



Spring HOME Improvement

March 30, 2023

A Special Supplement to

Salisbury  Post



Spring cleaning pointers

Spring is a season of renewal. When the flowers are blooming and the trees are budding and the weather is pleasantly warm, people often feel inspired to

make changes around their homes. Work may begin with culling belongings and organizing essentials.

There is debate regarding where the practice of "spring cleaning" origi-

nated. Some researchers link it to certain religious groups. It has long been an ancient Jewish custom to thoroughly clean a house in preparation for the springtime feast of Pass-



over. The house is scoured to remove any yeast bread, or chametz, from the home. Similarly, members of the Greek Orthodox church celebrate "Clean Week," which is a week of cleaning before Lent. In Iranian culture, families spend days cleaning prior to the Persian New Year, which begins on the spring equinox.

Spring cleaning also has some secular roots. For instance, in the 1800s, Londoners routinely cleared their homes of grime and soot that accumulated over the winter.

Spring cleaning is still

a ritual for many today. As people embark on their plans to tidy up, these tips can help them along.

TACKLE ONE BIG TASK A DAY

Who hasn't started one project only to be distracted into moving along to another room? This often occurs when people discover something out of place in one space and then move that item where it belongs, only to find a new cleaning task at hand in that space. Inefficiency can make you give up on spring cleaning prematurely. Agree to address one room/task a day. Keep a basket or box handy to store errant items until you move on to the next room.

STOCK UP ON SUPPLIES

Prepare all of the cleaning supplies in advance. Put together a tool kit of sorts with the equipment you need, including mops, brooms, rags, cleansers, and the like. Organization can keep you on course.

HARNESS YOUR STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Some people clean because they are stressed or angry, others do so to avoid

other tasks. Keep personality in mind when establishing a cleaning schedule. For example, clean at night if you're a night owl, or wait until you are feeling antsy before embarking on a "calm down cleaning."

TACKLE SEASONAL CHORES FIRST

Some tasks need to get done to prepare for the spring and summer season. These may include cleaning the grill and sorting through outdoor furniture and decor. Spring cleaning may involve readying the pool for another year of use, or cleaning out rain gutters to prepare for spring storms. Tackle time-dependent tasks first and then move on to others that are less time-sensitive.

SPREAD OUT THE WORK

Some people like to devote full weekends to spring cleaning, but that can be overwhelming for others. Breaking down cleaning tasks into 15- to 30-minute intervals each day can make the job more tolerable.

Spring cleaning season has arrived, and certain tips can make the job more efficient and manageable.

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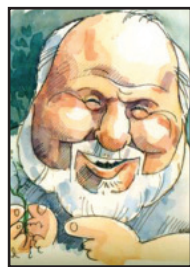
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How to control moles

One of the frequent questions people ask during a gardening talk concerns moles. Controlling moles is not easy; many have accepted these animals as part of the natural environment. They consume soil insects and reduce soil compaction, so their activity is not all bad. However, heaved ridges and mounds often



Darrell Blackwelder

shallow-rooted lawns or shrubs by drying of soil or exposing roots. Raised ridges also presents a walking hazard, especially to the elderly that enjoy walking in their lawns and gardens.

Moles tirelessly tunnel in lawns, gardens and plant beds in search of grubs and other soil insects. The mole's entire

diet is entirely animal including

earthworms, ants and beetles. Moles do not feed on plant material such as roots, stems or bulbs; however, damage often occurs when moles search for food. Field mice and voles often use this ready-made highway as a way to their food source of plant roots and bulbs.

Controlling soil insects is one of the most viable options. Grubs can be controlled with granular soil insecticides. Elimination of grubs with insecticides may take

two to three months for complete control. The entire lawn or garden area must be treated.

Another method is to use a spear-type trap designed kill the moles as they move about in the tunnels. Locate a frequently used tunnel by caving a short section and observing daily to determine which run is being used. These tunnels are usually straighter than most. Repeat this process for two or three days; then place the traps on their major runways. The mole is impaled by the spring-loaded mechanism on the trap. One or two traps should be enough for the average-sized

lawn. Ironically, one of the best methods of control is a hungry cat. Cats and often dogs can spot a mole. However, if you have an aggressive dog, your lawn will pay the price when they dig up the pest. Go to <https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/moles-in-turf> for more detailed information for mole control.

Darrell Blackwelder is the retired horticulture agent and director with the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service in Rowan County. Contact him at dblackw@ncsu.edu.

Did you know?

Vinyl siding is not something that many homeowners may consider painting, but it can be done. However, some contractors may not recommend it as the best option to overhaul

a home. Painting siding means it will only be as durable as the paint used. It's also essential to determine if painting vinyl will void any warranties. Wood or engineered wood or fiber cement sid-

ing tend to be better options than vinyl should you want to switch colors down the line. But vinyl siding can be painted if it is done right, and it can be an affordable way to change the look of a home without investing in new siding. According to Benjamin Moore Paints, vinyl siding that will be painted will need to be cleaned thoroughly, including the remov-

al of any mildew, chalk or dirt, to enhance paint adhesion. Pitted or porous vinyl siding always must be primed, but others may not require priming. Choose an exterior paint designed for painting on vinyl. Benjamin Moore has a palette called Colors for Vinyl that can be used in select exterior paint lines. Two coats of paint are recommended. According to

BobVila.com, paint for vinyl has acrylic and urethane resins that accommodate the expansion and contraction of vinyl and help the paint stick. Also, for the best results, the home improvement experts on the site advise painting when temperatures are mild and there is low relative humidity and an overcast sky.

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Budget-friendly ways to freshen up your home's exterior

As any homeowner knows, renovation projects tend to cost a lot of money. The average cost of a home renovation is difficult to gauge, as such endeavors run the gamut from complex projects like a kitchen overhaul to simpler ones like painting a room inside a home. Indeed, the National Association of the Remodeling Industry notes that scope is what drives the cost of a renovation project.

Though there might not be an "average cost" of a renovation project, homeowners can expect to spend thousands of dollars on projects that are not very small in scale. Navigating such an expense at a time when inflation remains high might be difficult for some homeowners looking to maintain the appearance of their home exteriors. However, there are many budget-friendly ways homeowners can tend to the exterior of their properties.

• **Power washing:** Power washing won't break the bank but it can revive the look of a home. Power washing removes dirt and grime from the siding of a

winter can be a good idea, as the elements can take a toll on a home's exterior. A good power washing before spring and summer entertaining season can thus give a home a fresh, clean look without breaking the bank.

• **Furnished front porch:** A furnished front porch can serve as a welcome sign to neighbors and provide a great place to relax with a morning cup of coffee and a good book. Homeowners with a small porch won't need to bust their budgets to upgrade their front porch furnishings. Some small chairs with bright

cushions, a small table and a rug underfoot can revamp an entryway at low cost.

• **Window box installation:** Installing window box planters is another cost-effective way to brighten up a home's exterior. Homeowners can hang window boxes outside windows on the front of their homes and then fill them with brightly colored flowers to add an inviting pop of color to their home exteriors. The experts at Better Homes & Gardens

urge homeowners to take weight into consideration before buying window planters. Keep in mind that soil and developed plants can be heavy, so look for a sturdy box as well as one that has drainage holes.

See **Budget** pg. C8



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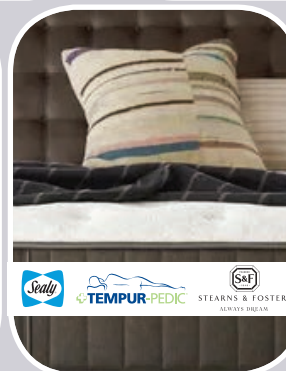
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Bees, bees, bees

Bees in the lawn? Have you noticed bees flying low along your grass and digging little holes?

If so, you might have digger bees.

Many common species of solitary bees nest in individual hollows in the ground. They don't have queens or build colonies like honeybees and other social insects.

Digger bees range in size from one-half to three-quarters of an inch and may be a variety of colors such as blue, green, copper or metallic reddish-brown. They may belong to any of several groups of bees, such as membrane bees, sweat bees, mason bees and leafcutter bees, and occur throughout the state. In the evening, females dig nesting burrows reaching six or more inches in depth. Small mounds of soil may appear around each nest opening. When there are large populations of bees, there are also many holes, each belonging to an individual female. During the day, the active females collect pollen and nectar to carry back to the nest to form a "ball" anywhere from one-eighth to 14 inch-

es in diameter, which is placed within a "cell" excavated in the side of the burrow. A single egg is laid upon the pollen ball in March, April or early May. After hatching, the larva feeds on pollen and develops within the cell into the next generation, emerging the following year in March or April. Mating then occurs, and bee ac-

tivity begins to pick up as the nesting cycle resumes. Although adult digger bees feed on nectar, none store honey like honeybees. Solitary, ground-nesting bees play a vital role in ecological systems, especially in the pollination of crops and wild plants. Solitary bees are valuable pollinators and should not be destroyed unless there is some compelling reason.

Ground-nesting bees generally prefer to make their homes in areas with morning sun exposure and well-drained soils containing little organic matter. Burrows are often dug in areas of bare ground or sparse vegetation. These bees usually avoid damp soils. Damage to lawns and turf is usually very minimal. Solitary bees rarely sting, and there is

no mass attack as might be found with honeybees or yellow jackets. You can continue mowing and other outdoor activities with little problem. However, with substantial populations, one may prefer to avoid the area for four to six weeks while nesting occurs. Cultural control methods include heavy watering or irrigation with a lawn sprinkler during the nest-building period to discourage nesting. Tilling soil to destroy tunnels may help, but establishing dense turf is probably the best deterrent to further nesting. Applications of heavy organic matter can be included as a soil amendment, if practical when tilling the soil. If the soil or location is not conducive to a healthy lawn, groundcovers or heavy mulches may be an alternative solution.

In celebration of spring and all pollinators, Rowan County Cooperative Extension, Hurley Park and Salisbury Parks and Recreation have partnered to bring author Dr. Danesha Seth Carley, associate professor of horticultural science at North Carolina State University and director of the Southern Integrated Pest Management Center. Dr. Seth Carley is the author



Digger bee nests at Foil Tatum Park in Salisbury.

of "Pollinator Gardening for the South: Creating Sustainable Habitats." She will speak about pollinator gardening from 6-7:30 p.m. on Thursday, April 20, at the Salisbury Civic Center.

This seminar is a free event, but seating is limited. Please register online at go.ncsu.edu/rowanpollinators. For more information about pollinators, contact the Rowan County Extension Center at 704-



Danesha Seth Carley will be Speaking at the Salisbury Civic Center on April 20 from 6-7:30 p.m. about Pollinator Gardening in the South.

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Amy-Lynn Albertson is the director of the Rowan County Extension.

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Give your home a new look with these shutter styles

Homeowners have many options at their disposal if they want to improve their homes. A focus on the exterior can be a promising and rewarding way to direct renovation dollars.

Curb appeal has a significant impact on how a home is viewed. Manicured landscapes, updated windows and doors and well-lit landscapes can improve the value of a home and ensure it sells quickly and above market rate.

When homeowners assess items they may want to

change, shutters can be an area of consideration. Shutters can help windows look a little less plain. In most modern residential properties, shutters are purely decorative. However, their roots lie in home protection. Originally, shutters were used in lieu of windows so they were the only way to safeguard a home's interior from the elements. Some shutters still offer that protection, but those typically are installed on homes in hurricane-prone areas.

Window shutters lend

a finished and distinctive look to a home. When shopping for shutters, individuals can choose among various styles.

• **Louvered:** A louvered shutter features several wood slats that overlap each other on the same frame. A typical louvered shutter features two sets of slats separated by a center rail. Some functional louvered shutters are operational, meaning the slats can be tilted to allow air to flow through. But this is something typically reserved for indoor shutters.

Decorative ones have fixed slats.

• **Panel:** Panel shutters come in different styles. Raised panel shutters present a boxed design where rectangular features will stand out from the rest of the frame. Flat panel shutters (sometimes referred to as shaker) have the boxed design, but those rectangles are not raised. Recessed panels are the opposite of raised panels. As their name suggests, recessed panels are set back from the rest of the frame.

• **Board and batten:** Board and batten shutters are formed from grouped single boards joined together with shorter crosspieces of wood called battens. Battens are positioned horizontally or at an angle. These shutters have a more informal, rural feel.

• **Bahama/Bermuda:** These tropical-inspired shutters are of the louvered variety, but they're installed from the top of the window rather than on the sides.

• **Scandinavian:** Scandinavian series shutters are very decorative board and batten shutters. They feature a series of cutouts and designs.

• **Combination:** Some shutters offer the best of both worlds, with louvered on top and a solid panel on the bottom, or vice versa. This gives homeowners infinite options.

Shutters are available in various materials. The

most common include wood, vinyl and composite. Cedar, mahogany and pine are commonly used woods for exterior shutters. Vinyl is more economical and lightweight, but they can be challenging to clean and do not offer the longevity of other materials. Composite shutters are durable and cost less than wood in most cases.

Color is another consideration when replacing shutters. Shutters can stand out or blend in with the siding and other architectural accents. Shutters also can flank a front door to fully complete an exterior look.

Budget from pg. C5

• **Replace hardware:** Another simple way to freshen up a stale exterior is to replace hardware. Door knobs, knockers, house numbers, and even the mailbox can appear dated after a while. Replacing

these items is inexpensive and quick but can have a profound impact on how the exterior of a home appears to residents and visitors.

Exterior renovations need not break the bank. Various simple and inexpensive tweaks can quickly revitalize the exterior of a home.



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Earth Day Jam set to focus on urban agriculture

Earth Day Jam returns on April 22 at Bell Tower Green park in downtown Salisbury. Hosted by local nonprofit Happy Roots, the full-day event promotes a holistic approach to health via music and arts, envi-

ronmental education, local farms and sustainable living.

The annual celebration also raises funds for Happy Roots school and community garden efforts. This year's theme focuses on

agriculture, highlighting local farms and N.C. agencies that assist citizens with rural and urban agriculture.

Earth Day Jam hosts dozens of local, regional, and nationally touring acts

on two stages; local foods and craft brews; over 50 environmental educators and vendors; community building and family fun. Earth Day Jam runs from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. and is free to the public.

At least one trolley will be running to shuttle festival goers. A show schedule, vendor map and trolley map will be posted closer to the date.

Headlining acts include powerhouse soul-rock

band Caitlin Krisko & The Broadcast, The Get Right Band, Abby Bryant & The Echoes and many more.

Featured educators include famous beekeeper and urban homesteader Samantha Winship of Mother's Finest Urban Family Farms, Rowan Cooperative Extension, N.C. A&T Community Garden Partners, Carolina Farm Trust, Rowan Soil & Water, Muddy Sneakers, and many others.

Also returning for the Earth Day mission is West Rowan High School graduate turned upcycled fashion icon Andrew Burgess aka "Wandy the Maker," to raise awareness on sustainable fashion.

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The basics of fertilizing a lawn

Spring marks the return of lawn and garden season. Lawns often bear the brunt of winter's wrath, so spring is a great time to nurse them back to health, and fertilizing can be an essential component of that process.

Fertilizing a lawn can be intimidating. An array of fertilizers, with each seemingly designed to address a different issue, can make homeowners' heads spin when visiting their

local lawn and garden center. However, fertilizing is a very simple task that any homeowner can tackle. In fact, fears about fertilizing are often unfounded and can be overcome with some basic knowledge of the process.

- **Identify which type of grass is in the yard.** The home improvement experts at HGTV note that turfgrass is divided into two categories: cool-season grass and warm-season grass. A local lawn and garden center can help homeowners identify which type of grass is in the yard, and this often depends on location. Fescue,

bluegrass and perennial ryegrass are some examples of cool-season grasses, while Bermuda, bahia, St. Augustine, and zoysia are considered warm-season grasses. Identifying which type of grass is in the lawn is important because that will indicate when to fertilize. Cool-season grasses are typically best fertilized in early spring, while warm-season lawns can benefit from an application just before especially warm temperatures arrive.

- **Survey the lawn to identify which spreader to use.** A small yard or a thriving lawn with only a few bald or unsightly patches may not need a full application of fertilizer. In such instances, a hand spreader can suffice. For larger lawns and ar-

See **Fertilizing** pg. C13

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6 signs you may need a new HVAC system

There's no place like home, especially when that home is a comfortable and safe haven. One of the ways residents find comfort in their homes is by maintaining the right indoor temperatures, which fluctuate along with the seasons. While there is much to be said about opening windows and doors to let Mother Nature do her thing, indoor comfort is often maintained with an

HVAC system.

HVAC stands for heating, ventilation and air conditioning. It can include heat pumps, furnaces and air conditioning units. It is an automated system that works by adjusting a thermostat to regulate air temperature, and sometimes humidity, in the home. According to Enviguard, a commercial contracting provider, HVAC systems also may be used to improve

indoor air quality through filtration and oxygen replacement.

As with any mechanical device, an HVAC system has a life span that must be considered. Should any of the following conditions be present, it is likely time to consult with an HVAC technician to see if repairs or replacement of the entire system is warranted.

1. AGE

If the HVAC system is more than 10 years old, it could be time to begin budgeting for a new unit. Many modern, efficient systems may last 12 to 14 years with routine maintenance. But it's good to keep an HVAC system's age in mind so you can readily recognize when it might start to fail.

2. LONGER OR CONSTANT RUNNING TIMES

An efficient, properly working system will quickly heat or cool the home and then turn off. A system that is turning on repeatedly or having to run for awhile before the set temperature



is reached could be nearing the end of its utility.

3. STRANGE NOISES

Groaning, banging or loud humming noises should be addressed. While these noises may indicate that certain components need maintenance or replacement, they also could be symptoms of age and a system nearing failure.

4. FREQUENT REPAIR VISITS

Knowing the HVAC company's repair person by name is a sign that the system has required too much work in recent months. Re-

peated issues and repairs are probably signs that it's time to consider a system replacement.

5. HIGHER BILLS

Sticker shock when receiving electricity or gas bills likely mean the HVAC system isn't working efficiently and might need to be replaced.

6. POOR INDOOR AIR

QUALITY

If the home is dusty or humid or even if allergies seem to have cropped up out of nowhere, this could indicate a poorly functioning HVAC system.

HVAC systems are vital to keeping indoor environments comfortable and safe. Such systems may exhibit certain signs that indicate they need to be replaced.

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Fertilizing from pg. C11

eas, a broadcast spreader is the ideal option. Spreaders have multiple settings, and the fertilizer package will indicate which setting to utilize when using the product.

- **Test the soil prior to purchasing fertilizer.** The lawn experts at Pennington® note that a simple soil test can reveal soil pH and phosphorous and potassium levels. Soil tests can be purchased at most home improvement stores and lawn and garden centers, and they can help homeowners determine which fertilizer will most benefit their lawns.

- **Water the lawn prior to fertilizing.** The experts at Scotts® recommend a good watering a few days

prior to fertilizing a lawn. Such an approach ensures the soil is ready to accept the fertilizer once it's applied.

- **Follow the instructions carefully.** Detailed instructions are typically provided on fertilizer product packaging. Once homeowners have identified and purchased the product they need, they can simply follow the instructions on the packaging, including how and when to water after application, which can make fertilizing less intimidating.

Fertilizing in spring can help a lawn recover from the previous summer and winter, ensuring it's lush and green when summer entertaining season arrives.

The benefits of energy-efficient homes

Homeowners recognize that their work is never done. Homes require maintenance that runs the gamut from daily tasks like cleaning kitchen countertops to more significant undertakings like replacing roofs. For many homeowners, keeping their homes running smoothly involves tending to septic systems.

Estimates from various sources indicate that roughly one in five homes in the United States has a septic system. Homeowners who live in areas with regional sewage systems may not give much thought to the operation and maintenance of their wastewater and disposal system. But that responsibility typically rests squarely on the shoulders of homeowners whose homes have septic systems. Learning to maintain septic systems so they operate safely and efficiently is essential. Homeowners should know that

recognizing signs of septic system malfunction is vital to avoiding potentially costly, messy accidents that can put the health of humans and local wildlife in jeopardy.

What happens when a septic system malfunctions?

The Washington State Department of Health notes that a malfunctioning septic system is a threat to the health of both humans and animals as well as the environment. When a septic system is malfunctioning, untreated sewage can be released and end up in places where it shouldn't be, such as groundwater, surface water and marine water. That's true even if it's not visible to the naked eye. Humans and animals are in danger when septic systems malfunction because untreated sewage contains pathogens and other contaminants that can make them sick.

What are the signs of a malfunctioning septic system?

The DOH of Washington State notes that properly maintained septic systems should provide reliable service for many years. Part of that maintenance is keeping an eye out for these signs that suggest a system is malfunctioning or failing:

- Water and sewage from toilets, drains and sinks is backing up into the home
- Bathtubs, showers, and sinks drain very slowly

- Gurgling sounds are coming from the plumbing system

- Standing water or damp spots near the septic tank or drain field

- Bad odors around the septic tank or drain field

- Bright green, spongy lush grass over the septic tank or drain field, even during dry weather

- Algal blooms in nearby ponds or lakes

- High levels of nitrates or coliform bacteria in water wells

Homeowners with septic systems should make tending to those systems part of their routine home maintenance.



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Did you know?

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, air currents can carry pesticides that were applied to nearby properties. That means even people who do not apply pesticides in their lawns and gardens can still be at risk of exposure to these potentially harmful chemicals. People concerned by the prospect of being exposed to the pesticides being applied by their neighbors can stay indoors with their children and pets

while the substances are being applied. Those who live near fields and parks where pesticides are routinely applied can plant hardy, thick-branched trees to reduce their risk of airborne exposure. The EPA notes that such plants and shrubs can serve as buffers against airborne pesticides, essentially acting as walls around a property that prevent gusty winds from blowing pesticides into yards and gardens.

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How to add shade to a deck or patio

Homeowners eagerly await the arrival of the warm weather so they can cast off the remnants of cabin fever and bask in the sunshine. However, as summer nears its dog days, the same sun homeowners once coveted can contribute to uncomfortable conditions in outdoor entertaining spaces.

Meteorologists at WHAS11 in Kentucky took to their neighborhoods in July 2020 to test just how hot surfaces can get in the sun during peak daytime temperatures. Concrete sitting in the sun almost all day reached a temperature of 134.7 F, while the same concrete in the shade clocked in at just under 80 F. When air temperatures

are around 90 F, unshaded concrete and asphalt can be 125 F and 140 F, respectively. While wood decking may not be as hot as asphalt and concrete, it still can get steamy underfoot.

Homeowners who want to be able to enjoy their outdoor spaces in an array of temperatures can think about investing in shade solutions. Sun-blocking ideas like awnings, shade trees and large umbrellas can help people enjoy their yards all day long.

• **Canopy:** A patio canopy is typically a free-standing unit that can be installed over a patio or a deck. Some people prefer to bolt it down so it will not be knocked over in windy conditions. The fabric on the canopy can be removed

during the offseason, helping to improve its longevity.

• **Awning:** Awnings may be stationary or retractable. Many are installed directly onto a home and can cast shade on specific areas of outdoor entertaining spaces.

• **Shade sail:** Similar to an awning but a bit less structurally rigid, shade sails are large pieces of triangular fabric installed over areas of a patio, pool or landscape, according to The Family Handyman. Shade sails are light and airy and can be customized.

• **Trees:** A natural way to increase shade in a yard is to plant more shade trees. If sun glare is an issue all year long, and it's not just the heat of the sun that is



Sun-blocking ideas like awnings, shade trees and large umbrellas can help people enjoy their yards all day long.

troublesome, think about planting evergreen trees. Deciduous cousins will drop their leaves in fall and only be effective during the warm weather.

• **Patio umbrellas:** Many umbrellas start at around \$25. Umbrellas can be paired with patio tables,

while stationary cantilever umbrellas sit out of the way on their own heavy-duty stands. A cantilever umbrella tends to provide more shade than patio table umbrellas.

• **Curtains:** Homeowners can block sunlight outdoors the way they do inside, of-

fers MSN. Hang curtains from the sides of canopies or between posts on a deck to provide shade and cozy spaces.

Shade is in high demand when the sun is hot. Options abound for making outdoor areas more comfortable.

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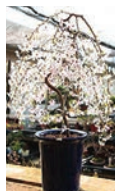


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Signs your gutters are in need of repair

Fall is a great time to tackle projects around the house. The weather each fall allows homeowners to make improvements to their homes' exteriors without worrying about extreme heat or cold, while interior projects like painting are made easier because homeowners can open the windows to allow for proper ventilation.

Fall also marks a great time to prepare for upcoming projects that can make winter work that much easier. For example, fall is a great time to take stock of your gutters so you can address any issues before leaves begin to fall or the first snowstorm touches down. Compromised gutters can contribute to water issues in basements and adversely affect a home's foundation if not addressed immediately, so it be-

hooves homeowners to learn the signs that gutters are in need of repair or replacement.

• **Gutters hanging off the home:** Gutters were once installed predominantly with spikes. However, many industry professionals now install gutters with hanger brackets. Why the change? Spikes loosen over time, leading to the gutters hanging off the home. That can contribute to serious issues if left untreated. Gutters hanging off the home need not necessarily be replaced, but rather secured to the home, ideally with hanger brackets instead of spikes. Brackets hook into the front of the gutter and are then screwed into the fascia of a home. A professional who specializes in gutter repair can perform this task relatively quickly, and it's an inexpensive yet highly

effective solution.

• **Gutter separation:** Gutters that are no longer fastened together can leak and contribute to issues that affect the home's foundation, siding and appearance. Clogs and the accumulation of debris can cause gutters to separate because they are not designed to hold too much weight. Replacement of separated gutters may or may not be necessary depending on how big the problem is and the condition of the existing gutters. If replacement is not necessary, separated gutters may be remedied by securing the joints, another relatively simple and inexpensive fix.

• **Peeling exterior paint:** Paint that appears to be peeling off of your home may indicate that water is seeping over the edge of the gutter closest to your home. When that happens, water is coming down the side of the house, causing the paint to peel. In such instances, replacing the gutters is often necessary.

• **Basement flooding:** Not all signs of deteriorating gutters are outside a home. Many a homeowner has been flummoxed by



flooding in their basements, and such flooding can be caused by aging, ineffective gutters. That's because deteriorating gutters sometimes allow water to leak near the foundation of a home,

contributing to basement flooding.

Fall is an ideal time to inspect gutters and have any issues fixed before leaves begin to fall or harsh winter weather arrives.

How to spot mold in your home

Homes are safe havens and relaxing spaces for their residents. No one wants to imagine the place they call home putting their health in jeopardy, but that's precisely the case for people who live in homes where mold is present.

The United States Environmental Protection Agency notes that molds are not usually a problem indoors. However, when they are, molds produce allergens, irritants and potentially toxic substances. Molds can become problematic when spores land on wet or damp surfaces and begin growing. If inhaled, those spores can cause allergic reactions in people with asthma who have mold allergies.

Even people without such allergies may suffer from irritated eyes, skin, nose, throat, or lungs due to exposure to mold. Mold also can affect the home itself, as the EPA notes that mold gradually destroys the things it grows on, potentially leading to costly remediation and renovation expenses.

Mold is sometimes visible in parts of a home. For example, mold problems in a bathroom may be recognizable when tiny black spots are present on surfaces that frequently get wet. Those areas may gradually expand from small spots and cover larger areas, such as windowsills and areas around the bathtub. Other signs indicating the presence of mold may be

less recognizable though potentially just as harmful. That's one reason why it makes sense for everyone to learn how to spot mold in a home.

• **Learn what mold looks like.** Not all molds are black. Some are white and look like thread, but they also can have a gray-brown or gray-green tint. When peeling old wallpaper, some people may notice orange, pink or purple growth on the newly exposed walls, and that's likely mold.

• **Identify problems with paint.** If paint is peeling, bubbling or cracking, it's likely indicative of a mold issue. In such instances, contact a mold remediation specialist rather than simply painting over the affected areas with a fresh

coat of paint.

• **Conduct a smell test.** Most molds will emit a damp, musty odor. However, a lack of this distinct and unpleasant smell should not lead individuals to conclude they don't have a mold issue, as some molds do not

produce an odor. In addition, the EPA notes that the smell of indoor molds can differ depending on the type of mold present in the home. Homeowners who have experienced mold issues in the past should not ignore a foul odor simply because it smells different from a previous infestation. Contact a mold remediation

professional if you suspect an unpleasant smell could be a byproduct of mold.

Mold can be harmful to homes and humans. Anyone who suspects their home has a mold problem is urged to contact a remediation specialist as soon as possible.



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