure they don't dry and out and potentially die.

• **Check for uninvited guests:** Summer might be the season most synonymous with pests, but houseplants are not invulnerable to uninvited pest guests in winter. Spider mites are common winter pests because they like warm and dry conditions. You should inspect the tops and undersides of houseplant leaves and stems for signs of pest infestation. Treat small infestations with an alcohol-soaked cotton ball, which can be used to wipe pests off the plants. Large infestations may require the use of insecticidal soap.

Winter is harsh on humans and can be hard on houseplants as well. Some simple strategies can help houseplants get through the season unscathed. <

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# Fall 2024 HOME & GARDEN Guide

## Ideas to enhance your home's exterior appeal

As a homeowner in Maine, the exterior of your property plays a significant role in curb appeal and overall value. With the harsh winters and humid summers that characterize the region, maintaining and enhancing the exterior of your home is essential not only for aesthetics but also for durability and protection. An exterior facelift can breathe new life into your home, making it more inviting and visually appealing. Here's a look at popular facelift options that can transform your Maine home.



Popular siding materials in Maine include vinyl, fiber cement, and wood. Each material has its benefits: vinyl is low maintenance, fiber cement offers durability and fire resistance, while wood provides natural beauty and insulation.

**Fresh coat of paint:** One of the most cost-effective ways to enhance your home's exterior is with a fresh coat of paint. Choosing the right color can significantly impact your home's appearance. Lighter colors can brighten up a property, making it appear larger and more welcoming, while darker shades can lend an air of sophistication. In Maine, it's also wise to consider using weather-resistant paints that can withstand the state's fluctuating temperatures and moisture levels.

**Landscaping improvements:** An often-overlooked aspect of an exterior facelift is landscaping. Well-planned gardens, flower beds, and shrubs can significantly enhance your home's curb appeal. Consider native plants that are well-suited to Maine's climate and require less maintenance. Adding pathways, decorative rocks, or even a fire pit can create an inviting outdoor space. Seasonal decorations, such as wreaths or pumpkins in the fall, can also add charm.

**Upgrading siding:** Old, damaged, or faded siding can detract from your home's overall appeal. Upgrading to new siding not only enhances aesthetics but also provides insulation and protection against the elements.

**Updating windows and doors:** New windows and doors can dramatically improve the look of your home

while enhancing energy efficiency. Replacing old windows with modern, energy-efficient ones can help reduce heating costs during the long Maine winters. Choose styles that complement your home's architecture, such as classic double-hung windows or stylish sliding doors that open to a deck or patio.

**Enhancing outdoor living Spaces**  
In Maine, outdoor living is a cherished aspect of home life during the warmer months. Creating or enhancing outdoor spaces like decks, patios, or porches can significantly improve the usability of your property. Consider adding features like built-in seating, outdoor kitchens, or pergolas for shade. A well-designed outdoor space can serve as an extension of your home, providing a perfect spot

for family gatherings or relaxing evenings.

**Focus on roofing:** Finally, don't overlook the importance of a good roof in an exterior facelift. Your roof not only protects your home from the elements but also plays a significant role in its overall aesthetic. If your roof is showing signs of wear, consider upgrading to durable materials like asphalt shingles or metal roofing, which can withstand Maine's weather conditions.

An exterior facelift can rejuvenate your home, enhance its value, and provide a welcoming atmosphere for guests and family. Whether it's through fresh paint, updated siding, improved landscaping, or better outdoor living spaces, the investment in your home's exterior is well worth it. <

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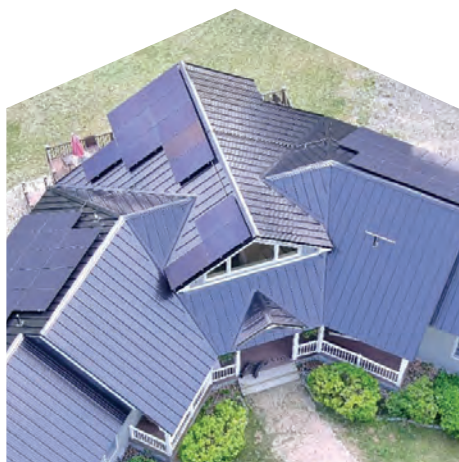
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# Fall 2024 HOME & GARDEN Guide

## Reasons to hire a professional to pest-proof your home

As the cold weather approaches, pests like rodents, insects, and other critters start seeking warmth and shelter, often making their way into homes. Winter is prime time for these unwanted guests to settle into your attic, walls, or basement. To prevent infestations and the damage that comes with them, pest-proofing your home

before the winter months is essential. Hiring a professional to handle this task can save you time, money, and the hassle of dealing with pests down the road.

**Expert knowledge and experience:** A professional pest control technician has the training and expertise to identify potential entry points and

areas in your home that are vulnerable to infestation. While you might block obvious gaps or cracks, professionals know the subtle signs of pest activity and understand the behaviors of different species, from mice and rats to spiders and cockroaches. They can assess areas you might overlook, such as rooflines, crawl spaces, and chimneys, ensuring a comprehensive inspection and treatment.

**Customized pest-proofing solutions:** Every home is different, and so are the pest-proofing needs. A professional pest control service will tailor their approach based on your specific home structure, location, and pest risks. They will identify the species most likely to enter your home and create a customized plan to keep them out. This often includes sealing cracks and holes in walls, floors, and foundations; installing screens or mesh over vents; and checking for damage in weather stripping or insulation. Additionally, professionals use safe, effective treatments that deter pests without posing harm to your family or pets.

**Prevent costly damage:** Pests can cause significant damage if they make

it into your home. Rodents, for example, gnaw on wires, insulation, and wood, potentially causing electrical hazards or structural issues.

Insects such as termites and carpenter ants can weaken the foundation and walls of your home, leading to costly repairs.

By hiring a professional to pest-proof your house, you can prevent these problems before they start, saving you from expensive repairs and the headache of dealing with infestations in the middle of winter.

**Long-term peace of mind:** One of the biggest advantages of hiring a professional is the peace of mind it provides. Knowing your home has been thoroughly inspected and protected by experts allows you to enjoy the winter months without worrying about unexpected pest invasions. Many pest control companies also offer warranties or follow-up services, ensuring your home remains pest-free throughout the season.

While DIY pest-proofing efforts can be helpful, hiring a professional provides a more thorough and reliable solution. An expert will ensure your home is well-protected, reducing the risk of infestations and the damage they bring during the winter months. <



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# Fall 2024 HOME & GARDEN Guide

## Advantages of creating outdoor hardscape spaces

In recent years, homeowners have increasingly turned their attention to outdoor living spaces, not only as places for relaxation and entertainment but also as essential components of home design. One popular trend is the use of hardscape elements to create functional, low-maintenance outdoor environments. Hardscaping refers to the non-living elements in landscape design, such as patios, walkways, retaining walls, and outdoor kitchens. These features can transform a yard into a versatile extension of your home, providing numerous benefits.

**Low maintenance:** One of the greatest advantages of hardscape spaces is their low maintenance. Unlike traditional landscaping, which requires regular watering, mowing, trimming, and seasonal care, hardscaping significantly reduces the amount of upkeep required. Materials like stone, concrete, brick, and pavers are durable and weather-resistant, meaning you can enjoy your outdoor space without the constant need for upkeep. This makes hardscaping an excellent choice for homeowners who want a beautiful outdoor area without the hassle of high-maintenance landscaping.

**Maximizes usable space:** Hardscaping allows you to create defined, usable areas in your yard, maximizing the potential of your outdoor space. Whether it's a patio for dining, a fire pit area for gathering, or a paved pathway that leads to a garden, hardscaping provides structure and function. These areas can be customized to meet your needs, offering places for entertainment, relaxation, or even additional cooking space with an outdoor kitchen. By adding hardscaped features, you effectively turn previously underutilized portions of your yard into practical, inviting living areas.

**Increases property value:** A well-designed hardscape can boost the curb appeal and overall value of your property. High-quality materials like stone, brick, and pavers add elegance and visual interest, making your home more attractive to potential buyers. Additionally, outdoor spaces like patios, decks, and walkways increase the overall living space of your home, which is a valuable selling point in the real estate market. Homebuyers often see the presence of low-maintenance, well-designed hardscape areas as an added benefit that reduces future expenses and improves their outdoor experience.

**Enhances functionality:** Hardscape elements provide a durable foundation for everyday outdoor activities. A paved patio creates a level, stable surface for dining furniture, grills, and entertainment areas, while retaining walls can help prevent erosion, ensuring your landscape remains intact and functional. Hardscaping can also help with water drainage, directing rainwater away from your home's foundation and preventing pooling or flooding. With the ability to create multi-functional spaces, hardscaping enhances the usability and convenience of your outdoor environment.

**Weather resistance and durability:** Hardscape materials are built to last, withstanding harsh weather conditions, including rain, snow, and extreme temperatures. Unlike soft landscaping elements like grass or flowers, which may suffer from seasonal changes, hardscape features like stone walkways, concrete patios, and brick retaining walls are resilient and durable. This makes hardscaping a long-term investment that will continue to look good and function well over the years, regardless of weather patterns.

**Improves water efficiency:** By reducing the amount of grassy areas in your yard, hardscaping can help conserve water. Lawns and plant beds often require frequent irrigation, especially in dry or hot climates, which can lead to high water usage. Hardscaped spaces like patios, pathways, and rock gardens minimize the need for watering, making them more environmentally friendly and cost-effective in the long run. Incorporating permeable pavers or gravel walkways can also promote natural water drainage, allowing rainwater to filter into the soil rather than running off and causing erosion.

**Complements natural elements:** While hardscape elements are non-liv-

ing, they can beautifully complement the natural elements of your yard. Stone paths can lead through a lush garden, or a fire pit can create a cozy spot among trees and greenery. Hardscaping doesn't have to replace nature; instead, it can enhance it by providing structure and contrast. Combining hard and soft landscaping elements—such as pavers interspersed with grass or a stone bench in a flower garden—creates a visually pleasing balance of nature and architecture.

With the ability to customize designs to suit your needs and style, hardscape spaces are a smart investment that can enhance both the beauty and usability of your home. <

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# Fall 2024 HOME & GARDEN Guide

## Wood floor cleaning guide

Wood floors are coveted for a number of reasons, not the least of which is their aesthetic appeal. Many people prefer wood flooring because dust and dirt do not become trapped as they would in carpet fibers, seemingly making wood flooring easy to clean.

Most floors endure a lot of wear and tear. However, with care, wood flooring may last for decades. The following are some steps for keeping wood floors as pristine as possible.

• **Remove shoes:** It's a good idea to remove shoes, particularly heels, when walking on wood floors. Sharp heels, cleats can scratch or dent the floor.

• **Sweep or vacuum frequently:** The experts at The Spruce suggest sweeping, vacuuming or dust mopping wood floors daily. Dirt and dust make floors more slippery, and dirt or sand particles can lead to scratches on the floor.

• **Learn your flooring type:** Wood flooring is broken down into three main categories: solid hardwood flooring, engineered hardwood flooring and laminate wood flooring. Traditional hardwood is made of planks or strips of any hardwood covered in a wood stain. Engineered flooring is manufactured by gluing together several thin plies of hardwood. Laminate flooring looks like wood but generally

is a veneer or a photographic image of wood covered by a thick layer of melamine resin over fiberboard.

• **Skip harsh cleansers.** Regardless of flooring type, most are covered by a sealant that can become streaky or dull if the wrong cleanser is used. Avoid chlorine bleach, ammonia, pine oil, or undiluted vinegar. Instead, choose a cleanser that is specifically recommended for the flooring type. Do not allow water or solutions to sit on the floor, as that can contribute to staining and warping. With laminate flooring, avoid wet mopping unless the flooring is specifically marked as being able to be wet. The underlayers of laminate flooring can warp if it gets wet.

• **Damp is better than wet:** When cleaning wood flooring, use a damp rather than a soaking wet mop. Standing water can damage wood surfaces.

• **Use the hard floor setting:** When vacuuming, adjust the vacuum to a hard flooring setting, which will not engage the brush rollers on the vacuum head. Rollers can scratch wood and laminate flooring.

• **Use repair products as needed:** Scratch and repair kits can fill in small scratches. Wood floor polish and wood waxes also can revitalize worn floors. Always check that the product is safe for your particular flooring before use. <

## Why hiring a professional cleaner is money well spent

As the seasons shift and cooler weather approaches, fall is the perfect time for a thorough cleaning to prepare your home for the months ahead. While many homeowners tackle fall cleaning on their own, hiring a professional cleaner can be a smart decision for several reasons.

• **Deep cleaning expertise:** Professional cleaners have the tools, products, and expertise to give your home a deep clean that goes beyond standard cleaning routines. From scrubbing baseboards and deep-cleaning carpets to tackling hard-to-reach areas like ceiling fans and vents, professionals know how to get your home thoroughly clean. They can also address areas you may not have time for, like cleaning behind furniture or sanitizing bathroom grout.

• **Saves time and energy:** Fall can be a busy season, especially with school, work, and holiday preparations. Hiring a professional cleaner saves you time and energy, allowing you to focus on more important tasks

or simply enjoy the season. Instead of spending weekends scrubbing floors and decluttering, you can relax knowing that the hard work is being handled by experts.

• **Prepares your home for the holidays:** Fall cleaning is an essential part of getting your home ready for holiday gatherings. Whether you're hosting family or friends, a professional cleaner ensures that every part of your home is guest-

ready. Cleaners can freshen up spaces like guest rooms, kitchens, and living areas, giving you peace of mind before the holiday rush.

• **Long-term home maintenance:** Regular deep cleaning helps maintain the condition of your home's surfaces, floors, and appliances. Professional cleaners can prevent dust buildup, protect your carpets from wear, and keep your home looking its best year-round.

Hiring a professional cleaner for fall cleaning is a smart investment, offering convenience, expertise, and long-term benefits for your home. <



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# Fall 2024 HOME & GARDEN Guide

## Ways to decorate your outdoors for fall in Maine

Fall in Maine is a magical time, with vibrant foliage, crisp air, and the cozy charm of the season. Decorating your outdoor space to reflect the beauty of autumn can enhance your home's curb appeal and create a welcoming atmosphere. Here are some ideas to decorate your outdoors for fall in Maine.

**Incorporate seasonal plants:** Nothing says fall quite like the rich, warm colors of mums, pansies, and ornamental kale. These hardy plants thrive in Maine's cool fall weather and add instant seasonal flair to your outdoor space. Plant them in pots, window boxes, or garden beds, and mix in textures with gourds, pumpkins, and corn stalks to create a vibrant autumn display. Don't forget to add layers of colorful foliage by using the natural fallen leaves around your property.

**Use rustic elements:** Maine's nat-



ural beauty lends itself to rustic, nature-inspired decor. Create a cozy, rustic vibe with hay bales, wooden barrels, or a vintage wheelbarrow filled with pumpkins or firewood. You can also use wooden crates as makeshift tables or platforms for fall displays, adding warmth and character. A classic Adirondack chair draped with a plaid blanket also brings a cozy, New England feel to your porch or patio.

**Add lighting for a warm glow:** As

the days get shorter, lighting becomes essential for making your outdoor space inviting. String lights, lanterns, and candles add a warm glow that complements the natural beauty of fall. Use solar-powered lights along pathways or hang lanterns from tree branches to create a magical, welcoming atmosphere in the evening. Consider a fire pit or outdoor fireplace to provide both warmth and ambiance during chilly Maine nights.

**Seasonal wreaths and door decorations:** A fall-themed wreath is an

easy way to dress up your front door and greet guests with seasonal cheer. Opt for wreaths made of grapevine, dried flowers, pinecones, or colorful leaves. Add a decorative door mat with autumn motifs, like pumpkins, leaves, or buffalo plaid, to complete the look. You can also place small pumpkins, mums, or decorative baskets around your front steps to extend the festive display.

With these simple yet charming decorations, you can embrace the beauty of Maine's fall season and make your outdoor space both cozy and inviting. <

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# Fall 2024 HOME & GARDEN Guide

## When and why to hire an electrician

Electrical work in a home or business is one of those tasks that requires a professional touch. While DIY projects can be rewarding, working with electricity is not something to take lightly. Hiring a qualified electrician ensures that the job is done safely, correctly, and up to code. Whether you're dealing with simple electrical repairs or a major renovation, knowing when and why to hire an electrician is crucial for your safety and peace of mind.

**Electrical safety concerns:** One of the most important reasons to hire an electrician is for safety. Electricity is dangerous to work with if you don't have the proper knowledge and training. Poor wiring, overloaded circuits, and incorrect installations can lead to electrical shocks, fires, and serious injuries. A licensed electrician is trained

to handle electrical systems safely and can identify potential hazards that you might overlook.

For example, if you notice frequent circuit breaker trips, flickering lights, or burning smells near your outlets, these are signs of electrical issues that need immediate attention. An electrician can diagnose the problem and fix it safely, reducing the risk of fire or electric shock.

**Upgrading electrical systems:** If you live in an older home or building, it may be time to upgrade your electrical system to meet modern demands. Many older homes were not built to handle the load of today's appliances and electronics, leading to frequent power outages or overheating wires. An electrician can upgrade your panel, rewire your home, and install ad-



ditional outlets to meet the increasing power needs of modern households.

Similarly, if you're adding new appliances or renovating your home, it's essential to hire an electrician to ensure your system can handle the increased load. A professional will ensure that your new electrical work is properly integrated with your existing system and meets local codes.

**New installations:** Whether you're installing new lighting, ceiling fans, or more complex systems like electric car chargers or home automation setups, hiring an electrician is necessary. New installations often require specialized knowledge of electrical wiring, permits, and safety codes. Doing it yourself may result in faulty wiring or incorrect installation, which can void warranties, damage the equipment, or cause safety risks down the line.

Electricians are skilled in understanding the electrical requirements of different systems and can install them in a way that maximizes efficiency and safety. They also ensure that your installations meet the necessary local regulations.

**Permits and code compliance:** Certain electrical projects require permits, and ensuring compliance with

local electrical codes is essential. These codes are designed to ensure the safety and efficiency of electrical systems in homes and businesses. Professional electricians are familiar with these regulations and can make sure your electrical work passes inspection, avoiding fines or the need for costly corrections later.

For example, if you're renovating a kitchen or adding an extension to your home, you'll likely need to update your electrical wiring. An electrician can handle all aspects of the project, including obtaining the necessary permits and ensuring code compliance.

**Troubleshooting electrical issues:** Sometimes electrical problems can be difficult to diagnose. Whether it's flickering lights, faulty outlets, or a mysterious power loss in one part of your home, an electrician has the tools and expertise to troubleshoot the issue efficiently. Trying to identify and fix these problems on your own could lead to further damage or a dangerous situation. Electricians can pinpoint the root cause of the problem and resolve it quickly.

Hiring an electrician is often the safest and most efficient way to handle electrical work. Whether you're upgrading your electrical system, dealing with safety concerns, or installing new devices, a licensed electrician can ensure the job is done properly, safely, and according to local regulations. When in doubt, it's always best to consult a professional for any electrical needs in your home or business. <

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# Fall 2024 HOME & GARDEN Guide

## Why is immediate black mold remediation so important?

The sight of mold in your home can be quite unsettling, especially when you understand its potential health risks. However, not all molds are created equal. One type that requires immediate attention and professional intervention is black mold, scientifically known as *Stachybotrys chartarum*.

**Understanding black mold:** Black mold is a toxic fungus commonly found on materials like cotton, wood, and paper products exposed to persistent moisture. Although it's often greenish-black in color, don't be fooled by its name; not all black-colored molds are the toxic black mold. It's the production of mycotoxins – toxic chemicals – that differentiates this type of mold from others.

**The health risks of black mold:** When people are exposed to black mold, they may experience a range of health issues. Some effects are mild and almost innocuous, while others can be severe and debilitating.

**Respiratory issues:** Respiratory distress is one of the most common symptoms associated with black mold exposure. This could present as chronic coughing, sneezing, or irritation of the eyes, nose, and throat. In more severe cases, exposure can lead to serious lung infections or bleeding in the lungs and nose.

**Skin irritation:** Skin rashes are another prevalent symptom associated with exposure to black mold. Direct contact with the spores can lead to redness, itchiness, and discomfort.

**Neurological symptoms:** Some individuals may experience neurological symptoms such as memory loss, inability to focus, or headaches after prolonged exposure to black mold. These symptoms are sometimes attributed to "toxic mold syndrome," although further research is needed to establish a direct causation.

**Exacerbation of existing conditions:** For individuals with pre-existing allergies or asthma, exposure to black mold can exacerbate their symptoms. These may include a runny or blocked nose, watery eyes, coughing, skin rashes, and a sore throat.

**Why immediate black mold remediation is crucial**

Given the potential health risks associated with black mold, immediate remediation becomes not just an option but a necessity. Here's why:

**Protection of health:** The immediate removal of black mold spares occupants from the risk of prolonged exposure to toxic spores. This is especially important for households with individuals who have weakened immune systems who are at higher risk

of fungal infections due to black mold exposure.

**Prevention of structural damage:** Black mold thrives on moisture and organic material – two things that are abundant in many structural elements of our homes, like wood and drywall. Left unchecked, the mold can cause significant damage to these materials, compromising the structural integrity of your home.

**Mitigation of financial costs:** In addition to the health and structural concerns, there are also financial implications related to unchecked black mold growth. The longer the problem persists, the more extensive the damage becomes and the more costly it will be to fix.

**The role of a professional black mold removal company**

When you discover black mold in your home, it's crucial that you contact a professional black mold removal company immediately.

**Expertise and equipment:** Hiring trained technicians who understand how to identify mold sources accurately, evaluate growth areas, contain contamination effectively, and safely remove black mold from affected sites is vital. Specialized equipment can detect hidden moisture sources – a critical component in preventing future

mold growth.

**Safe and effective removal:** While DIY methods may seem appealing due to their lower cost, they often fail to address the problem effectively. In fact, improper handling can unintentionally spread mold spores, exacerbating the problem. Professional black mold removal ensures the safe and thorough removal of the mold while preventing cross-contamination.

**Long-term solutions:** Professional remediation goes beyond just removing visible mold; it also involves identifying and resolving underlying moisture issues contributing to mold growth. This holistic approach ensures effective, long-term solutions rather than temporary fixes.

**The imperative of prompt black mold removal**

Immediate black mold remediation is not a matter of choice but a necessity for preserving health and maintaining the structural integrity of your home. While the sight of black mold may be alarming, remember that help is just a call away. By enlisting our professional black mold removal services, you can ensure your home is free from this toxic invader and safeguard your family's health.

*This article was brought to you by Octagon Cleaning and Restoration. <*

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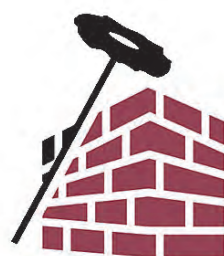
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# Fall 2024 HOME & GARDEN Guide

## Transform a playroom into a space that grows with the family

Parents typically make certain changes around a home to ensure it's accommodating to children. Child-proofing is a necessity, but entire rooms also may be transformed with children's enjoyment and well-being in mind.

It's common for homeowners to set aside rooms for children to play and

explore. These playrooms may initially feature infant swings and bouncers, and eventually start to accumulate the toys that kids receive on holidays and birthdays. Easels, building block sets, puzzles, video games, books, and so much more fill these playrooms where young children spend the majority of their time engrossed in imaginative

play. But as children grow, playrooms may no longer be necessary. Homeowners can ensure these rooms evolve with the family, and here are a few ways to do just that.

**Make it a home theater/gaming room:** The National Institutes of Health says children between the ages of eight and 17 spend an average of 1.5 to 2 hours playing video games each day.

It's important for parents to monitor their children's gaming, particularly when kids participate in social platform games that involve people with an internet connection chatting and working together. One way to do so is to locate the gaming setup in a central location, like a home theater room.

**Establish a hobby space:** Trade in kids' toys for "toys" that everyone in the family will enjoy. Turn the room into one where family members can explore their passions. This may include scrapbooking, painting, yarn crafts, collecting, photography, and more.

**Create a quiet learning spot:** As children grow up, they may need to spend more time studying. Transforming a playroom into a library or a study space can provide that out-of-the-way spot to get homework and studying done. Adults in the home also can use it for reading, paying the bills or any other task that requires concentration and quiet.

**Build a home gym:** If the space is



large enough, bring in some workout equipment and make the play space one that encourages exercise and fitness. You may not even need large equipment and can utilize interlocking foam tiles that already may be in the playroom. With some free weights, resistance bands and even your own body weight, you can perform a number of beneficial exercises.

**Expand your living space**

If the playroom currently abuts another room that can use some more real estate but is separated by a wall, take down the wall to increase the square footage.

**Set it aside for guests:** Clean out the toys and bring in a bed and nightstand. Now you'll have a dedicated spot for overnight guests to stay, or a room that visiting older children (and eventually grandchildren) can call their own.

Playrooms are much-used areas when children are young. These rooms can evolve as kids get older and families' needs change. <



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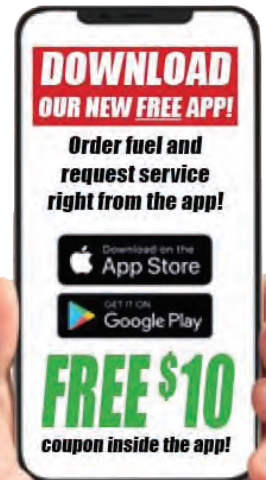
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# Fall 2024 HOME & GARDEN Guide

## Senior-friendly interior renovations

Home is where the heart is. That sentiment may be especially true for seniors who have spent decades living in their homes. A lot of hard work goes into home ownership, and seniors who have lived in the same space for a while undoubtedly have countless memories within the walls of their homes.

A lifetime of experiences in a home can make it hard to leave, but many seniors experience diminished mobility as they age. Mobility issues can make it hard for seniors to traverse their homes, but aging homeowners can make various renovations to make a home more accessible.

- **Revamp entryways and staircases:** A 2020 study of 1,000 adults found that 28 percent of individuals age 65 and older who don't exercise regularly struggle with activities like walking up stairs. The study, commissioned by Total Fitness, also found that 14 percent of men and women over 65 who regularly engage in moderate exercise still find it challenging to climb up and down a flight of stairs. Seniors facing similar challenges can install a ramp at their home's entryway so they can comfortably go in and out. Inside, a chair lift can ensure seniors are not struggling to move from one floor to another.

- **Raise the outlets throughout the**

**home.** They're easily overlooked, but outlets, particularly those outside the kitchen, tend to be close to the floor. AARP notes that's no accident, as outlets are generally placed at a height equal to the length of a hammer to save time with measuring when buildings are being constructed. Outlets close to the floor can be difficult for seniors with mobility issues to reach. Relocating the outlets a little higher off the floor is not an expensive renovation, but it can make a home more accessible for seniors who have difficulty bending down or getting down on one knee.

- **Install door knob extensions.** Verywell Health notes that nearly half of all people age 65 and older have arthritis or another rheumatic condition. Arthritis can make it difficult for seniors to grip and turn door knobs. Door knob extensions can make it easier for seniors with arthritis to open the doors in their homes. Such extensions are roughly five-inch levers that can be installed over an existing door knob, making it easier to grab and pull down. Extensions save seniors the hassle of turning the knob, which some may find painful and almost impossible.

- **Renovate the bathroom:** Bathroom renovation projects can be costly, but seniors with mobility issues should know that bathrooms can pose a par-


ticularly dangerous threat. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes that roughly three million older adults are treated for fall injuries in emergency departments each year. A 2019 analysis published in The Journals of Gerontology noted that 22 percent of in-home falls resulted in a change in

the person's walking ability. Replacing a step-over shower with a zero-step alternative can make it easier for seniors with mobility issues to get in and out of the shower, thus reducing their risk for falls. Grab bars along shower walls and a chair inside the shower can make it easier to bathe and towel off safely. <





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