



# MAKE YOUR HOME THE ENVY OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD



(StatePoint) You shouldn't judge a book by its cover, but you can judge a home by its exterior. Making your home the envy of the neighborhood starts with boosting its curb appeal.

From general maintenance to home upgrades, here are three ideas to refresh your home's look:

## UPDATE WINDOWS

Replacing your windows with beautifully designed products will give your home a great first impression, not to mention reduce your energy bills and increase your home's value.

After a window replacement, taking care of your new window is just as important. Wash windows every few months so they always look as good as the day they were installed.

Avoid scratching the surface of the glass, or frame, by utilizing non-abrasive agents. Water and a soft cloth is usually all you need to clean windows thoroughly, but a mild cleaner may also be helpful.

## CHOOSE SLEEK SIDING

If you are looking to boost your home's energy efficiency and attain

a new look for your exterior, replacing your siding is a great investment that can achieve both of these goals. Just be sure you get a superior product to avoid maintenance down the line. For example, vinyl siding is an ideal product because of its low maintenance and longevity. No matter what color siding you opt for, you can make your entire home's exterior pop by choosing a distinct trim color.

Use a complimentary online design center, like the one on the Window World website, to help visualize color options for win-

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dows, siding and doors.

While there, check out their full-line of ENERGY STAR qualified replacement windows backed by the Good Housekeeping Seal. In addition to offering stylish siding, Window World also professionally installs the Prodigy Insulated Siding System, which is both moisture and impact-resistant. The Prodigy system has the thickest EPS foam insulation on the market, helping you increase comfort while decreasing energy consumption.

## A GRAND ENTRY

It is said that the front door is the focal point of your home's curb ap-

peal. When creating your entryway, customize a new front door with smaller side window panels or glass panels within the door itself. Look for an exterior remodeler that can custom design and install entry doors to match your exterior décor. If

it's not time for a door replacement, consider adding a splash of color to your exterior by painting or staining your existing door.

More information regarding windows, siding and doors is available at [www.WindowWorld.com](http://www.WindowWorld.com).

To love your home, you must give it some love. Making the necessary home upgrades and maintaining your home's exterior is a surefire way to turn heads.

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# Are Your Spring Cleaning Products Safe?

(StatePoint) Do you know what ingredients are in the cleaning products you buy? Probably not, as there are no federal governmental regulations requiring companies to disclose their contents. But harsh chemicals can take their toll on the indoor air quality of your home, are harmful to the environment and may irritate eyes and skin.

So how can you learn more about the cleaning prod-

ucts you plan to purchase? Luckily, certain retailers are making it easier for consumers to make informed decisions. For example, in 2011 Whole Foods Market introduced the Eco-Scale Rating System, which are the first household cleaner standards offered by a retailer.

This season, don't just spring clean your home; take stock of your cleaners and clean up your entire act. By opting for green

cleaning products, you can help make your home a safer, healthier place. Here's how:

• **Do an audit:** Take a look at the cleaning products you currently own. Just because a brand or product is well known does not make it a healthy option. A quick Internet search can reveal the safety attributes of a product's ingredients -- so long as the manufacturer has chosen to disclose ingredi-

ents. Toss anything problematic and make a shopping list of what you need to replace.

• **Full disclosure:** Avoid cleaning products that don't disclose what ingredients they use. Look for brands, such as 365 Everyday Value, that make it easy for you to know what ingredients are being used in the product you're purchasing.





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### • Be informed:

Know what ingredients to avoid entirely. Harsh ingredients like formaldehyde and chlorine can still be found in cleaning products today. Don't know where to start? Take a look at the list of more than 40 ingredients that aren't

allowed in Whole Foods Market's cleaning products, including chlorine, formaldehyde, phosphates, phthalates and triclosan.

• **Lock-up:** No matter the contents of your cleaners, it's good practice to keep them stored in a safe place, such as a locked cabinet. Young children and

pets should not be able to access your cleaning products supply.

• **Do it yourself:** A quick and easy way to know exactly what's in your cleaning products is to make them yourself. Luckily, only a few inexpensive ingredients are needed to make your own

all-purpose cleaner. Simply mix one part water with one part vinegar, add a few drops of your favorite pure essential oil, and you have an all-purpose spray. Baking soda is another great cleaner that has a mild scrubbing power and helps combat odors.

Don't have the time to make your own cleaner? The Eco-Scale Rating system evaluates products for environmental impact, safety, efficacy, source, labeling and animal testing. Visit [WholeFoodsMarket.com/ecoscale](http://WholeFoodsMarket.com/ecoscale) to learn more.

If you're using conventional cleaning supplies, you may be exposing your family to harmful ingredients. By learning more about the products you use, you can green your spring cleaning, for a healthier home.



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# Getting The Most Out Of A Kitchen Remodel

by: James Young



(NAPS)—According to the U.S. Census Bureau, homeowners spent \$130 billion on remodeling projects last year. If you hope to join them anytime soon, there are a few things you'll want to keep in mind. After all, a kitchen remodel can give you one of the best returns on investment as long as you know where to save and where to spend.

I help homeowners who dislike their kitchens evaluate all their options, from cabinets to countertops. Here are a few tips for a kitchen renovation that's worth the

time and investment.

- Play with color. You spend a lot of time in the kitchen and you want it to be an inviting, comfortable place. One way you can really spice things up and show your true personality is with paint. Go bold or lighten things up with your favorite wall color; it's really up to you and your personal style. It's also one of the most inexpensive things to change down the road, so don't be afraid to go outside your comfort zone or experiment with the latest color trends.

- Mix and match materials. Combining materials of different textures—such as stainless steel, concrete and reclaimed wood—adds warmth and visual interest. Invest in a marble slab for baking prep and a coordinating laminate or solid surfacing on other surfaces. This is your kitchen; get creative.

- Make a statement with countertops. One place you can make a big statement is with countertops. The amount you spend on this item should account for only around

10 percent of your kitchen renovation budget. For this reason, I prefer working with Formica® brand laminate. Through the latest design and print technologies, you can get the look of granite and marble without breaking your budget. For example, the 180fx® line of laminates captures the true scale and color variation of exotic, natural surfaces but at a fraction of the cost.

- Update your cabinets. While this can be a pricey endeavor, new cabinets can completely transform the look of

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your kitchen. No budget to replace them completely? You can create a unique look by adding laminate to the fronts of cabinet doors and drawers. Even

more simple: Update them with a coat of paint, add new hardware and you'll be all set. For more tips on renovating and getting the best bang for your buck, visit

the Knowledge section at [www.formica.com](http://www.formica.com).

• Mr. Young is a licensed contractor, electrician and TV host.



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(StatePoint) When thinking about home updates, our attention so often turns to a fresh coat of paint or new décor, but some of the most practical, meaningful changes you can make to your home will truly modernize the way you live.

Here are a few key tech updates to fully bring your home into the 21st century.

### Modernize Your Landline

As our mobile phones' functional-



ity expands with each generation, don't leave your home phone in the dark ages. You can now link your mobile phone calls to your home phone. For example, with a Panasonic Link2Cell

handset, you can link up to two smartphones to make and receive calls, as well as receive talking ID alerts so you never miss a text. You don't even need a separate landline to use these features.

Other technology highlights include Enhanced Noise Reduction that allows you to suppress background noise around callers while simultaneously enhancing their voices, and a powerful battery back-up system that keeps you connected when the power goes out. More information can be found at [www.Panasonic.com](http://www.Panasonic.com).

### Home Theater

Bring the theater experience home by giving your living room or den a tech makeover. A smart home theater system will sync with your devices so you can enjoy music wirelessly or access an external or network drive for media content. Don't forget the surround sound, as well as a lighting scheme that optimizes your audiovisual experience.

### Programmable Thermostat

Going green and being comfortable can now go hand in hand. Improve your home's energy

efficiency and well-being at the same time by investing in a programmable thermostat. Look for a user-friendly, intuitive thermostat that automatically turns itself down when you are not home and that can also be programmed remotely from a laptop, tablet or smartphone.

Even if you have all the latest mobile gadgets, there's no guarantee your home life matches your techy on-the-go lifestyle. Take steps to bring your home up to speed.



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# WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT REPLACING YOUR MOWER

(StatePoint) Now is a great time to take stock of your lawn equipment, and assess whether your gear can withstand another season of wear and tear. If you've determined it's time to replace your toolshed's most valuable player -- your lawn mower -- get informed so you can make a savvy decision, as mower technology has changed a lot in the last several years.

Whether this is your first mower, your old mower is on the fritz or you're simply looking to upgrade, these tips and considerations can help you make a decision that's wise for you and your lawn.

## Budget

The first thing to take into account is your budget. You need the most dependable and durable mower that you can afford. However, keep in mind, you may not have to pay the entire cost of the mower upfront.

Some brands offer various financing options that allow

you to make payments over time. Whether you're seeking low minimum payments or you want to minimize interest payments, ask your dealer about your options.

## Mowing Properties

Take into account the size of your property. A smaller lawn requires a smaller machine.

"For properties under a half acre, a 21- to 36-inch walk-behind mower should be ideal," says Daryn Walters at Exmark, a leading manufacturer of residential and commercial mowers.

For smaller lawns, consider Exmark's Commercial 30 or a small zero-turn mower such as the Exmark Quest S-Series machine with a 34-inch cutting deck. Their mowers require little maintenance and offer fuel economy and durability.

If you live on a larger plot of land, don't rule out a commercial zero-turn mower, which



is more durable, tends to be more comfortable to operate, and offers increased productivity with more professional-look-

ing results. Keep in mind, properties of more than an acre may warrant a mower with a 60- to 72-inch cutting deck. You'll be

using your mower a lot, so look for an advanced ergonomic design, such as with the Exmark Lazer Z, which takes a scientific

approach to ensuring that less vibration is transferred from the seat to the driver.

## Mower Engine & Features

After you've considered your budget, lawn size and terrain, you'll want to look at the engine and features offered.

Many models come with a variety of engine types and configurations, including eco-friendly models that can save you money on fuel. Mower accessories can include mulching, bagging and striping kits.

Decide what your priorities are and get a model that's right for you.

For an online guide to finding a mower, visit [www.exmark.com/products/filter/](http://www.exmark.com/products/filter/).

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# GET A HANDLE ON HOUSEHOLD LEAKS

(NAPS)—Over 1 trillion gallons of water are wasted in the United States every year from easy-to-fix household leaks. That is the amount of water used by more than 11 million homes every year! Leaks can be a real

drain on resources and occur in a number of places at home, including faucets, showerheads, toilets, and outdoor spigots and irrigation systems.

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection

Agency's (EPA's) WaterSense® program, common household leaks can also add 10 percent to a family's water bill. Finding and fixing leaks to save money and water does not have to be difficult. Just



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**Check:** Look at your water meter (usually outside your house) before and after two or more hours when no water is being used, perhaps while your family is at work or school. If the number has changed, there is likely a leak. To check for silent toilet leaks, add a few drops of food coloring to your toilet tank and

wait 10 minutes before flushing. If the color appears in the bowl before you flush, the toilet flapper probably needs to be replaced.

**Twist:** Remedy dripping pipes, fixtures or hoses by twisting a wrench to tighten the connections. If needed, twist pipe tape around shower fixture or hose connections to seal them. Teach kids to turn faucets and showers all the

way off, and check washers and valves for persistent drips. If you're not the "do-it-yourself" type or you have a bigger leak on your hands, you can consult a licensed plumber.

**Replace:** For old or inefficient fixtures that are not easily repaired, replace them with WaterSense-labeled models. Toilets, faucets and showerheads that earn the WaterSense label are indepen-



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Following these simple steps could

save the average family more than 10,000 gallons of water each year, or the amount of water it takes to wash 270 loads of laundry! For ideas and events during Fix a Leak Week, March 16 to 22, visit [www.epa.gov/watersense/fix-a-leak](http://www.epa.gov/watersense/fix-a-leak).

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# Three Things Every Gardener Needs

(StatePoint)

Whether you have a green thumb or are just thinking about starting a new hobby, there are a few tools that can help you grow beautiful and delicious things.

figuring out how best to incorporate a fresh harvest into tonight's dinner. Consider a little inspiration. A great cookbook that focuses on cooking with fresh herbs and vegetables can serve as a primer

veggie main dishes take center stage.

## Indoor Gardening

Why only grow tasty vegetables and beautiful flowers part of the year? With an indoor

greens and flowers five times faster than plants grown in soil. Because it uses advanced hydroponics to create an ideal environment for healthy growth, you won't need expertise for a successful garden to thrive.

Plants grown in an Aerogarden receive an ideal balance of water, air and liquid nutrients packed with calcium, iron, magnesium and other key minerals. It also features a control panel to tell you when to add water, eliminating some of the trickier guesswork.

Foodies and health enthusiasts will also be pleased to know that many of the seeds provided are heirloom varieties, and the company sources organic seeds when possible. More information about indoor soil-free vegetable and flower gardening can be found at

www.AeroGarden.com.

## Bird Feeder

Help attract pollinators and add a touch of beauty to your garden with a unique bird feeder. The birds attracted by the feeder will do more than bring beauty to the recipient's garden --

they can help cross pollinate plants and flowers, as well.

If you're crafty, consider making it yourself, or use an online marketplace to find a unique, hand-crafted or vintage treasure. You might also opt for a do-it-yourself feeder or birdhouse kit.

For greater gardening, go beyond the shovel and spade. Stock up on all the tools you need to support a lifelong, year-round gardening habit.

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garden, you can get your gardening fix year-round. For example, The Miracle-Gro AeroGarden is a soil-free garden that grows herbs, vegetables, salad



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# Create a Healthy Ecosystem in Your Own Yard

(StatePoint) This spring season, help promote a healthy ecosystem by learning to identify and control damaging plants and insects in your yard.

Information about common invasive species and backyard invaders is now being offered by Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment (RISE):

## Invasive Plants

Invasive weeds can out-compete native species, changing the local ecosystem. Many varieties, first introduced as flora to plant in gardens, can be confused with similar, native varieties. Here are two common damaging ones to watch out for:

- *Purple Loosestrife*, native to Europe and Asia, is found in most states. One plant can produce more than two million seeds annually.

- Native to China, the *Tree-of-Heaven* was widely planted

as an ornamental plant for many years and is often confused with other trees having similar leaves, such as black walnut, butternut, and most sumac.

## Invasive Insects

Invasive insects can also have a severe negative impact on native species by out-competing them for food and resources.

Many also cause and carry disease and prey on native species. Two common ones to look out for include:

- *Emerald Ash Borer*, native to Asia, is prominently found across the North-

east, Midwest, and Southeastern United States. The larvae do the most damage, killing ash trees by feeding on the inner bark.

- *Zebra Mussel*, native to lakes in southern Russia,

is found in hundreds of waterways throughout the United States. The species commonly clog water intakes, damage boats, and can cause cuts and scrapes if they grow on rocks, swim rafts, and

ladders.

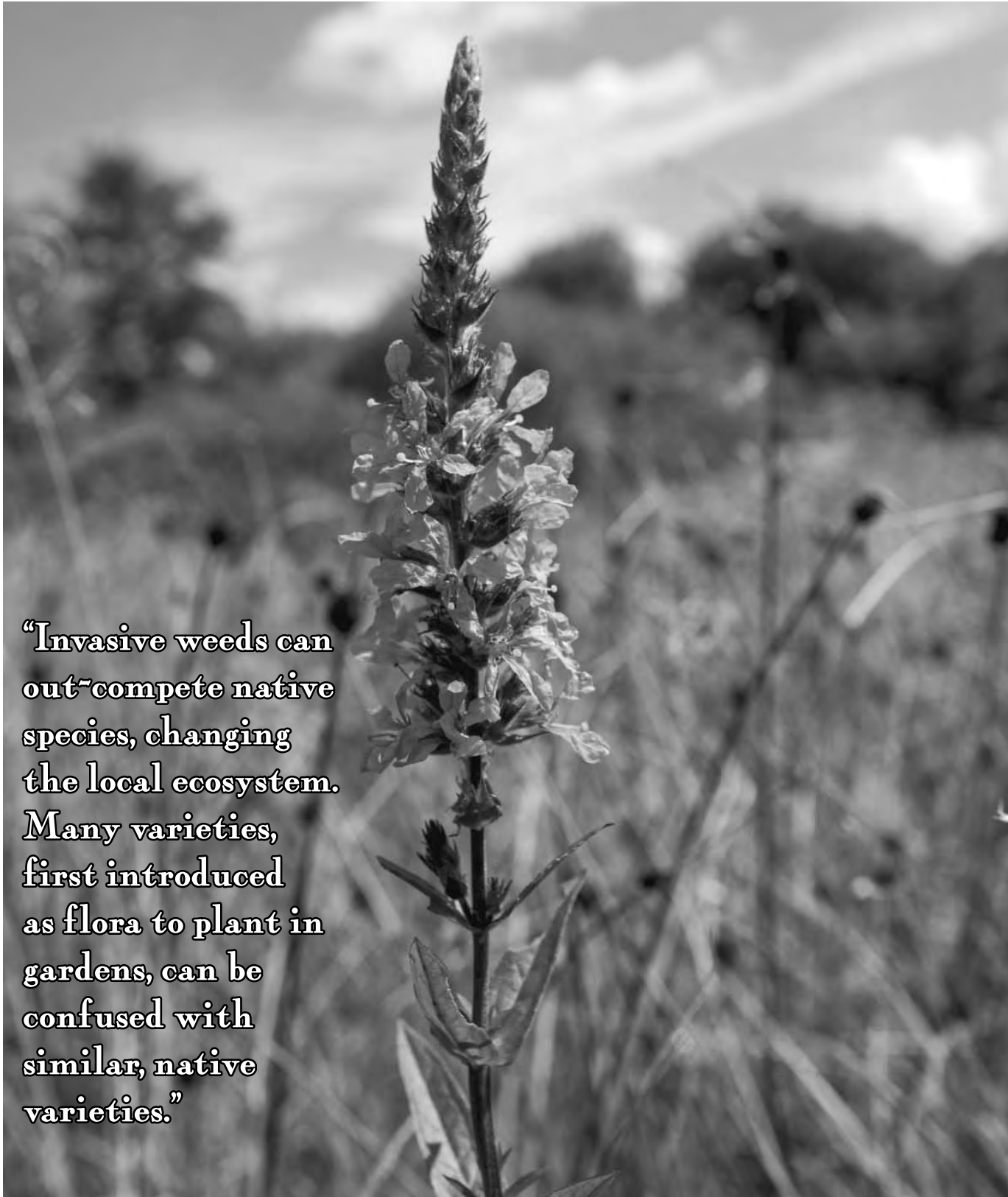
## Backyard Pests

Did you know native plants and insects can cause damage too?

- *Ticks* can transmit Lyme disease and Rocky Mountain spotted fever. Left untreated, Lyme disease infects the joints, heart, and nervous system. After time spent outdoors, check for ticks, especially in and around your ears, inside your belly button, behind your knees, around your waist, on your scalp, and in your hair.

- *Mosquitoes* can carry West Nile Virus. While most people may show few symptoms, 20 percent of people develop a fever along with headaches, body aches, joint pains, vomiting, diarrhea or rash, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Follow the “five Ds” to protect yourself: Drain standing water; Stay indoors at Dusk and Dawn; Dress in long-



**“Invasive weeds can out-compete native species, changing the local ecosystem. Many varieties, first introduced as flora to plant in gardens, can be confused with similar, native varieties.”**



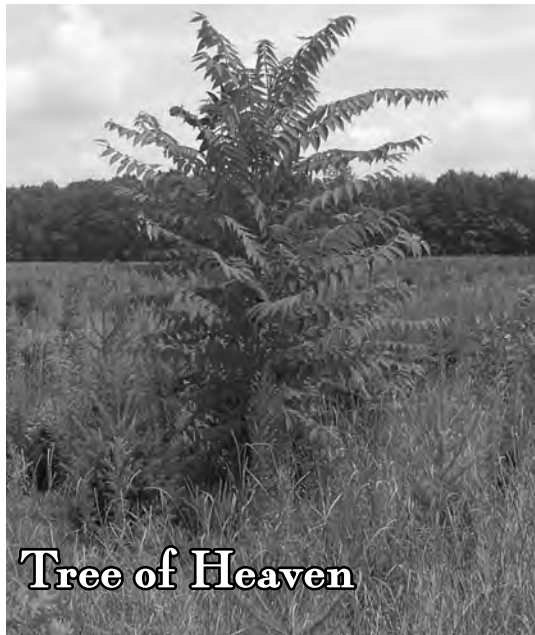
**Zebra Mussel**

sleeves and pants; and use DEET-based mosquito repellent.

• *Poison ivy*, *poison oak*, and *poison sumac* can lurk in backyards. Almost 85 percent of people develop

a rash when they come into contact with these weeds.

Control poisonous weeds long-term by carefully digging out the plants while wearing waterproof gloves or treating with a pesticide.



**Tree of Heaven**

Defend your local ecosystem by identifying exotic plants in your garden or yard. Spot invasive weeds and insects in your area? Let your county extension office know, which may have a monitoring and management program in place.

For more lawn and garden tips, visit [www.DebugTheMyths.com](http://www.DebugTheMyths.com).

By being aware of invasive species and other pests in your area, you can help support native species and a healthy ecosystem in your own backyard and neighborhood.

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(NAPS)—There could be good news for many households: The garage can be so much more than a storage room where you hide your kid's soccer cleats, lawn mower and old yearbooks. With these five tips, you can make it as organized, functional and aesthetically pleasing as any room in your house.

1. For many, the garage is the primary entry and



exit point to the home but it can also serve as a terrific storage space for emergency supplies. Check to make sure your

home emergency kit is up to code—replace batteries in flashlights and replenish your canned food and medical supplies.

You may not need them every day of the year, but it's better to be safe than sorry. Also, ensure that you have backup power sources available in the event of an outage—a home generator and back-up battery for your garage door opener are proven solutions that will help maintain accessibility and functionality for your family, no matter the circumstance.

2. While reorganizing, take some time to check your garage door. Test the alignment by disconnecting the door from the opener; once it's disconnected, you should be able to lift the door easily with one hand. If the door is stuck or difficult to lift, you should call an authorized dealer for an inspection. Also, be mindful—if your garage door opener was installed prior to 1993, it's prob-

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ably time to have it replaced, as it may not be equipped with the latest safety features, such as photo eyes.

3. When cleaning the garage, homeowners tend to think of horizontal space—clearing out boxes on the floor, moving gardening equipment and power tools over to the side—but freeing up vertical space can be just as important. Instead of piling containers on the floor, think about installing wall shelves to maximize space. If you want to clear up additional overhead for a larger car, a hanger for bikes or other large pieces of sporting equipment, consider replacing your overhead garage door opener with a wall-mount unit such as the LiftMaster 8500.

4. You've organized and upgraded your garage, but you're not done yet—you need to be sure your garage is a safe place for

friends, family and pets. Store flammable propane tanks outdoors and invest in a 5- or 10-pound fire extinguisher in case of emergencies. Lock up any other dangerous chemicals and perform a 3-Step Safety Check. The 3-Step Safety Check is a simple 45-second test you can perform on your garage door that checks the performance of key industry-standard safety features such as the photo eyes and auto reverse.

5. A good cleaning ultimately helps increase convenience and peace of mind, and that premise can extend beyond organizational tips. This year, take a look at your home technology and consider upgrading your garage door opener. With MyQ technology from LiftMaster—the No. 1 brand of professionally installed residential garage door openers—you can monitor, open or close your garage door from

any smartphone, tablet or computer. "It doesn't matter if you're at the office, on vacation in Paris or if you just drove down the road," says Paul Accardo from LiftMaster. "With MyQ, you can be sure your garage door is closed and the main entry point to your home is secure." Creating a clean,

functional space will provide the peace of mind you want and deserve. You can turn your home into an organized retreat and your garage into a functional space-saving area you can enjoy year after year.

Learn More  
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door openers and safety in and around the garage, visit [www.LiftMaster.com](http://www.LiftMaster.com).

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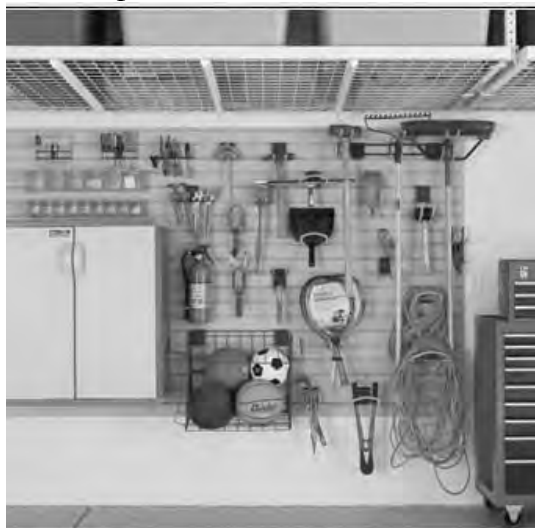
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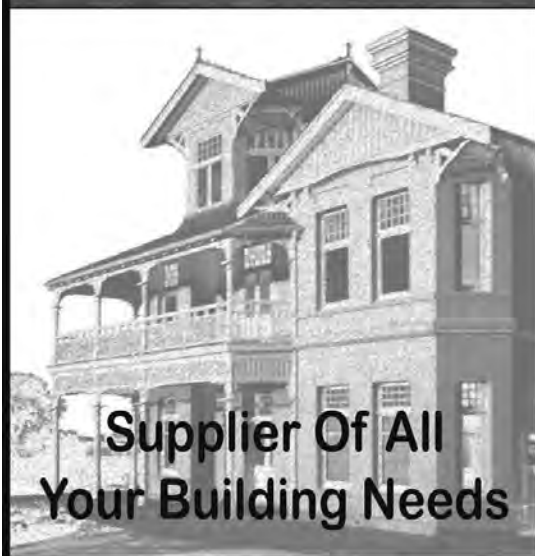
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# Time-Saving Spring Cleaning Tips for Your Home's Outdoor Spaces

(StatePoint) It's time to prep your home's outdoor spaces for the season ahead. From the yard to the garage to the deck, getting these areas tidy is all part of a thorough spring clean.

Here are some tips to make the process faster and easier.

## DE-CLUTTER YOUR WORKSPACE

Your shed, your garage, your toolbox -- it's time to take stock of what you're storing in these key areas. Broken tools, piles of junk -- these are items that will get in your way and slow you down all

season long. So before you get to the nitty gritty of your outdoor spring clean, take the time to organize your workspace.

Throw out what is junk, donate what you aren't using, and organize the rest into categories. Vertical storage

can save crucial room, so install tall shelves and use walls and the ceiling to install organizational systems. Now is also a great opportunity to perform routine maintenance on your lawn equipment and tools to improve their efficiency.

## IDENTIFY MULTITASKING TOOLS

Check out innovations on old tools that can make your versatile workload easier. For example, you can upgrade your conventional pressure washer for a newer model with more diverse functionality. For example, Briggs & Stratton's new POWERflow+ Pressure Washer technology has one pump with two separate cleaning modes -- high pressure and high flow, which work for different tasks.

Remember, different surfaces require different cleaning techniques. Whether you're cleaning up tough mold and mildew stains from your deck or patio or washing the more delicate surface of your car, you can switch modes or apply soap directly from the nozzle. This feature eliminates the need for switching attachments or walking back to the pressure washer, making an afternoon of diverse to-dos manageable.



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Just be sure you're using the proper mode for the task. Tips and instructional videos can be found at [www.PowerFlowPlus.com](http://www.PowerFlowPlus.com).

### DO SMART YARD MAINTENANCE

If you have a larger yard, consider a riding mower to save time and energy on lawn maintenance. Remember not to over mow your lawn. Not only is it not healthy for the grass, it can be

a time suck and increase your carbon footprint needlessly. Likewise, only water your lawn and garden when necessary. During periods of rain, you can ease up on this chore. The most efficient times of day to water your lawn are morning. When the sun is strongest, you will lose more water to evaporation and your work will be for naught. By changing up your lawn care habits, you can save time all season.



While working outdoors can be fun, don't spend more time than you need to on your household spring cleaning tasks. Finding simple ways to be more efficient will give you more time to enjoy your home's outdoor spaces.



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# What to Know Before You Replace Your Home's Siding



"Fiber-based materials (such as fiber cement planks) absorb water, which over time can make siding more prone to rot, decay and even disintegration."

StatePoint) Whether you're building a home from scratch or contemplating an upgrade, when choosing siding, there's a lot more to consider beyond color. The type of material you use can impact durability, beauty and even energy efficiency.

Since siding is a long-term investment, you'll want to make a decision from an informed

place, especially with more options now available in the marketplace. With that in mind, here are some things to consider about different siding materials:

## Weather

Extreme weather events, including high winds and hot and cold temperatures can damage or destroy siding. Look for a product that is certified to

withstand these conditions. No matter where you live, this should be an important consideration, as weather patterns have become more unpredictable across the country.

## Rot

Fiber-based materials (such as fiber cement planks) absorb water, which over time can make siding more prone to rot, decay and

even disintegration. At the store, ask to see siding options made of polymer-based materials, which are impervious to moisture.

## Environmental Impact

For improved energy efficiency, choose insulated siding, which will prevent undue loss of warm air in winter and cool air in summer. Where

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environmental impact is concerned, vinyl is a good bet, as it complies with environmental standards known as LEED and ICC 700 National Green Building standards.

## Maintenance

A certain amount

of upkeep will be required to keep your siding looking great. However, vinyl siding requires only occasional soap and water, whereas fiber cement requires re-caulking and repainting to maintain color and help

prevent moisture absorption. First introduced in the 1960s, vinyl siding is the most popular home siding material today, due to its overall low cost, easy installation, durability and minimal maintenance. New

products are particularly versatile, and easy to install and maintain, such as Heartland Siding by ProVia. Their super polymer vinyl siding comes in a number of styles, colors and price points. Additionally, the energy efficiency of the company's Cedar-MAX line can help you save money down the line. Visit [www.proviaproducts.com/vs](http://www.proviaproducts.com/vs) for more information. Whenever making a major home upgrade, learn more about your purchase for smarter, sounder investments.

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# Seven Steps Toward A Greener, Cleaner Bathroom

(NAPS)—When people think of ways to live green and save energy in their homes, the bathroom may not be the first place that comes to mind. However, Carter Oosterhouse, home and design expert, proves there are several simple ways you can make a big difference in one of the most trafficked rooms in your home.

1. **Save Water with Every Flush.** Put a small plastic juice bottle or laundry soap bottle in your toilet tank. First, soak off the label, fill the bottle with water, replace the cap and

place it in the tank. Because the bottle is in the toilet tank, less water is needed to fill the tank and therefore less water will be flushed. Be careful that the bottle doesn't interfere with the flushing mechanism, and with five minutes work, you can save on or two gallons per flush.

2. **Purchase Green Products.** You can swap your traditional toilet paper for Scott Naturals® Tube-Free bath tissue and toss the tube. There's no cardboard core so it has major potential to reduce a portion of the 17

billion toilet paper tubes thrown away each year in the U.S., enough to fill the Empire State Building twice.

3. **Reduce Waste.** Use bathroom necessities with less packaging such as bar soaps, which are friendlier to the environment (and your budget). The carbon footprint of liquid soaps is about 25 percent larger than that of bar soaps. Liquid soaps also require more energy for packaging production and disposal.

4. **Clean the Air.** Bathrooms are one of the most

humid rooms in the house. Excess humidity can cause mold, which can spur allergies, asthma and other breathing troubles. Use nontoxic cleaning solutions to remove mold, such as household ingredients (baking soda and vinegar) or other natural cleaners. Help prevent mold by better ventilating the bathroom which removes the moisture that mold needs to grow.

5. **Install a Tankless Water Heater.** With a tankless water heater, you only heat the water that you use, which saves energy

and money. Gas water heaters give off an average of 58 percent fewer carbon emissions than electric ones.

6. **Save Energy.** Compact fluorescent bulbs use about 75 percent less energy than traditional incandescent bulbs and last 10 to 25 times longer. Energy-efficient bulbs can also save you money on electricity.

7. **Conserve Water.** Aerators on faucets and showerheads use half the water with twice the power. If everyone used one, aerators could save 250 million gallons of water a year.

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# Preparing Your Lawn And Garden Equipment For Spring: Tips From The Outdoor Power Equipment Institute

(NAPS)—Spring is on its way, and soon, home and business owners will be cleaning and preparing lawn and garden equipment.

“Many are so eager to pull out lawn and garden equipment once spring arrives that they sometimes forget basic steps to ensure the pow-

erhouse of the equipment—the engine—is in good working order,” said Kris Kiser, president and CEO of OPEI.

“One challenge is that most fuel contains some level of ethanol, which contains corrosive alcohol. If you left that fuel in the tank over the winter months, you don’t want to use it in the spring. It may damage your equipment. You need to drain it and put in new fuel that is E10 or lower,” advises Kiser. Whether it’s a mower, trimmer, blower, chain saw or pruner, the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI) offers tips to help users avoid fuel-related problems and ready their equipment to operate safely.

Check the fuel tank. If fuel has been sitting all winter long in the fuel tank, do not use it in the spring. Drain it responsibly and put in fresh

fuel. Remember to dispose of this fuel properly.

Use only E10 or lower fuel in your outdoor power equipment. Do not use gas with more than 10 percent ethanol (E10) in outdoor power equipment. Some gas stations may offer 15 percent

ethanol (E15) gas or other fuel blends, but this higher ethanol fuel is dangerous—and is in fact illegal—to use in any small engine equipment, such as lawn mowers, chain saws, generators, and all other lawn and garden equipment.

Don’t leave fuel sitting in the tank 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, damage to the fuel system. Inspect your equipment. Check for



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loose belts and missing or damaged parts. If you find anything concerning, replace the parts or take your equipment to a qualified service representative.

Drain out the old oil and put in fresh oil. Remove the oil drain plug in your lawn mower and catch the old oil in a container. Replace the plug and refill the engine with oil recommended by the product manufacturer. Properly dispose of the oil you drained.

Install clean air filters. Your engine and equipment will run much better with clean filters. Paper filters need



to be replaced. Some foam filters can be cleaned and replaced.

Sharpen your cutting blade. Have your lawn mower's cutting blade sharpened so you can get a clean cut on your lawn. Your lawn will be healthier and your lawn mower will operate more efficiently, too.

Clean your equipment. If you did not clean your equipment before storing it, there may be dirt, oil or grass stuck to it. Give your equipment a good spring-cleaning. A cleaner machine will run more efficiently and last longer.

Review your manual. Now is a good

time to read the operator's manual and refamiliarize yourself with the controls and what they do. Make sure you know how to stop the machine quickly if needed.

About OPEI  
The Outdoor Power Equipment Institute is an international trade association representing more than 100 power

equipment, engine and utility vehicle manufacturers and suppliers. OPEI is the advocacy voice of the industry, and a recognized Standards Development Organization

for the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) and active internationally through the International Standards Organization (ISO) and the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) in the development of safety and performance standards. OPEI is managing partner of GIE+EXPO, the industry's annual international trade show, and the creative force behind the environmental education program, TurfMutt.com.

OPEI-Canada represents members on a host of issues, including recycling, emissions and other regulatory developments across the Canadian provinces. For more information, visit [www.OPEI.org](http://www.OPEI.org).

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