



Fall HOME IMPROVEMENT Guide

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Maximize outdoor spaces this holiday season

The holiday season comes at a time when the weather can be anywhere from cool to frigid. But even if the weather outside is somewhat frightful, holiday entertaining in outdoor spaces can still be delightful. Making the most of outdoor spaces during the holidays and the rest of the winter can

small, decorated Christmas trees can finish the effect.

- Consider a fire or heating element. Unless you live in a temperate climate, you'll need some way to keep guests warm. Center the outdoor entertaining space around a fire pit, outdoor fireplace or an outdoor

grill or an outdoor grid-dle; otherwise, set up the food buffet-style inside so guests can make their plates and gravitate where they feel comfortable.

- Provide blankets or fleeces. In addition to warming elements around your entertaining space, stock a large basket with cozy throws, blankets or fleece jackets that guests can use to warm up. Hats and scarves also may be appreciated.

- Invest in waterproof furniture. Upgrade your exterior seating with plush outdoor couches and lounges that are decked out in weather-resistant fabrics. Make them more comfortable with throw pillows that coordinate with a holiday entertaining theme.

- Set up two drink stations. Set up beverages both inside and outside the home so guests can easily refill their drinks wherever they are relaxing. Think about having some warm drinks outside, such as mulled cider or hot chocolate, so guests can be warmed from the inside as well.

- Use a wireless speaker. A Bluetooth-enabled wireless speaker placed outside allows guests to listen to holiday tunes while they are enjoying themselves.

Using well-equipped outdoor areas for entertaining can expand the possibilities and guest list for holiday gatherings.



The following are some tips for putting outdoor areas to good use when hosting loved ones this holiday season.

enable guests to spread out, which should make things more comfortable for them. With that goal in mind, the following are some tips for putting outdoor areas to good use when hosting loved ones this holiday season.

- Decorate first. An easy way to make outdoor entertaining spaces more welcoming is to coordinate the decor with the interior of the home. Greenery wrapped with lights around railings and fencing can create the perfect ambiance. Candles, wreaths and

heater. Make sure to illuminate the outdoor area so that guests can find their way around with ease.

- Host an early gathering. The sun sets early in fall and winter, so it may not only get colder, but also darker at a time when guests typically arrive. Think about moving up the start time of your holiday event if you'll be having an outdoor area, so guests can see one another and stay a little warmer.

- Use the grill. Keep foods warm by using the

Warning signs a bathroom needs work

Homeowners know that the work involved to maintain a home is never done. The end of one project has a tendency to roll into the planning of another, and so it goes for years on end.

Fortunate are the homeowners who get to choose when to begin a renovation project, but it's far more common that homeowners spot an issue and then realize it's time to renovate. When it comes to bathrooms, which can be among the more expensive spaces to renovate in a home, homeowners can keep an eye out for various signs suggesting the room needs a remodel.

• Mold and mildew: Mold and mildew is perhaps the most glaring

sign a bathroom needs to be renovated or remodeled. Mold and mildew pose a notable threat to human health, as the United States Environmental Protection Agency reports that molds can cause allergic reactions. Individuals sensitive to mold may develop symptoms that mimic reactions to outdoor allergens like pollen, including sneezing, runny nose, red eyes, and dermatitis (skin rash). Mold also can trigger asthma attacks in people allergic to mold who have the condition. Mold can grow in poorly ventilated bathrooms, such as those without a fan or ones in which fans are not working properly. Mold and mildew will return if it's merely scrubbed away, so

the underlying cause of mold must be addressed to prevent its return.

• Small signs of fading: Stains, peeling paint, cracked paint, and gaps in grout are small signs of fading that indicate a bathroom is in need of renovation if not a complete remodel. These issues also can serve as warning signs of larger issues, such as water issues and structural problems, so they should not be merely written off as minor problems or eyesores.

• Rising water bills: Some signs a bathroom could use a little TLC are not necessarily confined to the room itself. If water bills are rising significantly and do not align with price increases or an uptick in water consump-



When it comes to bathrooms, homeowners can keep an eye out for various signs suggesting the room needs a remodel.

tion, homeowners may have leaking pipes. Such pipes might be beneath a bathroom sink or behind

tilled walls. Discoloration on the walls, peeling paint or wallpaper and/or a musty odor may indicate

leaks inside a bathroom wall. If coupled with ris-

See **Warning**, 4D



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Senior-friendly interior renovations

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

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

- **Revamp entryways and staircases.** A 2020 study of 1,000 adults in the United Kingdom found that 28 percent of individuals age 65 and older who don't exercise regularly struggle with activities like walking up stairs. The study, commissioned by Total Fitness, also found that 14 percent of men and women over 65 who regularly engage in moderate exercise still find it challenging to climb up and down a flight of stairs. Seniors facing similar challenges can install a ramp at their home's entryway so they can com-

fortably go in and out. Inside, a chair lift can ensure seniors are not struggling to move from one floor to another.

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

- **Install door knob extensions.** Verywell Health notes that nearly half of all people age 65 and older have arthritis or another rheumatic condition. Arthritis can make it difficult for seniors to grip and turn door knobs. Door knob extensions can make it easier for seniors with arthritis to open the doors in their homes. Such extensions are roughly five-inch levers that can be installed over an

existing door knob, making it easier to grab and pull down. Extensions save seniors the hassle of turning the knob, which some may find painful and almost impossible.

- **Renovate the bathroom.** Bathroom renovation projects can be costly, but seniors with mobility issues should know that bathrooms can pose a particularly dangerous threat. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes that roughly three million older adults are treated for fall injuries in emergency departments each year. A 2019 analysis published in The Journals of Gerontology noted that 22 percent of in-home falls resulted in a change in the person's walking ability. Replacing a step-over shower with a zero-step alternative can make it easier for seniors with mobility issues to get in and out of the shower, thus reducing their risk for falls. Grab bars along shower walls and a chair inside the shower can make it easier to bathe and towel off safely.

Seniors with mobility issues can make their homes more accommodating through an assortment of simple, yet effective renovations.

Warning

Continued from 3D

ing water bills, these signs could be indicative of a significant issue that requires immediate attention.

- **Issues with tiles:** Cracked or damaged tiles in the shower and bathtub or even on the floor are unsightly and also pose a safety hazard. Cracked floor tiles can lead to slips and falls, which can be especially harmful to older residents. And cracked tiles within the shower and tub area can indicate water problems behind the walls or general disrepair. Such issues should be addressed before they escalate into something larger.

- **A dated vibe:** Of course, some issues affecting a bathroom are not necessarily health or safety hazards but more an affront to homeowners' grasp of current styles and trends. If walking into a bathroom unintentionally feels like stepping backward into a bygone era, then it's probably time to consider a renovation or remodeling job.

Various signs can indicate to homeowners it's time to consider a bathroom renovation.

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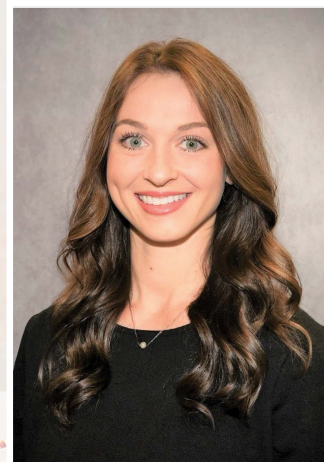
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Build your gift list for DIY enthusiasts

Rising prices have pushed people to look for new ways to save money. The do-it-yourself approach to home repairs has long been seen as a potential avenue to save money, and holiday shoppers can consider DIY when shopping for loved ones this year.

A recent survey by the remodeling company Allstar Home reported that 70 percent of Americans have recently engaged in DIY home improvement projects. Similarly, a new Ipsos poll conducted on behalf of the DIY Network found that 73 percent of Canadian homeowners have done a renovation project themselves in the past. With so many homeowners tackling projects around the home on their own, DIY-related products may be just what's needed to hammer down the perfect gift. The following are some potential



The following are some potential home improvement presents for DIY enthusiasts.

home improvement presents for DIY enthusiasts.

• **Magnetic wristband:** Keeping items close at hand takes on new meaning when one utilizes a magnetic wristband. The BinyaTools Magnetic Wristband is just one of the versions of this handy tool that's ideal for wrangling screws, nails, washers, and any other ferrous items. It's also a great option for crafters

and jewelry makers.

• **Painting essentials kit:** Painting is an easy and effective way to transform a room. For those DIYers who have yet to compile all of their painting gear, local home improvement retailers often package kits that include a dropcloth, assorted roller sizes, brushes, a paint tray, and even

See **DIY**, 8D

Risk factors for mold infestation in a home

Homeowners know that there's no shortage of work required to maintain a home. Whether it's a renovation project designed to make a home more comfortable or a safety-related remodel, homes require a significant amount of TLC.

Mold remediation falls under the umbrella of safety-related renovations. Various types of mold can grow in a home, and such infestations may develop just about anywhere in a house. According to the Rhode Island Department of Health, exposure to mold can contribute to an array of adverse health consequences, including allergy symptoms such as runny nose, watery eyes, sneezing, difficulty breathing, and headache. Prolonged exposure can cause allergic reactions to become more severe.

Various points in a home can be vulnerable to mold infestation. The New York State Department of Health notes that identi-

fying and controlling moisture is the key to preventing mold infestations in a home. Certain points in a home, if left unchecked, are more likely to promote mold growth than others. As homeowners work to maintain their homes so the environment inside their walls is as comfortable and healthy as possible, they can routinely inspect potential mold infestation points and do their best to keep these areas as free from moisture as possible.

• **Roof:** A sturdy, leak-free roof can help prevent a buildup of moisture that can contribute to mold growth.

• **Indoor plumbing:** Check the pipes beneath sinks throughout the home, including those in the kitchen and bathrooms. Homeowners whose washrooms have a slop sink or utility sink should inspect these areas for leaky plumbing as well.

• **Outdoor drainage:** Maintaining effective outdoor drainage is another way to prevent mold growth in a home. This typically requires maintaining gutters and drains so they do not become clogged during or after rainstorms. Gutter

guards can prevent gutters and drains from clogging. Homeowners also may want to work with a landscaper or landscape architect to ensure soil around the house slopes away from the foundation, which can prevent water from pooling near the walls. When water pools near the walls, this can contribute to foundation problems and make it easier for mold to grow.

• **Basements/crawl spaces:** Basements and crawl spaces are vulnerable to mold infestations because they tend to be dark and cool, which can contribute to dampness that facilitates mold growth. The Rhode Island Department of Health recommends using a dehumidifier in basements and crawl spaces.

• **Bathrooms:** Steam from hot showers also can contribute to mold growth if the bathrooms do not contain exhaust fans. Such fans can remove excess moisture that makes it easy for mold to grow.

Mold can pose a notable health threat in a home. But homeowners can keep an eye on various areas of their home and implement measures to keep such spaces dry and less mold-friendly.

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The benefits of home security cameras

Homeowners go to great lengths to make their properties comfortable places to call home. Whether it's new interior furnishings or renovated outdoor living areas or the installation of various smart home technologies, there's no shortage of ways to upgrade a home with comfort in mind.

When homeowners renovate a home in an effort to make spaces more relaxing and welcoming, it's important they recognize the relationship between comfort and safety. A home is only as comfortable as it is safe, as residents might struggle to relax if they're concerned about their safe-

ty. Security cameras can help quell such concerns, which is one of a handful of reasons homeowners should consider these increasingly popular safety features for their homes.

- Security cameras can help to deter criminals. Property crimes may not garner the same level of news coverage as violent crimes, but a recent report from the Federal Bureau of Investigation indicated that there were still nearly 900,000 burglary offenses in the United States in 2022. That figure represents a

Security cameras can help quell such concerns, which is one of a handful of reasons homeowners should consider these increasingly popular safety features for their homes.

decline of more than 50 percent since 2012, when FBI data indicates more than 1.8 million such offenses were committed. A host of variables undoubtedly contributed to that decline, and the greater availability and increased affordability of security cameras has made it easier than ever for homeowners to make their homes less appeal-

ing to prospective burglars.

- Security cameras may help to lower insurance premiums. Exterior or security cameras can help individuals lower the cost of their homeowners insurance policies. The extent of those savings may depend on the type of cameras homeowners

See **Security**, 10D



DIY

Continued from 6D

painter's tape to get started on projects.

- Rolling work bench: People serious about projects will need a place to store all the tools they have collected. A rolling work bench, such as the Gladiator nine-drawer work bench, has drawers to store tools and a wooden top on which smaller tasks can be tackled. Roll it where needed.

- Hearing protection: Drills, sanders and other power tools can be noisy. DIYers will want to protect their hearing, and a set of workshop earmuffs can be a thoughtful gift. Some, like the 3M WorkTunes headphones, even come with Bluetooth technology to offer both hearing protection and the ability to listen to tunes while working.

- Headlamp: DIYers need both hands to tackle jobs effectively, which can make holding a flashlight to illuminate the area challenging. Hands-free lighting is possible with an LED headlamp. The light is easily focused where the user is looking.

- Laser measuring tape: A smart measuring tape utilizes a laser to increase measuring size, calculate distances and ensure that every home improvement project lines up.

- Sawhorse: DIYers working on large projects can benefit from an adjustable saw horse to support materials and ensure safer cuts. The ToughBuilt C700 is an option to consider since it has support pegs that fold out of the legs to allow for greater ease of use.

The list of gifts for DIYers is endless. Tools and additional gear can help people nail holiday shopping this year.



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Ideas to repurpose a formal dining room

Formal dining rooms are no longer a must-have among home buyers. Reports on the decline of the formal dining room appear to have been premature, as many real estate professionals have noted that some clients still insist that a home must have such a space. However, many agents also report low demand for formal dining rooms.

Beauty is indeed in the eye of the beholder regarding formal dining rooms. Buyers and homeowners who see these rooms as unnecessary

can consider the many ways to transform them to better suit their needs.

- **Playroom:** Parents of young children know that kids have a way of taking over living spaces in a home. If the living room has been overtaken by toys, homeowners can consider converting their formal dining room into a kids' playroom. Formal dining rooms tend to be spacious places that can accommodate a large dinner table, a bar and a buffet table. That means there's ample space for a kids' toy chest, bookshelf,

crafts table, dollhouse, and more.

- **Home office:** The COVID-19 pandemic changed the way many modern workers go about their typical workday. Millions of workers now work from home at least a few days a week if not full-time. When the pandemic began, that led to a space crunch, particularly in homes with more than one working adult. Workers who have been using the formal dining table as a desk for years can now fully commit to repurposing the room.



A seldom-used formal dining area can be converted into a game room with a few simple touches.

One factor to keep in mind is whether or not the room will need a door. Some formal dining rooms already feature pocket doors or even French doors, but many do not offer any such privacy. A door in-

stallation could increase the price tag associated with repurposing the room, but the end result could be well worth the additional costs.

- **Game room:** A large formal dining table might

be similar in shape and size to a pool table, but pool players will need some space around a pool table to ensure they aren't putting holes in the

See **Repurpose**, 11D

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Did you know?

Homeowners with an eye on home improvement projects should know that kitchens and bathrooms tend to be the most costly rooms to renovate. An affiliate of the National Kitchen and Bath Association told Architectural Digest in 2023 that kitchens and bathrooms require the most labor-intensive renovations, which contributes significantly to the high costs of such projects. Labor is indeed a significant cost when renovating a home, as the Construction Labor Market Analyzer indicates labor cost percentages in construction are between 20 and 40 percent of the total budget of a given project. The final cost of any renovation project will depend on a host of variables unique to each home, including the square footage of the room being remodeled and the materials homeowners choose. However, homeowners looking for less costly renovations may want to consider revamping their dining rooms and closets, each of which are projects that can make a difference and tend to require a less significant financial commitment than projects like kitchen and bath remodels.



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Security

Continued from 8D

ers install and whether or not the cameras are integrated into a whole-home security system. The Insurance Information Institute notes that whole home security systems can save homeowners anywhere from 2 to 15 percent on their homeowners insurance policies. More advanced systems, such as those which feature alarms and exterior cameras, can earn homeowners greater savings on their policies.

• Security cameras provide peace of mind while traveling. Modern security camera systems now provide remote access through smartphone apps. That can give homeowners peace of mind when traveling, as they can monitor their properties when they're away from home and potentially alert local authorities if they notice anything suspicious on their remote feeds.

• Security cameras can give parents peace of mind. Much like security cameras help travelers keep an eye on their property while they're away, parents also may find that access to real-time video footage of their homes can calm their nerves when children are in the house. Parents can utilize cameras to keep tabs on youngsters playing in the yard and monitor feeds to see what older kids are up to while Mom and Dad are at work or away from the home for other reasons.

Home security cameras are a worthwhile investment that can save homeowners money and provide peace of mind that they're doing everything possible to make their homes comfortable, safe spaces to live.

Repurpose

Continued from 9D

surrounding walls each time they pick up a cue stick. If pool doesn't tickle homeowners' fancy, then a room devoted to gaming, complete with a

flat screen or two on the wall and some new gaming chairs, can be a great way to repurpose the space. Modern parents often play video games alongside their children, making this a great way to create a fun and family-friendly space in the

home.

• Reading room: Devoted bibliophiles may aspire to turn their formal dining rooms into spaces tailor-made for curling up with a good book. Book lovers often lament they lack the space to display all of their books, so this

idea can provide the perfect solution to that problem. Replace existing furnishings with some bookcases and a comfortable reading chair and then sit back and crack open a good book. Homeowners who want to go the extra mile can convert the

room into a traditional English library, complete with wood-paneled walls, a fireplace, a floor globe, and leather furniture.

There's no end to what

can be done when homeowners decide it's time to convert their formal dining rooms into spaces they're likely to use more often.



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