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SpringHOME & GARDEN

CREATING A FUNCTIONAL, COMFORTABLE OUTDOOR SPACE

When it comes to making a house feel like a home, don't overlook your outdoor areas. Patios, porches, decks, and docks are where some of the best memories happen – morning coffees, evening fires, and summer barbecues with family and friends. Creating a space that's both functional and relaxing doesn't have to be overwhelming. Here are a few simple tips to help you make the most of your outdoor living areas:

Consider Your Space First

Before you buy a single chair, take a look at the size and shape of your space. Measure it out and think about how you move through it. Small patios and balconies might benefit from a couple of compact chairs and a side table, while larger spaces could handle a dining set or conversation area with multiple seating options.

Think About How You'll Use It

Is this your quiet escape for early morning reading, or the go-to spot for family cookouts? Maybe it's both! Knowing how you want to use the space will help you choose the right pieces. Dining tables for hosting, rockers for relaxing, or benches for flexible seating.

Choose Durable, Low-Maintenance Materials

Outdoor furniture lives a tough life



– sun, rain, salt air, and snow can do a number on certain materials. Look for pieces made from weather-resistant, easy-care materials like HDPE (a recycled plastic known for durability). They're built to last through Maine seasons and require little upkeep.

Prioritize Comfort

Looks matter, but so does how a chair feels after you've been sitting in it for an hour. Test out seating when you can. Look for wide armrests, supportive backs, and options for adding cushions if you want extra coziness.

Stay True to Your Style

Your outdoor space should feel like a reflection of you. Whether you love coastal, cottage, classic camp, or something modern and sleek, choose colors and designs that make you feel

at home outside too.

Invest Where It Counts

Good outdoor furniture is an investment – but it doesn't have to mean overspending. Prioritize quality on your everyday pieces like chairs and tables, and mix in affordable accents like planters, pillows, and lighting for personality.

Stop By for Inspiration

If you're looking for ideas or want to try out some Adirondack chairs in person, On the Docks in Windham

carries a great selection of Built To Last furniture, known for its comfort, durability, and timeless style. Each piece in the Adirondack Collection is handcrafted in the USA using 100% recycled high-density polyethylene plastic. This sustainable material is incredibly tough, weather-resistant, and maintenance-free – built to handle harsh sun, rain, and coastal conditions with ease. Beyond the classic Adirondack chair, Built To Last offers love seats, rockers, ottomans, and more, all available in a range of colors to suit your outdoor décor. Whether you're outfitting a dock, porch, patio, or garden, there's a piece to complete your vision. <

DECK MAINTENANCE

Did you know that regular deck maintenance can double the lifespan of your deck? A well-maintained deck not only looks great but also resists damage from weather, pests, and daily wear. Wood decks, in particular, are vulnerable to moisture, which can lead to rot, warping, and mold. By cleaning your deck annually and sealing or staining it every two to three years, you help protect it from water damage and UV rays. Even composite decks, while lower-maintenance, benefit from periodic cleaning to prevent mildew and staining. Regular inspections are key—look for loose boards, protruding nails, and signs of deterioration. Prompt repairs can prevent costly fixes later. Also, keeping debris out of gaps and joints helps with ventilation and drainage, reducing the risk of structural issues. So, whether your deck is wood or composite, a little upkeep goes a long way in preserving its beauty and safety for years to come!

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SpringHOME & GARDEN



HOW TO KNOW WHEN YOUR ROOF NEEDS ATTENTION

Spring in Maine is a time of renewal – budding trees, melting snow, and the welcome return of sunshine. But while you’re getting your garden beds ready and cleaning out the garage, don’t forget to look up... at your roof. After a long winter of snow, ice, and wind, spring is the ideal time to assess your roof’s condition and catch any damage early before it turns into a costly problem.

Here are the top signs your roof might need attention this spring, straight from a Maine home and garden expert.

1. Visible Shingle Damage

One of the clearest signs your roof needs help is damaged shingles. Maine winters are tough on roofing materials. Ice dams, high winds, and fluctuating temperatures can cause shingles to curl, crack, loosen, or go missing entirely. From the ground, look for uneven patches or obvious gaps. If you spot granules in your gutters or around your downspouts, your shingles may be nearing the end of their lifespan.

2. Leaks or Water Stains Inside

Water stains on ceilings or walls inside your home are never a good sign. Even small leaks can lead to mold, mildew, and structural damage. After the snow melts, check your attic for any signs of water infiltration. Pay attention to dark spots, musty smells, or visible mold growth, which are all indicators your roof isn’t keeping water out like it should.

3. Sagging or Drooping Areas

A sagging roofline can point to more serious structural issues, possibly caused by heavy snow loads from winter storms or accumulated water from clogged gutters. This is more than a cosmetic issue, it can compromise your home’s integrity. Spring is a good time to visually inspect your roofline from a distance and look for any dips or uneven spots.

4. Ice Dam Damage

Ice dams are a common problem in Maine, especially on older homes or those with poor insulation and ventilation. They form when snow melts on the upper parts of your roof but freeze-

es at the edge, trapping water behind it. The result? Seepage under shingles and into your home. If you noticed icicles or ice buildup during the winter, your roof may have sustained damage beneath the surface.

5. Moss or Algae Growth

Moss might look quaint on a stone wall, but on a roof, it’s trouble. It retains moisture and can cause shingles to deteriorate faster. Spring is the perfect time to look for patches of moss or dark streaks on your roof. If you find some, don’t ignore it. Early treatment can prevent serious damage.

What to Do Next?

If you notice any of these issues, don’t wait. Spring is a prime season for roofing inspections and repairs. Maine weather can change quickly, and summer storms aren’t far off. Hire a licensed roofing professional to conduct a full inspection. They’ll check areas you can’t see and give you a clear idea of your roof’s condition.

A little spring maintenance can go a long way in protecting your home. Your roof is your first line of defense. Give it the attention it deserves after a long Maine winter. <



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HYDROSEEDING: THE FAST-TRACK TO A LUSH LAWN

Hydroseeding is a fast, efficient method of planting grass using a slurry of seed, water, fertilizer, mulch, and a tackifier (a glue-like substance that helps everything stick to the soil). This mixture is sprayed over prepared soil using a specialized hose or tank.

It's often used for large areas or in situations where traditional seeding or laying sod might not be ideal.

Benefits of Hydroseeding

- Quick coverage: Great for large lawns, slopes, or areas with erosion issues.
- Cost-effective: More affordable than sod, especially for big spaces.
- Better seed-to-soil contact: The slurry helps seeds stay in place and retain moisture, improving germination.
- Erosion control: Especially helpful on hillsides or construction sites where loose soil needs stabilization.
- Custom blends: You can tailor the seed mix for sun, shade, or Maine's specific climate and soil conditions.

Best Time to Hydroseed in Maine

- Late spring (May–early June) or early fall (late August–mid-September) is ideal.
- You want:
 - Warm soil temps (50–65°F)
 - Reliable moisture (either from rain or irrigation)
 - Cooler air temps than midsum-



mer, which helps avoid drying out. Avoid peak summer heat and dry spells, unless you can commit to frequent watering.

When Should You Use Hydroseeding?

- Starting a lawn from scratch (new construction or total lawn renovation)
- Repairing large damaged areas (post-construction, erosion, or storm damage)
- Seeding sloped or uneven terrain
- Covering up excavation, septic system installs,

or utility work

- When you want faster results than dry seeding, but sod is too costly

Aftercare

- Keep the area consistently moist for the first few weeks.
 - Avoid walking on it while the new grass is establishing.
 - First mow usually happens around 3–4 inches tall (usually 3–4 weeks post-application, depending on conditions).
- In short: If you need to seed a large or tricky area and want quick, even results with less labor than sod and better performance than traditional seeding, hydroseeding might be your best bet. Want help determining if your property is a good candidate? A local lawn care or hydroseeding pro can assess your site. <

MULCH: WHEN AND WHERE

The best time to mulch is in the spring, typically late April to early May, once the soil has warmed up slightly but before weeds have a chance to take hold. Mulching too early can trap cold moisture in the soil and delay plant growth. A second round of mulching in the fall, around late October, can help insulate plant roots against harsh winter temperatures and reduce soil erosion. Where you mulch depends on your garden's layout and goals. Around trees and shrubs, maintain a mulch ring several inches from the trunk to retain moisture and suppress weeds. In flower and vegetable beds, apply mulch between rows and around plant bases to keep soil temperatures steady and reduce watering needs. Use organic materials like bark mulch, straw, shredded leaves, or composted wood chips to gradually enrich the soil as they break down. Avoid piling mulch too high or too close to plant stems, as this can lead to rot and pest issues. A 2–3 inch layer is generally ideal. Proper mulching not only supports healthy plants through the growing season but also helps your landscape thrive year-round.

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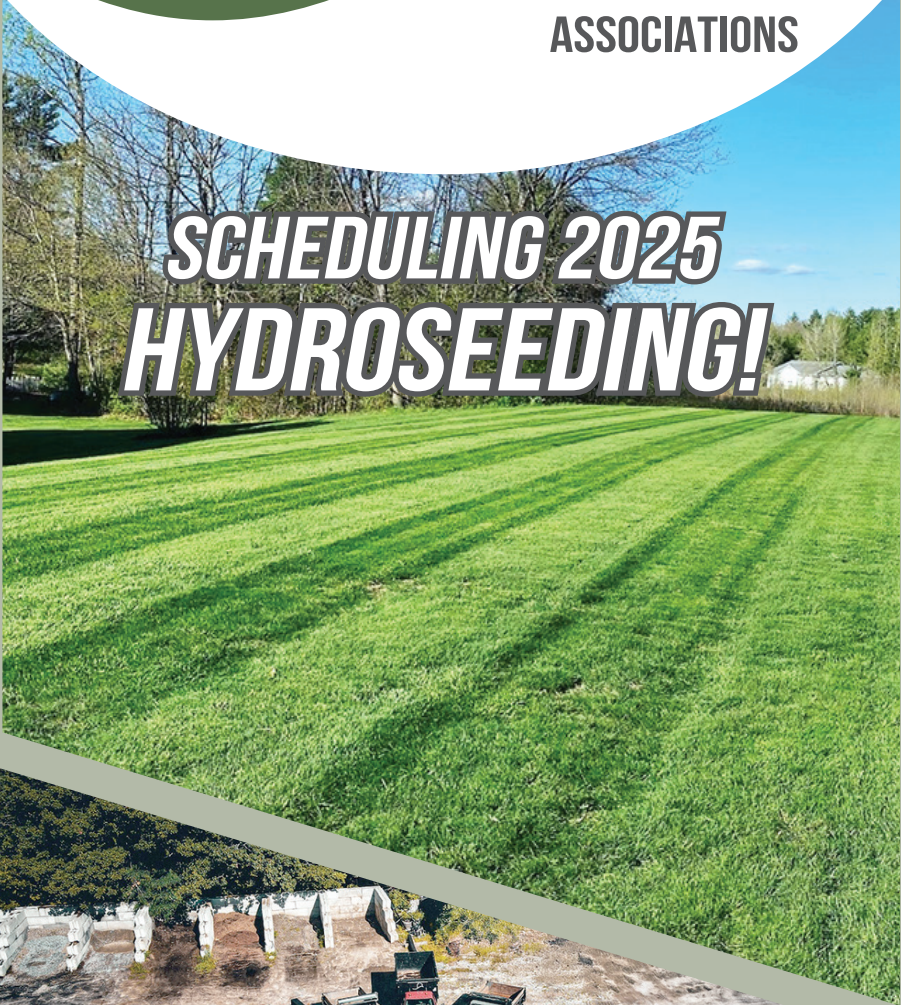


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SPRING IN MAINE: SIGNS OF PESTS IN YOUR YARD AND WHEN TO CALL A PROFESSIONAL

As the snow melts and the days grow warmer, Maine yards begin to wake up—with new growth, bird-song, and unfortunately, pests. From tiny insects to larger burrowing critters, spring is the season when many yard invaders emerge or become active. Early detection is key to protecting your lawn, garden, and even your home.

Here’s how to spot the signs of spring pest activity in Maine—and when it’s time to handle it yourself versus when you should call in the pros.

1. Tunneling and Mounds: Moles and Voles

If your lawn is marked with raised trails, soft soil, or chewed bark, you might be dealing with moles or voles.

- **Moles** dig tunnels and leave mounded dirt as they hunt for grubs.

- **Voles** chew on roots, bulbs, and tree bark, leaving narrow surface runways.

DIY fixes:

- Remove food sources like grubs with lawn treatments.
- Install underground mesh around young trees or garden beds.

Call a professional if:

- Tunneling is extensive or damaging lawn equipment.
- DIY deterrents aren’t working after a couple of weeks.
- You suspect multiple burrowing animals or can’t identify the culprit.

2. Patchy Grass: Grubs and Cutworms

Brown, dead patches in your lawn could be from grubs feeding on roots beneath the surface. In garden beds, cutworms can destroy seedlings over-

night.

DIY fixes:

- Apply beneficial nematodes or spring grub control treatments.
- Use collars around young seedlings to deter cutworms.

Call a professional if:

- Lawn damage is widespread or persistent after treatment.
- You’re seeing regular animal digging (skunks, raccoons), which can indicate a heavy grub infestation.

3. Chewed Plants and Bark: Deer and Rabbits

- New growth is a favorite snack for deer and rabbits, especially before native forage is plentiful.

DIY fixes:

- Use commercial repellents and motion-activated deterrents.
- Install physical barriers around vul-

nerable plants.

Call a professional if:

Damage is happening consistently despite repellents or fencing.

You need help installing effective fencing or implementing a long-term strategy.

4. Insect Activity: Wasps, Ants, and Ticks

Insects like carpenter ants, wasps, and ticks become more active as spring progresses.

DIY fixes:

- Knock down small wasp nests early.
- Remove leaf litter and woodpiles to reduce hiding spots.
- Use perimeter sprays and perform regular tick checks.

Call a professional if:

You see large or aggressive wasp nests, especially near your home.

Carpenter ants are entering your home or nesting in wooden structures.

You find multiple ticks regularly, even with preventative measures.

5. Burrows and Holes: Skunks, Groundhogs, and Chipmunks

Holes in the ground can be caused by a variety of critters, including skunks, groundhogs, and chipmunks.

DIY fixes:

- Seal small entry points under sheds and porches.
- Use scent-based repellents or motion-sensing lights.

Call a professional if:

- You suspect an animal is living under your deck, porch, or garage.
- You see repeated digging near your home’s foundation.

You’re concerned about safety (especially with skunks).

General Rule: Call a Professional When...

- You can’t identify the pest or the problem persists despite your efforts.

The issue is damaging property, like wiring, siding, or major lawn areas.

• Safety is a concern, such as when dealing with wasp nests, skunks, or signs of infestation near your home’s structure.

- You want peace of mind through a full inspection or treatment plan tailored to your property.

Licensed pest control professionals can help diagnose issues more accurately and use treatments that are safe, effective, and environmentally responsible—especially important in a state like Maine where yards often blend into woodlands and wetlands.

Spring should be about enjoying your yard, not fighting to keep it from being taken over. Whether you’re seeing signs of small invaders or suspect a larger problem, early action is always best. Take some time this season to walk your property, inspect vulnerable areas, and respond to warning signs before they become full-blown infestations.

And remember—you don’t have to go it alone. Knowing when to call in a professional can save you time, money, and hassle in the long run. <



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TICK ALERT: RISING CASES AND PROTECTIVE MEASURES

Maine has experienced a significant increase in tick-borne diseases over the past two years, with 2024 marking a record high. This surge underscores the importance of proactive measures to protect yourself, your family, and your pets from tick bites and the illnesses they can transmit.

Tick-Borne Disease Trends in Maine

- **Lyme Disease:** In 2024, Maine reported 3,218 cases of Lyme disease, surpassing the previous record of 2,943 cases in 2023.
- **Anaplasmosis:** Cases increased from 777 in 2023 to 1,284 in 2024.
- **Babesiosis:** Reported cases rose from 194 in 2023 to 310 in 2024.
- **Powassan Virus:** A rare but serious illness, with seven cases reported

in 2023—the highest on record for the state.

PREVENTATIVE MEASURES

Personal Protection:

- **Use EPA-Approved Repellents:** Apply repellents containing at least 20% DEET, picaridin, IR3535, or oil of lemon eucalyptus on exposed skin.
- **Treat Clothing and Gear:** Use products containing permethrin on clothing and gear; these remain effective through several washes. Maine
- **Dress Appropriately:** Wear long sleeves, long pants tucked into socks, and light-colored clothing to spot ticks more easily.
- **Perform Regular Tick Checks:** After outdoor activities, thoroughly check your body, clothing, and gear for ticks. Pay special attention to areas like under the arms, behind the knees, around the ears, and in the hair.

Property Management:

- **Maintain Your Yard:** Keep grass short, remove leaf litter, and clear tall grasses and brush around homes and at the edge of lawns.
- **Create Tick-Safe Zones:** Place a

3-foot wide barrier of wood chips or gravel between lawns and wooded areas to restrict tick migration.

- **Discourage Deer:** Use fencing to keep deer, which can carry ticks, away from your yard.

When to Call a Professional

If you're experiencing any of the following, it's advisable to consult a pest control professional:

- **Persistent Tick Presence:** Regular sightings of ticks on your property despite personal preventive measures.
- **High-Risk Areas:** Living in or near wooded or brushy areas known for high tick populations.
- **Previous Tick-Borne Illnesses:** If you or family members have previously contracted tick-borne diseases, reducing exposure risk is crucial.

Stay informed and take action to protect your health and that of your loved ones. There are several great local companies, many of which can be found in this section, that can help fend off ticks and the dangers they bring to our pets and families. <

*Sources: Maine.gov

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ENTRYWAY RENOVATION IDEAS FOR EFFICIENCY & STYLE

The entryway is more than just a passage—it’s the first impression of your home and a critical hub for everyday comings and goings, especially in a busy family household. Renovating this space for both efficiency and style can streamline your daily routines while offering a welcoming ambiance. Here are some practical and stylish renovation ideas to transform your entryway into a functional and beautiful family zone.

1. Built-In Storage Solutions

Storage is key in any family home, and the entryway should be no exception. Consider installing built-in cubbies or lockers for each family member. These can include hooks for coats and backpacks, shelving for shoes, and cubbies for sports gear or seasonal ac-



cessories. A bench with lift-up storage underneath is another smart solution, offering a place to sit while putting on shoes and a hidden spot for clutter.

2. Durable and Easy-to-Clean Flooring

Entryways endure heavy foot traffic and exposure to the elements. Opt for durable, low-maintenance flooring like ceramic tile, luxury vinyl, or sealed natural stone. These materials can withstand mud, moisture, and scuff marks while adding a polished look. Choose darker tones or patterned designs to help hide dirt between cleanings.

3. Family Command Center

Incorporating a family command center can make your entryway a hub of organization. Use a section of the wall for a calendar, message board, key hooks, and charging station. This space helps coordinate schedules, manage reminders, and keep devices powered up and ready to go.

4. Stylish Lighting and Mirrors

Lighting plays a huge role in making your entryway feel bright and welcoming.

Swap out old fixtures for modern, energy-efficient ones, or add wall sconces for a cozy touch. Including a mirror not only makes the space feel larger but also offers a last-minute glance before heading out the door. Choose mirrors with stylish frames to add a decorative element.

5. Personalized Touches

Make your entryway reflect your family’s personality. Add framed family photos, custom signs, or art made by the kids. These personalized touches create a warm, inviting atmosphere

and make your home feel truly yours.

6. Seasonal Storage Rotation

To maximize efficiency, design storage that allows for seasonal swaps. Clear bins or labeled baskets can be easily rotated throughout the year to accommodate winter gloves or summer flip-flops. A small closet or overhead shelf can store off-season items when not in use.

With a little planning and creativity, your entryway can become a streamlined, stylish space that handles the hustle of family life with ease. <

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SIGNS IT'S TIME FOR AN ELECTRICAL SYSTEM UPGRADE

Your home's electrical system is the invisible backbone powering everything from your coffee maker to your laptop, lighting to HVAC. But like every other system in your house, it ages—and sometimes not gracefully. Ignoring electrical issues can lead to costly repairs or even fire hazards.

So how do you know when it's time to upgrade or at least assess your home's electrical setup? Here are some telltale signs to watch for:

1. Your Home Is More Than 30 Years Old

Older homes were often built to handle far less electrical demand than what modern life requires. If your home hasn't had an electrical upgrade since the '90s—or earlier—it's probably overdue.

Why it matters: You may still have an outdated panel (like 60-amp service or even fuse boxes), aluminum wiring, or wiring that isn't grounded properly.

2. You Frequently Trip Breakers or Blow Fuses

Circuit breakers trip when a circuit is overloaded or shorted. Occasional trips are normal, but if it's happening often, it's a sign your electrical system can't keep up.

- Open your breaker panel and look for scorch marks, a burnt smell,

or buzzing sounds — all signs something's not right.

- Test your breakers by flipping them off and back on to ensure they're functioning.

Red flag: If one outlet or room consistently trips the breaker, it could point to a specific wiring issue or an overloaded circuit.

3. You Use a Lot of Extension Cords or Power Strips

Relying on power strips and extension cords because you don't have enough outlets? That's a major clue.

Why it's risky: Too many high-draw devices on one circuit can create fire hazards or damage appliances over time.

4. You Notice Dimming or Flickering Lights

Lights that dim when you turn on the microwave or flicker unpredictably aren't haunted—they're probably just underpowered.

Potential causes: Loose wiring, outdated circuits, or overloaded panels.

5. Outlets Feel Warm or Smell Burnt

Touch an outlet or plug and feel heat—or worse, smell something burning? Shut off the power immediately and call an electrician.



This is urgent. Warm or scorched outlets can signal serious wiring issues that pose immediate fire risk.

6. You Still Have Two-Prong Outlets

Two-prong outlets don't have a ground wire, which means they offer far less protection from shocks and surges.

Modern fix: Upgrading to three-prong, grounded GFCI outlets improves safety, especially in kitchens, bathrooms, and basements.

7. Your Breaker Panel Looks Outdated or Is Full

If your breaker box looks like it came from a Cold War bunker—or it's completely full with no room to add circuits—it's time to consider an upgrade.

Look out for: Panels from older brands like Federal Pacific or Zinsco, which have a history of malfunctioning.

8. You're Renovating or Adding High-Energy Appliances

Planning a kitchen remodel, adding a home office, or installing central air? You'll likely need to upgrade your panel or run new circuits.

Future-proofing: A panel upgrade can support new appliances and smart home features without overloading existing systems.

9. Buzzing Sounds or Shocks

Buzzing outlets, switches, or lights—and definitely any small shocks when plugging something in—are signs something is wrong.

Possible cause: Loose wiring, poor connections, or faulty outlets that need immediate attention.

Electrical issues aren't just inconvenient—they can be dangerous. The good news? Modern electrical systems are safer, more efficient, and better equipped to handle today's tech-heavy lifestyles.

If you're seeing any of these signs, it's worth having a licensed electrician perform a full electrical assessment. Catching issues early can prevent fire hazards, lower your energy bills, and give you peace of mind. <

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WAYS TO ELEVATE YOUR BATHROOM REMODEL

Renovating a bathroom is one of the most impactful ways to enhance both the value of your home and your daily comfort. Whether you're upgrading a master bath or refreshing a powder room, the best designs balance modern style with practical functionality. Here are some key renovation ideas that will elevate your bathroom into a space that's as efficient as it is elegant.

1. Optimize the Layout

A smart layout can dramatically improve how a bathroom feels and functions. Evaluate your current floor plan and consider if rearranging fixtures like the toilet, sink, or shower would improve flow. In smaller bathrooms, a corner sink or a wall-mounted toilet can free up valuable space. If possible, expanding a cramped bathroom or borrowing space from an ad-

jacent closet can provide much-needed breathing room.

2. Invest in Quality Fixtures

High-quality fixtures not only look better, but they also last longer and perform better. Consider installing a rain showerhead for a spa-like experience, or a dual-sink vanity to reduce morning traffic jams. Touchless faucets, water-saving toilets, and thermostatic shower controls are also great upgrades that combine tech with convenience and eco-friendliness.

3. Choose Durable, Stylish Materials

Bathroom surfaces should be both attractive and built to withstand moisture. Porcelain or ceramic tile is a popular choice for its durability and design versatility. Large-format tiles can make a space feel more open, while textured tiles add visual



interest and slip resistance. Quartz or solid-surface countertops offer a sleek look with low maintenance, perfect for busy households.

4. Maximize Storage

Clutter can quickly ruin the look of a freshly renovated bathroom. Include built-in storage wherever possible—such as recessed medicine cabinets, floating shelves, or a vanity with deep drawers. Over-the-toilet shelving or a tall linen tower can provide additional storage without taking up much floor space.

5. Light It Up

Lighting plays a major role in both aesthetics and usability. A layered lighting approach, ambient lighting for overall brightness, task lighting around the vanity, and accent lighting for mood, ensures a balanced and functional space. LED backlit mirrors and dimmable fixtures are both stylish and practical upgrades.

6. Add Personal Touches

Finally, incorporate design elements that reflect your style. A bold vanity color, statement wall tile, or stylish hardware can elevate the entire room. Neutral palettes with pops of texture or color create a timeless feel that's easy to refresh with accessories.

By blending thoughtful design with functional choices, a bathroom renovation can transform a purely utilitarian space into a relaxing and refined retreat. Whether you're making small updates or doing a complete overhaul, prioritizing both style and function will ensure a beautiful, usable space for years to come. <

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HIRING A PROFESSIONAL EXCAVATION COMPANY

Excavation is one of the most critical steps in construction and landscaping projects, forming the foundation for everything that follows. Whether you're preparing for a new home build, installing a septic system, building a retaining wall, or creating a driveway, proper excavation is essential. While some may be tempted to take a DIY approach or hire an unlicensed contractor to save money, the importance of hiring a professional excavation company cannot be overstated.

Precision and Expertise: Excavation involves more than just digging holes and moving dirt. It requires a thorough understanding of soil types, slope stability, drainage systems, and the proper use of heavy machinery. Professional excavation contractors bring years of experience and training to ensure the job is done right the first time. They know how to assess site conditions, work around existing structures or underground utilities, and make adjustments for unexpected issues like rock formations or water tables.

A reputable excavation company will also be well-versed in local codes and regulations, ensuring the project is up to standard and avoiding costly legal issues or delays down the line.

Safety First: Excavation work can be dangerous. Collapsing trenches, equipment mishaps, and hidden utility lines are all serious risks. Professional excavators are trained in proper safety protocols and have the right tools and equipment to minimize hazards on the job site. They're also fully insured, which means you're protected in case of accidents or property damage. This peace of mind is one of the most important reasons to hire a licensed and insured excavation team.

Time and Cost Efficiency: While hiring professionals may seem like a bigger investment upfront, it can save significant time and money in the long run. A professional excavation company will have the tools, workforce, and expertise to complete the job efficiently and correctly. They can avoid or quickly resolve issues that might cause major delays or lead to costly repairs if handled improperly. With the right team in place, you can keep your project on schedule and within budget.

Access to the Right Equipment: Excavation requires specialized machinery such as backhoes, bulldozers, trenchers, and compactors. Professional excavation companies not only have access to this equipment, but they also know how to operate

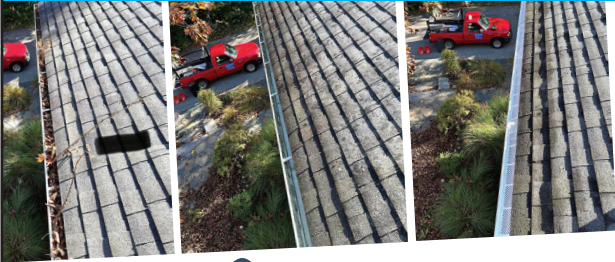
and maintain it safely and effectively. Renting equipment and trying to operate it without experience can lead to accidents and subpar results. Letting trained experts handle it ensures both safety and quality.

Site Preparation and Cleanup: Proper excavation involves more than just digging—it includes grad-

ing, compacting soil, clearing debris, and preparing the site for construction. Professionals ensure your land is properly leveled and stabilized, providing a strong foundation for any future structures. They also take care of cleanup, leaving your site ready for the next phase of the project without unnecessary mess or delays. <

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HOW TO FIX BALD SPOTS AND FERTILIZE FOR A LUSH GREEN LAWN IN MAINE

After a long Maine winter, it's common to find bald spots in your lawn—patches where snow, salt, or pests have taken their toll. Fortunately, spring and early summer are the perfect times to bring your grass back to life. With a few smart steps, you can restore those bare patches and encourage a thick, green lawn that holds up all season.

Step 1: Identify the Cause
Before patching bald spots, determine the root cause. Was it snow mold? Dog urine? Grubs? Each problem might need a slightly different fix. If pests are to blame, treat them first so your new grass doesn't suffer the same fate.

Step 2: Loosen the Soil
Use a rake or garden fork to break up the compacted soil in the bare spots. This helps seed take root and improves drainage. Remove any remaining dead grass or debris.

Step 3: Apply Quality Grass Seed
Choose a grass seed blend suited for Maine's climate—typically a mix of Kentucky bluegrass, perennial ryegrass, and fine fescue. These varieties perform well in cool climates and recover quickly from damage.

Spread seed evenly over the loosened soil, and gently rake it in to ensure good contact. Cover with a thin layer of compost or topsoil to protect it from birds and help retain moisture.

Step 4: Water Consistently
Keep the seeded areas moist but not soaked. Water lightly once or

twice a day until seedlings are established, then gradually shift to deeper, less frequent watering.

Step 5: Fertilize Smartly
Once your grass is growing, fertilize with a slow-release, nitrogen-rich fertilizer designed for spring use. In Maine, late April through mid-May is ideal for the first application. Follow up with a second application in early summer if needed.


Avoid over-fertilizing, which can burn grass or encourage weed growth. Choose a product that includes crabgrass prevention if you've had issues in the past.

Bonus Tip: Aerate if Needed
If your lawn has a lot of traffic or drainage issues, aeration can help improve root growth and nutrient absorption.

With some targeted seeding, consistent watering, and proper fertilization, even the patchiest Maine lawn can be turned into a green, resilient yard you'll be proud of all season long. If you are not sure where to begin or simply don't have the time, you can find plenty of experienced companies in this guide that can help.


Hiring a professional ensures expert diagnosis of lawn issues, tailored treatment plans, and proper reseeding techniques. They save you time and effort while delivering lush, lasting results that boost curb appeal and lawn health. Plus, their knowledge of soil, grass types, and local climate helps prevent future problems. <

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SpringHOME & GARDEN

CARING FOR HOUSEPLANTS DURING SPRING & SUMMER

As the snow melts and the days grow longer in Maine, spring and summer bring a welcome shift, not just for people but also for our indoor plants. The transition from the harsh New England winter to warmer months means it's time to give your houseplants some seasonal TLC. Here are some region-specific tips to help your houseplants flourish:

1. Light Shifts with the Seasons: Maine's increasing daylight in spring and summer is a blessing, but it also means adjusting how and where you place your houseplants.

- **Reassess Sunlight:** The sun's angle changes in spring, and the intensity increases by summer. South-facing windows may suddenly deliver too much light for delicate foliage. Watch for signs of sunburn (bleached or crispy leaves) and consider using sheer curtains to filter light.
- **Rotate Regularly:** Rotate your plants weekly to promote even growth and prevent leaning.

2. Watering Wisely: With warmer weather comes increased evaporation and transpiration, but that doesn't mean it's time to flood your pots.

- **Check the Soil:** Always test the top inch of soil before watering. Some plants may dry out faster in the heat, while others still prefer slightly dry soil between waterings.

- **Humidity Boost:** Despite Maine's humid summers, air conditioning can dry indoor air. Use a pebble tray, misting, or a humidifier for tropical plants like ferns, calatheas, or orchids.

3. Feeding Time: Winter dormancy is over, now is the time to feed your plants.

- **Use Balanced Fertilizer:** A diluted liquid fertilizer every 2-4 weeks during the growing season helps support new growth.
- **Don't Overdo It:** Over-fertilizing can do more harm than good. Always follow the instructions on the label.

4. Repotting & Pruning: Spring is prime time for repotting and refreshing your plants.

- **Repot When Rootbound:** If you see roots circling the pot or poking out the drainage holes, it's time to upgrade to a slightly larger container.
- **Refresh the Soil:** Even if you don't repot, replace the top inch or two of old soil with fresh potting mix to boost nutrients.
- **Trim for Shape and Health:** Remove dead or yellowing leaves and leggy stems to encourage fuller, healthier growth.

5. Pest Patrol: As temperatures rise, so does pest activity.

- **Inspect Regularly:** Look for tiny webs, sticky residue, or distorted leaves. Common culprits include spider mites, aphids, and fungus gnats.
- **Natural Solutions:** Neem oil, insecticidal soap, and even a good rinse in the shower can keep pests at bay.

6. Vacation-Proofing Your Plants
If you're planning a weekend getaway to Acadia or a camping trip in the North Woods, don't forget about your plants.

- **Group Them Together:** Cluster plants in a low-light area to reduce water needs while you're away.
- **Self-Watering Tips:** Use self-watering spikes, or place a water-filled bottle upside-down into the soil for a slow release. <

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ALWAYS PERFORM A SPRING TREE CHECK

In early spring, it can be tricky to tell whether a bare tree in your yard is dead, dying, or simply taking its sweet time to wake up after another long Maine winter. While some species leaf out early, like maples and wil-

lows, others, such as oaks and ash, can lag well into late May before showing signs of life.

So how do you know if it's time to call an arborist or just be patient?

Here's how to tell if a tree needs to come down, or if it just needs a little more time and TLC.

Late Bloomer or Lifeless? Know the Difference

Just because a tree hasn't leafed out yet doesn't mean it's dead. Temperature swings and soil conditions can affect blooming times. Before rushing into removal, check for these signs of life:

- **Scratch Test:** Use your fingernail or a small knife to lightly scratch the bark of a small branch. If the layer underneath is green and moist, your tree is still alive.
- **Buds vs. Barren:** Look closely at the tips of branches. Are there small buds, even if they're not open yet? That's a good sign the tree is just a bit behind schedule.
- **Flexibility:** Gently bend a few smaller twigs. Live ones are flexible and bend without snapping. Dead ones will break cleanly and feel brittle.

Signs a Tree May Need to Come Down

If you're noticing any of the following, your tree may be hazardous and

should be evaluated by a certified arborist:

- No buds at all by late spring (end of May to early June)
- Large branches that are cracked, split, or hanging
- Mushrooms or fungus growing at the base of the trunk (a sign of internal rot)
- Peeling bark, deep vertical cracks, or holes from pests
- A pronounced lean, especially if the roots look like they're lifting on one side
- Sudden leaf drop or leaf discoloration on just one side of the tree

Remember, a dead or structurally compromised tree isn't just unsightly, it's dangerous. Falling limbs or whole trees can cause property damage, power outages, or injuries during spring and summer storms.

When to Call in a Pro: Tree removal is not a DIY task. If you suspect a tree is dead or hazardous contact one of the many licensed arborist in this section to assess it. Most offer free consultations. Don't wait until hurricane or thunderstorm season, removal companies get very busy after the first big storm. If the tree is near your home, power lines, or public roads, removal may require special permits or coordination with utility companies. <

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SIMPLE TIPS TO REFRESH YOUR SPACE FOR SPRING

As winter fades and the days grow longer, spring offers the perfect opportunity to breathe new life into your home. Refreshing your space with bright colors, light fabrics, and nature-inspired decor can energize your environment and your mood. Here's how to bring the beauty of spring indoors with simple, stylish updates.

1. **Embrace a Lighter Palette**
Start by switching out darker winter hues for softer, more vibrant tones. Think pastel blues, sunny yellows, sage greens, and blush pinks. You don't need to repaint the whole house—try incorporating these colors through accent pieces like throw pillows, vases, or artwork. Swapping out heavy drapes for sheer curtains in lighter tones can also instantly brighten a room.
2. **Refresh Textiles**
Replace cozy winter textiles with breezier options. Linen or cotton throws, light area rugs, and fresh bedding in floral prints or soft solids can create a springtime vibe. Mix patterns for a playful look—like pairing stripes with florals or geometric designs in a



- similar color palette.
3. **Bring in Natural Elements**
Nothing says spring like greenery. Add potted plants, fresh flowers, or even faux arrangements to breathe life into your space. Tulips, daffodils, and hyacinths are classic spring blooms, while greenery like eucalyptus or ferns adds a modern, minimal touch. Place arrangements in different areas—on your dining table, windowsills, or entryway console—for maximum impact.
4. **Update Your Wall Art**
Refreshing your artwork is an easy and affordable way to transform your space. Look for prints that reflect the season—botanicals, landscapes, or bright abstract pieces. You can also rotate family photos or DIY some spring-themed wall art for a personal touch.

5. **Swap Out Accessories**
Small decor changes can make a big difference. Replace heavy candles and dark vases with glass or ceramic pieces in light colors. Add a new doormat with a cheerful message, or hang a spring-themed wreath on your

door. Even updating your coffee table decor with a tray of seasonal items—like books, a small plant, and a scented candle—can add fresh energy.

6. **Declutter and Rearrange**
Spring is a natural time for a deep clean and decluttering. Clear out what you no longer use and give your rooms a fresh layout. Rearranging furniture can make your space feel new without spending a dime.

With a few intentional changes, your home can reflect the renewal and joy of spring. Add color, invite in nature, and let the season inspire a lighter, brighter living space. <

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GARDEN TIPS FOR GROWING YOUR OWN PRODUCE

Growing your own produce in Maine is a rewarding way to enjoy fresh, healthy food right from your backyard. With its unique climate and short growing season, gardening in Maine requires a little planning—

but the results are well worth the effort.

hours of direct sunlight. Choose a sunny spot and consider using row covers or cold frames early in the season to help warm the soil and protect young plants from chilly nights.

Start with the Right Timing

Maine’s growing season typically runs from late May through September, depending on your location. Begin by checking your local USDA hardiness zone and frost dates. Start seeds indoors in late winter for crops like tomatoes, peppers, and eggplant, and transplant them outside after the danger of frost has passed.

Choose Hardy, Cold-Tolerant Plants

Select vegetables that grow well in cooler climates. Root crops like carrots, beets, and potatoes thrive in Maine’s soil and weather. Leafy greens such as kale, spinach, and lettuce also perform well, especially in early spring and fall.

Use Raised Beds and Mulch

Maine soils can be rocky and acidic. Raised garden beds filled with high-quality soil improve drainage and soil conditions. Add mulch around your plants to retain moisture, reduce weeds, and regulate soil temperature.

Maximize Sun and Warmth

Most vegetables need at least six

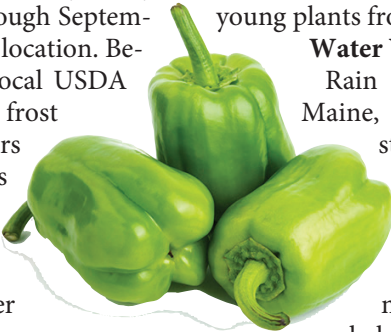
Water Wisely

Rain is common in Maine, but droughts can still happen. Water deeply and less frequently to encourage strong root growth. Early morning watering helps prevent fungal diseases.

Extend Your Season

Take advantage of Maine’s cool fall weather by planting a second crop of fast-growing vegetables like radishes, spinach, and lettuce in late summer. Cold frames or hoop houses can also extend your growing season well into the fall.

Top 20 most popular veggies grown in Maine are: Potatoes, Carrots, Beets, Radishes, Turnips, Onions, Garlic, Lettuce, Spinach, Kale, Swiss Chard, Cabbage, Broccoli, Brussels Sprouts, Peas (Snap & Shelling), Green Beans (Bush & Pole), Zucchini, Summer Squash, Tomatoes (short-season or cold-tolerant varieties) and many varieties of Peppers. <



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SpringHOME & GARDEN

HOW TO ATTRACT HUMMINGBIRDS TO YOUR YARD

Spring and summer in Maine bring vibrant life back to our yards—and few visitors are more enchanting than hummingbirds. With their shimmering feathers and high-speed wings, these tiny pollinators are not only a joy to watch, but they also play a key role in the garden by helping pollinate flowers.

Here’s how you can attract hummingbirds to your Maine yard and a few fun facts that make them even more fascinating.

How to Attract Hummingbirds in Maine

1. Plant Nectar-Rich Flowers

Native flowers are ideal because they’re adapted to local conditions and bloom when hummingbirds are most active (May through September).

Great flower choices include:

- Bee balm (Monarda)
- Columbine
- Trumpet honeysuckle
- Cardinal flower
- Coral bells

• Lupine

Hummingbirds are drawn to bright colors—especially reds, oranges, and purples. Group flowers together in clusters for a bigger visual impact and easier access for the birds.

2. Put Up a Feeder

A classic sugar-water feeder is an excellent supplement, especially early in the season.

Use a simple recipe: 1 part white sugar to 4 parts water. No dye needed! Boil the mixture to dissolve the sugar, cool it, and refill feeders every 2–3 days (daily during hot weather).

Clean feeders thoroughly each time to prevent mold or bacteria.

3. Create a Hummingbird-Friendly Habitat

Provide shelter with trees, shrubs, or even tall native grasses.

Add a misting fountain or shallow water source for bathing and cooling off.

Avoid pesticides—these harm both hummingbirds and the insects they sometimes feed on for protein.

Fun Hummingbird Facts You Might Not Know

- They’re true long-distance flyers: Maine’s ruby-throated hummingbirds migrate over 2,000 miles—including a nonstop flight across the Gulf of Mexico.
- They remember you: Hummingbirds can recognize individual people and will return to the same feeders year after year if they’re treated well!
- They have excellent memories: Hummingbirds remember which flowers they’ve visited and when they’ll refill with nectar.
- They can hover and fly backwards: Thanks to unique shoulder

joints, they’re the only birds that can fly in all directions—even upside down!

- They’re tiny but mighty: A ruby-throated hummingbird weighs about the same as a nickel but can beat its wings over 50 times per second.

With just a few thoughtful plantings and a bit of care, your Maine yard can become a haven for hummingbirds all season long. Whether you’re sipping coffee on the porch or tending to your flowers, spotting one of these iridescent guests is always a special treat. Happy planting—and happy hummingbird watching! <



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SpringHOME & GARDEN

OUTDOOR POWER EQUIPMENT CHECKS PARAMOUNT

When spring is on its way, homeowners are often eager to get outside and spruce up their yards. It's important when doing so to keep safety in mind.

"Before you use a mower, trimmer, blower, chain saw, pruner or other piece of outdoor power equipment this season, it's important to refresh yourself on handling and safety procedures," said Kris Kiser, president and CEO of the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI), an international trade association representing outdoor power equipment, small en-

gine and utility vehicle manufacturers and suppliers. "We're all eager to get outside and enjoy the living landscape after a long winter but take the time to do basic maintenance now to ensure your equipment operates safely for the season and is ready to get the job done."

These six tips can help:

1. Read your owner's manual. Follow all guidelines for your outdoor power equipment and familiarize yourself with the controls. If you have lost your manual, look it up online (and save a copy on your computer for

easy reference in the future).

2. Inspect equipment. Check for loose belts and missing or damaged parts. Replace any parts needed or take your equipment to a qualified service representative for servicing.

3. Drain old fuel. Never leave fuel sitting in the gas tank of your equipment for more than 30 days. Untreated gasoline (without a fuel stabilizer) left in the system will deteriorate, which may cause starting or running problems and, in some cases, significant damage to the fuel system.

4. Protect your power by using only E10 or less fuel in outdoor power equipment. Some gas stations may offer 15 percent ethanol (E15) gas or higher-ethanol fuel blends but any fuel containing more than 10 percent ethanol can damage and is illegal to use in small engine equipment not designed for it.

5. Store fuel safely. Label your fuel can with the date of purchase and ethanol content of the fuel. Never put "old" gas in your outdoor power equipment. If you don't know the date of purchase, dispose of the fuel in the can safely and buy fresh fuel. Always store fuel out of the reach of children

or pets and in approved containers.

6. Clean equipment. Remove any dirt, oil or grass stuck to it. Clean equipment will run more efficiently and last longer.

If you're unsure how to maintain or repair outdoor equipment, taking it to a professional small engine shop is a smart move. Experts can quickly diagnose issues, perform proper maintenance, and prevent costly breakdowns. They'll ensure your mower, portable generator, or trimmer runs safely, efficiently, and lasts longer, giving you peace of mind.

"Now is also a good time to assess your outdoor power equipment needs," adds Kiser. "Whether you're needing battery-, gasoline-, propane-, diesel- or hybrid-powered equipment, there is a product to fit your unique needs that can handle any job." (NAPSI) <



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SpringHOME & GARDEN

5 FUN OUTDOOR PROJECTS FOR KIDS WITH SIDEWALK CHALK

As soon as Maine sidewalks are free of snow and ice, kids can't wait to get outside and make their mark. Sidewalk chalk is the ultimate spring-time art supply: inexpensive, easy to use, and only as limited as your child's imagination.

Looking for ways to turn an afternoon of doodling into an adventure?

Here are five creative, screen-free chalk projects to try with your kids this season—no art degree required.

1. Giant Outdoor Board Games

Transform your driveway or patio into a life-sized board game!

- Draw a huge checkerboard, tic-tac-toe grid, or even a winding "Candy Land" path.

- Use rocks, pinecones, or toy cars as playing pieces.
 - Kids can invent their own rules—creativity counts as extra points!
- 2. Self-Portrait Silhouettes**
- Lay down a beach towel or yoga mat, have your child strike a silly pose, and trace their outline in chalk.
- Let them fill in their "chalk selves" with wild hair, superhero costumes, or favorite outfits.
 - Take pictures to send to grandparents—they'll love seeing the masterpieces.
- 3. Obstacle Course Challenge**
- Create a colorful sidewalk obstacle course with arrows, shapes, and silly instructions:
- "Hop on one foot to the yellow star!"
 - "Spin three times at the squiggly line!"
 - "Bear crawl from the heart to the X!"
- Not only does this burn off energy, but it helps with balance and coordination, too.
- 4. Nature Rubbings**
- Take a piece of paper and place it over tree bark, a leaf, or the porch steps.
- Rub the side of a chalk stick gently across the paper.
 - Watch the hidden patterns ap-



pear!

- Use different colors and surfaces for a full "nature art" gallery.

5. Spring Story Murals

Work together to create an entire chalk story across your driveway.

- Start with a scene (a Maine lighthouse, your family, a parade of animals).
- Add speech bubbles, names, or silly captions.
- Each person can draw a new "chapter" or character.

When you're done, take a "walking tour" and tell the story out loud!

Bonus: Rain in the forecast? Let the kids know their masterpieces are "limited editions"—and watch their excitement grow when it's time to create something brand new after the next shower.

So grab a box of chalk, head outside, and let your sidewalk become the canvas for springtime memories. <

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SpringHOME & GARDEN



REDUCING HOME ALLERGENS HELPS IMPROVE HEALTH

As the warmer seasons unfold, a host of allergens and irritants become more prevalent, potentially disrupting your daily life and health, especially if you have asthma and allergies.

According to the Allergy and Asthma Foundation of America (AAFA), millions of people are affected by allergies, and understanding how to control your environment can significantly improve your quality of life during this beautiful but challenging season.

Here are effective strategies and types of products that can help reduce allergens and irritants in your home:

Air Purifiers: Invest in a good air purifier. Devices with HEPA filters are especially effective at trapping allergens such as pollen, pet dander, and dust mites. To maximize their effectiveness, put air purifiers in commonly used areas such as bedrooms and living rooms.

Humidity Control: Maintain indoor humidity levels between 30 percent and 50 percent. Humidifiers can add moisture to dry air, while dehumidifiers can help control mold growth and dust mites by reducing excess moisture. Both tools are essential in creating a balanced indoor environment.

Regular Cleaning: Weekly cleaning can significantly reduce the presence of allergens. Use a vacuum cleaner with a HEPA filter to capture the fine particles that traditional vacuums may recirculate into the air. Remember



to wear a dust mask while cleaning to avoid inhaling allergens.

Bedding and Upholstery: Encase mattresses and pillows in dust mite-proof covers. Wash bedding weekly in hot water to kill dust mites and remove allergens. Additionally, consider washing or replacing curtains and deep cleaning upholstery where allergens can linger.

Replace HVAC Filters: Regularly replace the filters in your heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems. Opt for filters with a high MERV (Minimum Efficiency Reporting Value) rating that can capture smaller particles, thus improving indoor air quality. Check with your manufacturer to ensure you're using the right MERV rating for your system. Using a filter with too high a rating for your system can cause more harm than good, taxing your system and shortening its lifespan.

Enhance Ventilation: Improve your home's ventilation by opening windows when the pollen count is low or using exhaust fans in the kitchen and bathrooms to reduce moisture and cooking fumes, which can exacerbate asthma symptoms.

Air Duct Cleaning: Consider having your air ducts cleaned by a certified professional. Over time, dust, mold, and other allergens can accumulate in your duct system, affecting the overall air quality and efficiency of your HVAC system. Cleaning your air ducts can help ensure that these irritants are removed, providing cleaner,

fresher airflow throughout your home.

Pollen-Free Zone: Keep windows and doors closed during high pollen days. Use air conditioning in your home and car to keep pollen out. Remove your shoes at the door and shower after being outdoors to wash pollen off your skin and hair.

Control Pet Dander: If you have pets, groom them regularly to reduce the dander they shed. Also, establish pet-free zones, especially in bedrooms, to minimize allergy exposure while sleeping.

Consider Indoor Plants: Some

plants can help improve indoor air quality. However, it's important to choose wisely, as some plants can also be sources of mold or pollen. Spider plants and ferns are good options for improving air without increasing allergens.

By integrating these strategies you can significantly reduce the impact of allergens and irritants during the allergy and asthma season. Living with allergies and asthma can be challenging, but with these tips, you might be able to enjoy the season without all the sneezing. (NAPSI) <

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SpringHOME & GARDEN

SPRING CLEANING: MORE THAN JUST A FRESH START

When the snow finally melts and the birds return to Maine skies, it can only mean one thing: spring has arrived, and so has the urge to clean. But spring cleaning isn't just about wiping down baseboards and organizing closets, it's also about maintaining a healthier, safer, and more enjoyable home environment.

Here's how to approach spring cleaning with both purpose and practicality, whether you're in a coastal cottage or a wooded farmhouse.

- **Start with the Air You Breathe**
 - Change HVAC or furnace filters.
 - Dust vents and baseboards.
 - Clean ceiling fans before turning them on for the season.

– Consider an air purifier if you have allergies or pets.

Pro tip: use a damp cloth instead of a feather duster — it traps dust rather than spreading it around.

- **Let the Light In — Literally**
 - Wash windows inside and out using a vinegar-water solution or a commercial streak-free cleaner.
 - Check screens for holes or tears and replace them before bug season.
 - Wipe down windowsills and tracks, which often collect mold or mildew during colder months.

• **Declutter One Room at a Time**
Trying to tackle the whole house at once is overwhelming. Instead, go room by room and use the four-box method: keep, donate, toss, relocate.

Focus on high-traffic zones like entryways, kitchens, and bathrooms where clutter tends to pile up over winter.

- **Don't Forget the Hidden Dirt**
 - Vacuum behind appliances and under beds.

- Clean inside the dishwasher, washer, and garbage disposal.
- Disinfect doorknobs, remotes, light switches, and cabinet handles.

These small tasks can make a big difference in cutting down germs and allergens.

- **Tidy Up the Outdoors**
 - Rake leaves and clear debris from flower beds.

- Sweep porches, patios, and walkways.

- Check gutters for leftover ice damage or blockages.

- Organize sheds and garages while the weather is still cool.

- If you're thinking about power washing, spring is a great time — just wait until temperatures consistently stay above freezing.

Spring cleaning isn't just a tradition, it's a chance to reset, refresh, and reclaim your space after a long Maine winter. Whether you spend a full weekend deep cleaning, take it one drawer at a time, or hire a professional to help, your home (and your peace of mind) will thank you.

Here's to clean windows, open windows, and a fresh new season. <

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SpringHOME & GARDEN

CHOOSING THE RIGHT PERENNIALS FOR MAINE GARDENS

Gardening in Maine offers a unique opportunity to embrace the state’s natural beauty and changing seasons. With its cold winters and relatively short growing season, Maine’s climate demands hardy, low-maintenance plants that can thrive in USDA hardiness zones 3 to 5. Perennials, plants that come back year after year, are an excellent choice for gardeners seeking long-lasting color, structure, and purpose in their landscapes. Choosing the right perennials can enhance your garden not only for aesthetic appeal but also to attract beneficial insects, create privacy, and support a healthy ecosystem.

Color All Season Long

One of the most popular reasons to plant perennials is to enjoy vibrant color throughout the growing season. When selecting perennials for color, consider bloom times to ensure continuous interest from spring through fall.

- Spring: Early bloomers like Bleeding Heart (*Dicentra spectabilis*) and Pasque Flower (*Pulsatilla vulgaris*) are great for kicking off the season.
- Summer: For bold mid-season color, try Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*), Coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*), and Bee Balm (*Monarda didyma*). These not only add cheerful color but also handle Maine’s summer temperatures well.
- Fall: Extend the color with Sedum ‘Autumn Joy’ or New England Aster (*Symphyotrichum novae-angliae*), both of which bloom well into

October.

Choosing a mix of bloom times and colors ensures your garden never looks dull, even as the seasons change.

Attracting Pollinators and Beneficial Insects

Creating a pollinator-friendly garden is both rewarding and environmentally important. Many Maine-native perennials support bees, butterflies, and other beneficial insects.

- Milkweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) is essential for Monarch butterflies.
- Joe-Pye Weed (*Eutrochium purpureum*) attracts a wide variety of pollinators and adds height and texture.
- Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) and Purple Coneflower are also excellent for attracting bees and butterflies while providing long-lasting blooms.

Planting in clusters and using native varieties increases visibility and accessibility for pollinators. Avoid chemical pesticides, as they can harm the very insects you’re trying to support.

Perennials for Privacy and Structure

Perennials can also be used strategically to define spaces, add privacy, or provide visual interest in the landscape. While shrubs and trees are common for these purposes, some tall and bushy perennials are up to the task.



- Tall Ornamental Grasses like Switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*) and Feather Reed Grass (*Calamagrostis acutiflora*) offer vertical interest and movement in the wind.
- Delphinium, Joe-Pye Weed, and Hollyhocks can create a living screen when planted in groups.
- For shady areas, Hostas provide a lush, layered look that works well along borders and fences.

These plants can soften hard edges, break up open spaces, and provide a sense of enclosure while still being beautiful and easy to maintain.

Low-Maintenance and Hardy Choices

Given Maine’s cold winters, it’s crucial to choose perennials that can

withstand frost and rebound strongly in spring. Look for hardy plants labeled for Zones 3–5.

- Daylilies (*Hemerocallis*), Peonies, and Lupines are all well-suited to Maine’s climate.
- Astilbe is perfect for moist, shady spots.
- Ground covers like Creeping Phlox and Ajuga can handle cold winters and help control weeds.

Once established, most perennials require minimal care—just some occasional dividing, dead-heading, and mulching to keep them healthy and tidy.

Perennials are a smart, sustainable choice for Maine gardeners looking to create a landscape that is as functional as it is beautiful. Whether you want to fill your yard with seasonal color, support pollinators, establish privacy, or simply enjoy a garden that comes back year after year, there’s a wide range of perennial options perfectly suited for Maine’s climate. With thoughtful planning and a little local know-how, your garden can flourish year after year, providing beauty, purpose, and resilience in every season. <



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SpringHOME & GARDEN

BRIGHTEN YOUR OUTDOORS WITH FLAGS & DECORATIVE BANNERS

When it comes to sprucing up your yard or outdoor space, few things make as big an impact with as little effort as decorative flags and banners. These vibrant accents are a fun, easy, and affordable way to add personality, color, and seasonal flair to your outdoor areas.

Flags and banners come in countless styles, sizes, and themes, making it simple to find designs that suit your taste or match your home's aesthetic.

Whether you're celebrating a holiday, showing off your hobbies, supporting a favorite sports team, or simply welcoming guests with a cheerful "Hello," there's a flag or banner for just about every occasion and sentiment.

One of the best things about using decorative flags is their versatility. Garden flags can be staked into flower beds or planters, while larger house flags can be mounted on porches, fences, or posts. Some even hang from balconies

or mailbox posts, instantly transforming even the most basic outdoor spot into something festive and eye-catching. Many banners are double-sided and weather-resistant, making them a reliable choice for year-round display.

Seasonal decorating becomes effortless with a collection of flags you can rotate throughout the year. Think bright florals in spring, patriotic themes in summer, pumpkins and leaves in fall, and snowflakes or holiday motifs in winter. This simple change can keep your space feeling fresh and timely without the need for major overhauls or costly landscaping.

Decorative banners also add move-

ment and visual interest, fluttering in the breeze and catching the eye of passersby. They can help create a welcoming atmosphere for gatherings, special events, or everyday curb appeal.

In short, flags and banners are a creative and low-maintenance way to dress up your yard. With just a few strategically placed pieces, you can express your style, celebrate the seasons, and bring life to your outdoor space—all without breaking the bank. So next time your yard needs a little something extra, consider raising a flag or unfurling a banner. The results might surprise you!

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SpringHOME & GARDEN

A GUIDE TO CHOOSING THE RIGHT PAVING STONES

Spring is the perfect time to refresh your outdoor spaces, and paving stones are a versatile way to create beautiful, durable surfaces. Whether you’re installing a new patio, walkway, or driveway, choosing the right pavers can make all the difference in the longevity and look of your project. Here’s what to consider as you plan your next upgrade:

1. Define the Purpose of Your Project: Think about how the area will be used. Most pavers are well suited for patios and garden paths, but driveways require more strength and thickness to withstand vehicle traffic. Make sure to select a paver that matches the functional needs of your space.

2. Consider a Permeable Installation

If your yard has drainage issues, or if you’re interested in sustainable landscaping, permeable pavers are an excellent solution. These systems allow rainwater to flow through the joints and into the ground below, helping reduce runoff and recharge groundwater. Permeable paver installations are ideal for lakefront patios, protecting water quality and reducing erosion along the shoreline.

3. Choose the Right Paver Size for the Space

- Large-format pavers create a

clean, contemporary look and are ideal for patios and open areas. They can also make smaller spaces feel more expansive by reducing the number of joint lines.

- Smaller pavers work well in narrow walkways, intricate layouts, or curved garden paths. Their manageable size makes them easier to handle, especially for DIY installations.

- Mixed sizes create a dynamic, custom appearance and lend visual interest to large areas.

4. Think About Surface Texture

- Smooth pavers offer a sleek, modern surface that pairs well with minimalist designs. They’re also practical for outdoor dining areas, where stability is key.

- Textured pavers mimic natural materials like flagstone or cobblestone and add warmth and character. They’re great for creating a rustic or traditional feel.

5. Explore Patterns and Layout Options

How you arrange your pavers has a big impact on the final design:

- Interlocking patterns like herringbone offer exceptional interlock and structural strength, making them ideal for driveways.

- Linear patterns create clean, streamlined lines with a minimalist

feel.

- Random “ashlar” patterns blend multiple sizes for a natural, organic look that adds depth to larger spaces.

- Decorative patterns like basketweave lend traditional charm and are well suited for patios and garden paths.

- Borders and accents can define edges, highlight focal points, or frame specific areas.

6. Mix It Up with Color and Contrast

Don’t be afraid to experiment with multiple colors and patterns. Try using different paver styles to define zones within your landscape while still maintaining a cohesive look. Even a simple circle kit or accent border can transform a standard patio into a standout feature.

7. See Samples in Person

Pavers can look very different in real life than they do online or in print. Visiting a local hardscape supplier gives you the chance to see and feel the materials in person—and many suppliers offer outdoor display areas so you can visualize how materials will look in your own yard.

8. Choose Materials Built for Your Climate

In regions like Maine, with freeze-thaw cycles and tough winters, choos-

ing pavers manufactured specifically to withstand these conditions can ensure your investment holds up over time. Look for locally manufactured pavers, which are often tailored to regional climate needs, and a strong warranty.

9. Look for Sustainable Options

If you’re trying to make more environmentally responsible choices, keep an eye out for pavers made with low-carbon concrete mixes. These newer formulations reduce the embodied carbon of your hardscape project while maintaining long-term strength and performance.

By balancing aesthetics, functionality, and sustainability, you can design an outdoor space that’s not only beautiful but built to last. Take your time exploring your options, talk to professionals who understand the nuances of paver selection and installation, and don’t be afraid to ask questions, especially when it comes to product origin, warranties, or environmental impact.

Your outdoor upgrade starts with a solid foundation—and the right paving stone can make all the difference.

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SpringHOME & GARDEN

CHIMNEY CLEANING: WHAT TO LOOK FOR THIS SPRING

As the snow melts and the wood stove goes quiet for the season, it's easy to forget about your chimney. But spring is actually the perfect time for a chimney check-up. After months of heavy use and exposure to harsh winter weather, your chimney may need cleaning, repairs, or preventative maintenance.

Here's what to look for this spring to make sure your chimney is safe, clean, and ready for next season.

1. Creosote Buildup

If you burned wood throughout the winter, creosote buildup is almost guaranteed. This sticky, flammable residue lines the inside of your chimney and is the leading cause of chimney fires. A quick flashlight check inside the flue can show you if there's a thick, black coating (it can look shiny, flaky, or tar-like). If you see even a quarter-inch of buildup, it's time to schedule a cleaning.

Tip: Don't try to clean it yourself unless you have the right tools and experience. A certified chimney sweep has specialized brushes and vacuums to safely remove creosote.

2. Cracks or Damage in the Masonry

Maine winters are brutal on bricks and mortar. Freeze-thaw cycles can cause cracking or crumbling in the

chimney structure, especially near the crown or the top few rows. In spring, walk around your home and check for:

- Missing or cracked bricks
- Loose or crumbling mortar joints
- White, chalky stains (a sign of water damage called efflorescence)

Left unchecked, moisture damage can lead to serious structural problems — and expensive repairs down the line.

3. Chimney Cap and Crown Issues

The chimney cap (a protective cover) keeps out rain, animals, and debris. The crown (the concrete slab at the top) prevents water from seeping into the chimney structure. Both are essential to chimney health. In spring, look for:

- A missing or tilted chimney cap
- Rust or deterioration on a metal cap
- Cracks in the crown or signs of pooling water

A damaged or missing cap also invites nesting birds and small critters. No one wants a surprise raccoon in their flue come fall!

4. Signs of Moisture Inside

Check the area around your fireplace or stove for signs of water intrusion — peeling wallpaper, damp smells, or staining. Moisture entering through the chimney could be a result

of flashing failure (where the chimney meets the roof) or damaged bricks/mortar. Spring is a great time to fix this before Maine's summer thunderstorms roll in.

5. Rust or Damage in Your Fireplace or Stove

Rust on your damper, firebox, or stove pipe? That's a sign water is getting where it shouldn't. It could mean your cap isn't doing its job or your flue has cracks. Addressing these issues now can prevent further corrosion or

damage to your heating system.

Chimney maintenance isn't just about keeping things clean — it's about keeping your home and family safe. Spring inspections catch problems early, save money, and ensure your chimney is ready for cozy fires next fall.

If it's been over a year since your last chimney sweep, or you're seeing signs of damage, call a certified chimney professional. A spring cleaning now means peace of mind later. <

DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know that used coffee grounds can be a powerful addition to your garden? Rich in nitrogen, coffee grounds can help improve soil structure, attract beneficial earthworms, and even deter common pests like slugs and snails. When added to compost, they contribute valuable organic matter that supports healthy plant growth.

Sprinkle them lightly around acid-loving plants like tomatoes, blueberries, and roses—or mix them into your compost pile to balance green (nitrogen-rich) and brown (carbon-rich) materials. Just be careful not to overdo it—too many coffee grounds in one spot can compact and create a barrier to water.

So, the next time you brew a pot of coffee, don't toss those grounds—your garden will thank you!

Spring is the Best Time for a Chimney Inspection and Clean!



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SpringHOME & GARDEN

RENT OR BUY? HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF EQUIPMENT RENTAL FOR HOME AND YARD PROJECTS

Tackling home and yard projects can be incredibly satisfying—and sometimes overwhelming. Whether you're building a new deck, landscaping your yard, or cleaning up after a storm, the right tools make all the difference. But before you rush out to buy that pricey piece of equipment, consider whether renting might be the smarter option.

Why Equipment Rental Makes Sense

For many homeowners, equipment rental offers convenience, cost savings, and flexibility. Rental companies provide access to a wide range of professional-grade tools and machinery—from pressure washers and chainsaws to skid steers and mini-excavators—without the upfront cost of ownership.

Renting is ideal for tasks that are seasonal, one-time, or occasional. For instance, most people don't aerate their lawn every month or need a stump grinder regularly. In those cases, renting ensures you have access to the right equipment when you need it, without the burden of storage, maintenance, or repairs.

Common Projects That Are Perfect for Renting Equipment:

- Yard cleanup: Leaf blowers, chainsaws, and chippers for fall or



storm debris.

- Lawn care: Aerators, dethatchers, and overseeders for spring and fall prep.
- Landscaping: Sod cutters, tillers, or trenchers for garden beds and irrigation lines.
- Home improvement: Floor sanders, pressure washers, or cement mixers for remodeling projects.
- Heavy-duty work: Skid steers, mini-excavators, and dump trailers for digging, grading, or hauling.

Benefits of Renting:

- Cost-effective: You avoid the high upfront cost and ongoing expenses like maintenance, fuel, parts, and storage.
- Access to professional equipment: Rental gear is often newer and well-maintained.
- Try before you buy: Renting gives you a chance to test out equipment before committing to a purchase.

When Buying Makes More Sense

While renting is great for short-term needs, buying equipment can be a better long-term investment if you use it regularly. If you mow your lawn weekly, it makes sense to own a mower. The same goes for snowblowers in a snowy climate, or power washers if you use them several times a year.

Here are a few questions to ask yourself before buying:

- Will I use this more than three to four times a year?
- Do I have a place to store and maintain the equipment properly?
- Am I comfortable doing basic repairs or servicing, or will I need to pay someone to do it?
- Is there a resale value if I decide to upgrade or stop using it?

Great Tools to Own:

- Lawn mowers and trimmers
- Snowblowers
- Basic power tools (drills, saws, etc.)
- Leaf blowers
- Small tillers (for gardening)

Combining Rent and Own Strategies

Many homeowners find that a hybrid approach works best. You might own frequently used tools and rent specialty equipment as needed. For ex-

ample, you might own a lawnmower and trimmer, but rent a stump grinder or log splitter once a year. This strategy helps manage costs while still giving you access to the right tools for the job.

Tips for Renting Equipment:

- Plan ahead: Reserve equipment early, especially during peak seasons like spring and fall.
- Know your timeline: Understand how long you'll need the tool and ask about half-day or weekend rates.
- Inspect before use: Make sure everything is in working order before you leave the rental shop.
- Ask for guidance: Rental shops have experts who can explain how to safely and effectively use the equipment.

Using an equipment rental service can help you complete home and yard projects more efficiently and affordably. Whether you're digging a trench, clearing land, or power-washing your siding, the decision to rent or buy depends on how often you'll use the tool and whether you're ready for the responsibilities that come with ownership.

The key is to match the tool to the task and your lifestyle. Rent when it makes sense, buy when it's worth it—and enjoy the satisfaction of getting the job done right. <

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HOW TO START YOUR OWN HERB GARDEN FOR ALL USES

There’s something magical about walking outside, snipping a sprig of rosemary or mint, and using it in your kitchen or for a quick herbal tea. Whether you’re soothing a sore throat, seasoning a roast chicken, or calming your nerves with chamomile, an herb garden can be both healing and delicious.

In Maine, with our short but productive growing season, herbs thrive in containers, raised beds, or garden plots. Many herbs offer dual benefits: culinary flavor and medicinal value. With a bit of planning, your garden can become a powerful, all-natural apothecary and pantry.

Here’s how to get started — with plant suggestions, growing tips, and inspiration for using what you grow.

Choose the Right Herbs

For a garden that works double duty in the kitchen and medicine cabinet, start with these easy-to-grow, multi-tasking herbs:

- Basil
 - Kitchen: Perfect for pasta, salads, and pesto.
 - Medicinal: Anti-inflammatory; may help with digestion and anxiety.
 - Tip: Needs warmth and sun, plant after the last frost.
- Mint
 - Kitchen: Refreshing in drinks, desserts, and sauces.

– Medicinal: Helps with nausea, headaches, and indigestion.

Tip: Contain it, mint spreads aggressively.

• Rosemary

- Kitchen: Great for meats, potatoes, and bread.

– Medicinal: Improves circulation and memory, soothes muscle pain.

– Tip: Loves sun and well-drained soil; bring it inside in winter.

• Chamomile

- Kitchen: Used for calming tea.
- Medicinal: Aids sleep and digestion.

– Tip: Harvest the daisy-like flowers; best grown in full sun.

• Thyme

- Kitchen: Delicious in soups, stews, and roasted vegetables.

– Medicinal: Antimicrobial and antiseptic, great for colds.

– Tip: Very hardy; thrives even in rocky soil.

• Lemon Balm

- Kitchen: Lovely in tea, fruit salads, or herbal syrups.

– Medicinal: Reduces stress, improves sleep.

– Tip: Another spreader — grow in a pot or trim often.



Choose Where to Plant

You don’t need a huge yard. Herbs are flexible:

– Raised Beds: Ideal for Maine’s rocky soil. Add compost for richness.

– Containers: Perfect for patios or small spaces. Choose pots with drainage holes.

– Garden Beds: Great for long-term herbs like thyme or sage. Group herbs by their watering and sunlight needs for better results.

Most herbs prefer full sun (6+ hours a day) and well-drained soil. Avoid overwatering – soggy roots are the quickest way to kill your plants.

Harvest and Use

Regular harvesting encourages new growth and more flavorful leaves.

– Harvest in the morning when es-

sential oils are strongest.

– Pinch basil just above a pair of leaves to encourage bushiness.

– Snip rosemary and thyme stems, but never strip a plant bare.

– Cut mint and lemon balm before they flower for best flavor.

You can dry extras by hanging bunches upside down in a cool, dry space, or use a dehydrator. Store in airtight containers away from light.

Everyday Uses

Herbs can do more than spice up dinner. Here are a few ways to use what you grow:

– Tea: Steep fresh chamomile, lemon balm, or mint for calming blends.

– Cooking: Add rosemary, thyme, and sage to soups, stews, and roasts.

– Skincare: Infuse herbs like calendula or lavender (if you add them!) into oils for balms.

– Aromatherapy: Sniff fresh basil or rosemary to uplift your mood.

An herb garden is one of the most rewarding and low-maintenance additions to your home. Whether you’re a beginner gardener or seasoned grower, these plants offer natural remedies and incredible flavor—right from your backyard.

Start with a few herbs you love and build from there. You’ll be amazed how much joy, peace, and purpose a few leafy greens can bring. <

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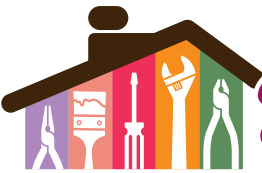
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SpringHOME & GARDEN



“IF YOUR HOUSE WERE A MAINER...”

We all know someone like this: wears Bean boots year-round, keeps a snow shovel in the truck even in July, and says “ayuh” with pride. But what if your house were a Mainer?

No matter your home’s personality, spring is the time to help it shine again. So, just for fun, here’s our totally unofficial, oddly accurate “If Your House Were a Mainer” Spring Prep Guide.

• **If Your House Were a Mainer... It’d Insist on Doing Things the Hard Way (but Right).**

What to do: Check your roof, chimney, and gutters - even if you “did that last fall.” Winter in Maine is unpredictable, and small issues can turn big fast.

Translation: Patch the roof before it leaks. Not after.

• **If Your House Were a Mainer... It’d Never Invite Anyone In Without Sweeping the Mudroom.**

What to do: Power wash the porch, beat the welcome mat, and make sure the door doesn’t stick.

Bonus: Add a new plant by the entryway. It’s basically the house version of putting on clean flannel.

• **If Your House Were a Mainer... It’d Say “That’ll Do” About That Tree That’s Leaning.**

What to do: Don’t wait. Check for dead or damaged trees before spring storms roll through. Call a pro if needed.

Note: If it’s leaning toward the neighbor’s camp, really don’t wait.

• **If Your House Were a Mainer... It’d Know the Ants Are Coming Before You Do.**

What to do: Seal up the cracks, check the basement, and clean those corners.

Bonus tip: Cinnamon and vinegar can help deter ants naturally - and make your kitchen smell like spring.

• **If Your House Were a Mainer... It’d Still Be Using That One Outlet From 1984.**

What to do: Give your electrical system a once-over. Replace old extension cords, test outlets, and make sure you’re surge-protected before the first thunderstorm.

Safety first: Just because it’s “always worked fine” doesn’t mean it’s safe.

• **If Your House Were a Mainer... It’d Say, “Don’t Rush Me, I’ll Bloom When I’m Ready.”**

What to do: Be patient with late-blooming trees and shrubs. Not everything wakes up at the same time - and that’s okay.

How to tell if it’s alive: Scratch the bark. Green = good.

• **If Your House Were a Mainer... It’d Say, “Pull Up a Chair, We’re Not Fancy, But We’re Comfy.”**

What to do: Clean off the deck furniture, put out the citronella, and prep

for porch season. Bonus points for fresh seat cushions and a string of lights.

Your house doesn’t need to be per-

fect, it just needs a little love. Happy spring, folks, and remember: black fly season builds character. <

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