



# 2016 HOME & IMPROVEMENT LAWN CARE Spring

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# SIMPLE SEASONAL TIPS TO KEEP PLUMBING OPERATING SMOOTHLY

(StatePoint) Proper seasonal maintenance can keep your plumbing running smoothly. Experts say that even those with no experience can inspect for issues and perform simple tasks to prevent costly repairs.

“You don’t have to be a crackerjack plumber to handle

basics and protect your home,” says Jeff Devlin, host on HGTV and DIY Networks.

Devlin offers homeowners some key plumbing tips:

## KITCHENS AND BATHROOMS

Ensure drains have strainers to prevent

debris from clogging drain lines. Check faucets for drips and leaks.

Inspect the toilet tank and bowl for visible cracks. Check for hidden leaks by adding six drops of food coloring to the tank. If the toilet is leaking, color will appear in the bowl within 30 minutes.

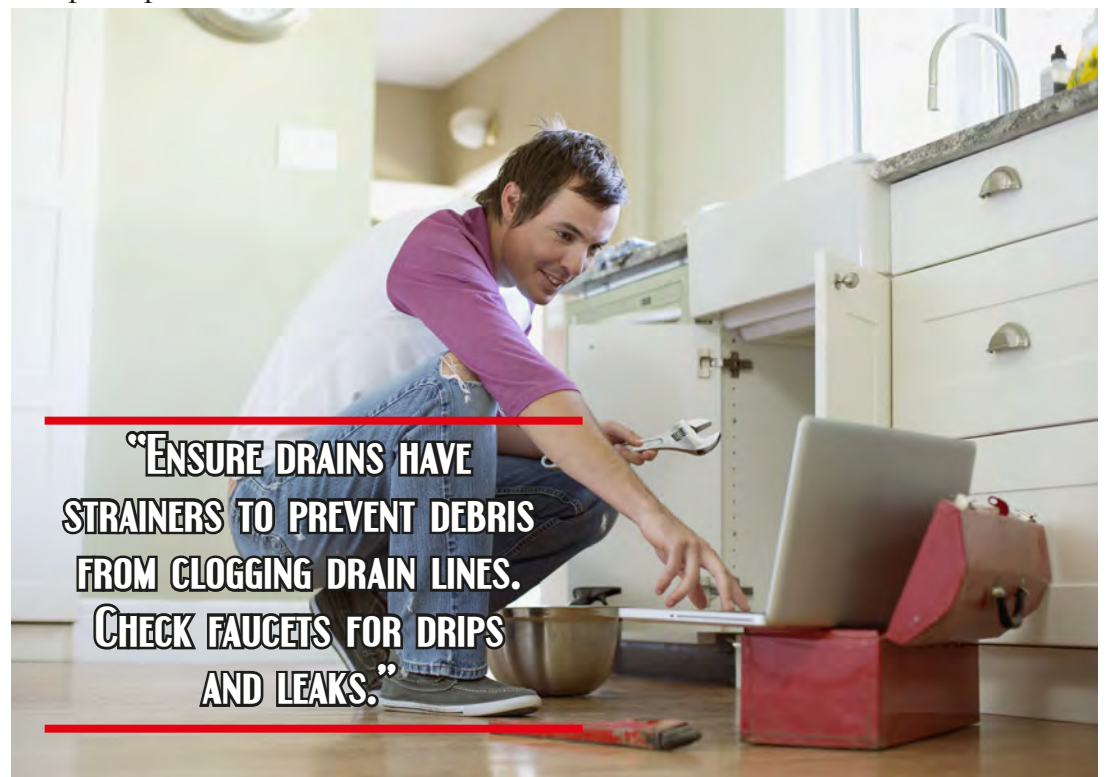
Ensure toilets flush properly. If the handle must be held down to flush, or jiggled to stop water from running, you may need to replace parts.

## WATER HEATER APPLIANCES

Carefully drain several gallons from the tank to flush out corrosion-causing sediment,

Check your dishwasher, washing machine and ice maker’s supply hoses for bulges or

Clean your washing machine lint trap, and place a wire trap or a piece of pantyhose over the end of the hose that drains the washer.



“ENSURE DRAINS HAVE STRAINERS TO PREVENT DEBRIS FROM CLOGGING DRAIN LINES. CHECK FAUCETS FOR DRIPS AND LEAKS.”

Clean mineral deposits from the shower head. Unscrew it and soak in vinegar overnight. Then gently scrub with an old toothbrush.

which reduces heating efficiency and shortens the life of the heater. Consider replacing those older than 15 years with a new, energy-efficient model.

leaks. Replace hoses showing signs of weakness or those older than ten years. Use stainless steel hoses, which are more reliable and less prone to bursting.

## GENERAL

Pour water into infrequently used drains to fill traps and prevent odors. Slow floor drains should be snaked to ensure they’ll carry

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water away during flooding.

Take a reading on your water meter before bedtime. The next morning, without using any water overnight, take another reading. If it's changed, you have a leak that should be repaired.

## OUTSIDE

Free yard drains, gutters and downspouts of debris. Check for bird nests in plumbing

vent pipes. Check faucets and hose bibs to ensure water flows freely. If an outdoor faucet drips, or if there is leakage inside your home the first time the hose is turned on, you may have had a frozen pipe that cracked and needs to be replaced.

## BE EQUIPPED

Look for commercial-quality products designed with average consumers in mind. For ex-

ample, Roto-Rooter, the number one brand in plumbing, with 80 years of experience, now offers a complete line of consumer products that contain 25 percent more active ingredients and clear clogs 50 percent faster than the competition.

“It’s stronger and faster which means you can get the job done right the first time,” says Devlin.

Devlin, who lives in an historic farmhouse, recommends the brand’s Septic Treatment, which contains twice the amount of enzymes to keep septic tanks in balance. More information about the product line can be found at [roto-rooter-products.com](http://roto-rooter-products.com).

“Be proactive,” says Devlin. “A few minutes of prevention could save you tens of thousands of dollars in costly repairs.”

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(StatePoint) Building a home or making upgrades? One of the most important factors to consider is the material used. While “all-natural” may be an appealing quality on your plate, in construction, man-made products often provide more

options and value. Seek out materials offering durability, energy-efficiency and resistance to threats like fire and wicked weather. Many such high-quality products are domestic, so you can support US manufacturing

while making key choices. Boost home beauty, strength and efficiency with these projects:

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room elements, use newer materials offering water efficiency, style and safety benefits.

Look for a toilet marked with the WaterSense label, which indicates it's been certified to be at least 20 percent more efficient without sacrificing



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against sidewall water penetration. These features make the basement dampfree and a more comfortable area for extended living space in the home.

### Plucky Plumbing

Perhaps your toilet rattles and leaks; maybe your tub and sink look dingy no matter how much you clean them. If it's time to replace bath-

performance. The free Water Savings Calculator at the Mansfield Plumbing website can help you determine your return-on-investment.

For a coordinated look, consider a suite of products that work together, like the Affordable Style Designer series from Mansfield Plumbing. You get a toilet, tub and sink, all in the same style.

Switching to an easy-access Smart-

Height toilet can be another smart move. Options in the bathroom like grab bars, walk-in tubs and pedestal sinks, all provide enhanced safety and comfort.

## Gorgeous Windows

Over time, windows can look old and become difficult to operate. Make wise replacement choices that add beauty and privacy to key areas of your home without compromising light entry.

Whether it's an acrylic block win-

dow over a bathtub or a set of decorative glass windows in the kitchen, privacy windows are a great accent for any room. Those from Hy-Lite are offered in a variety of styles, sizes and enhancements. Operable awning, casement, slide and single hung units can easily be opened to encourage airflow.

Their Home Designer Collection features nods to architectural styles like Metro, Mission, Prairie and Baroque to complement any home.

## The Roof

Your roof is your protective layer, between the elements and you. Ideally it should be impact- and fire-resistant, as well as beautiful. Natural slate and shake roofing materials evoke traditional charm; however they tend to degrade over time. Look for the man-made alternative.

Polymer slate and shake roofing tiles capture the authentic look of natural materials but are more resistant to chipping, flaking and splintering. For example, DaVinci

Roofscapes offers an impressive array of more than 50 colors and blends for an enhanced look, plus they resist fire and severe weather. Their roofs also come with a lifetime limited warranty, saving you big on repairs, inspection and maintenance down the line.

To be a savvy homeowner, don't leave it to chance. Select durable, high-quality man-made products.



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# Hot Colors For Kitchens

(NAPS)—The American kitchen these days is more than just a place to cook and eat. It's become the central meeting place or “hub” of the home and the right colors can really help warm it up. Helpful Hints To help you brighten your kitchen, Jessica McConnell,

Manager, Color, Finish & Material at the Whirlpool Corporation Institute of Home Science, offers a few tips.

For a simple update for your kitchen, she recommends adding pops of color with different textiles, cookware and kitchen gadgets each season:

orange for Halloween, red for Christmastime as well as pearly white and frosty pine, which can be a more understated, modern and unexpected approach to holiday themes. Also, gold is a hot color trend for kitchens right now, and few things say holidays like shiny gold accents.



It's pretty amazing, McConnell says, what some new dish towels, a rug and coordinating throw pillows (if, say, you have a breakfast nook with bench seating) can do to update your kitchen.

Another simple trick she offers is to add color in the form of a tea-pot or cookware that you can display either on your cooktop or on a shelf or rack. A nice container of kitchen tools and gadgets is a really simple and easy

way to tie it all together.

The next time you're in the market for new kitchen appliances or in the midst of remodeling your home, consider this: When it comes to kitchens, black is the new, well, black. Now you can get a new kitchen suite from KitchenAid in a black stainless finish.

The key to making black, white or

stainless appliances work with existing or new cabinetry is to understand what complements each finish for a modern look.

■ Pair white appliances with light wood or gray or white painted cabinets; black appliances with espresso, gray washed wood, walnut or dark painted cabinets. If you have high contrast from appliance to cabinet color, such as white appliances

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and dark, cherry cabinets, bring in white accessories and countertop appliances to complement.

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■ With a black stainless suite, small touches of red, either in small appliances, cookware or textiles, will coordinate really nicely

with the red medallions on the handle end caps.

Don't Avoid Color, Embrace It Explains Mary Jo Peterson, CKD, CBD, CAPS, "Color is the tool most readily available to us to establish our personality in our home, to create a mood, to invite others into our space, and we can do this with the ways we use this easy tool. To add warmth to a space, we might add a soft yellow,

gold or bronze or, in smaller amounts, a brighter tone of orange or red. While these are all warm colors, the more intense colors will have greater impact on the level of activity they suggest in the space. Particularly when used in muted hues, these colors are often great companions to the newer black stainless suites of appliances we are seeing in trends today."

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# Spruce Up Your Outdoor Spaces for the Season

(StatePoint) When the weather warms up, it's all about relaxing outdoors. But it's possible you've neglected upkeep on your home's outdoor spaces during the chilly months of winter.

To enjoy yourself more this season, take time to spruce up your yard. Here are some quick tips.

## Do a Survey

Take a walk around the perimeter of your patio, deck and yard to survey what needs to be cleaned, repaired or replaced. Did potted plants and lawn ornaments survive the cooler months? Are outdoor light fixtures functioning? Are fallen branches littering the yard? Make a mental to-do list.



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## Deep Clean

Like interior spaces, periodic deep cleans are necessary outdoors too. But don't waste your leisure time.

"With the right tools you can work smart, not hard," says Jeff Devlin, host on a popular home improvement channel. "A heavy-duty cleaner, such

as Mean Green Degreaser, not only works indoors, but is ideal for my tough outdoor cleaning jobs." Devlin recommends using the

Super Strength multi-surface formula -- which is lab-tested to clean and remove grease, grime, mildew, dirt, and oil more effectively than its

competitors -- to clean and remove mildew from patios, outdoor furniture, concrete, composite and wood fences and siding, as well as

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to clean and de-grease tools, lawn equipment and grills. Use it as a concentrated spray or diluted solution. Clean with a brush or sponge.  
“For your toughest jobs, add it to your pressure washer,” says Devlin. Helpful cleaning tips can be found at MeanGreenDegreaser.com.

## Routine Maintenance

Perform routine upkeep to keep items from falling into disrepair or becoming overgrown or unkempt.

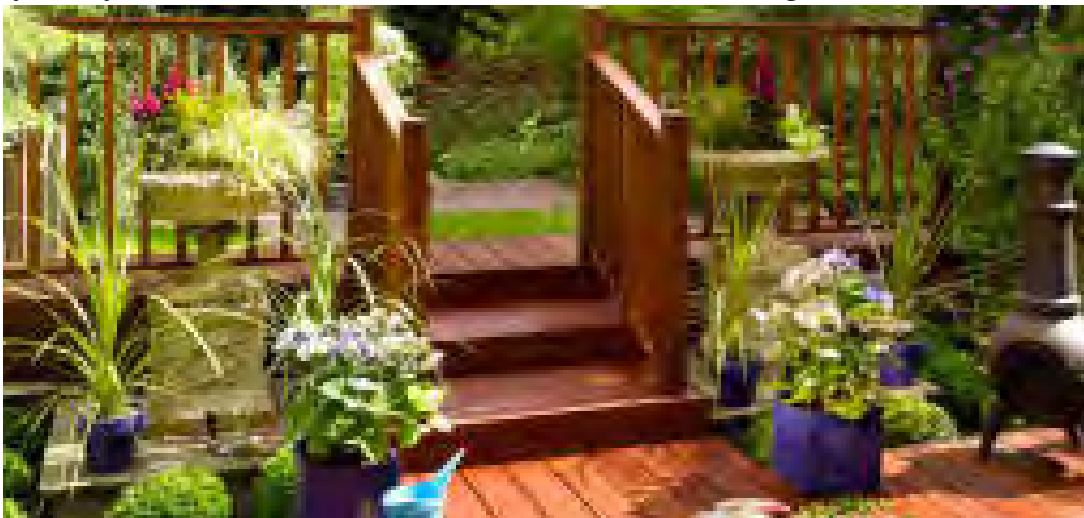
Sweep walkways and your deck regularly, especially if they are situ-



ated under trees. Promote a healthy lawn by mowing it regularly, never removing more than one-third of the grass blade. Keep gutters devoid of

leaves and debris so that water does not collect in your yard or at the base of your home's structure. Rinse patio furniture, umbrellas and awnings

using water or a diluted cleaner. Spring is in the air. With a little effort, you can be prepared to make the most of it.



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(StatePoint) If you love the results of spring cleaning, but not the process, it could be that the methods and tools you're using to get the job done are making the work harder than it needs to be.

To get your to-dos done with less effort, consider these tips.

### Make it Fun

Before you even get started, take steps to prepare yourself for an afternoon or day of chores.

Turn on some music to motivate you. Open the windows to get some fresh



air. Eat a solid meal so you're fueled for the tasks at hand. You'll already be in a much better mood.

### Avoid Harsh Chemicals

One of the less savory aspects of

cleaning can be the exposure of one's eyes and skin to harsh and irritating chemical formulas. But it doesn't have to be this way.

In some cases, you can get the same results with natural alternatives and, at times, just water. For example, microfiber is designed to pick up and trap dust, dirt, fingerprints, and grime from furniture, woodwork, and cabinetry without scratching surfaces. Brands such as Casabella offer

an array of cleaning supplies made of this material, including cloths, chenille mitts, mops and dusters, which offer deeper cleaning with just a little bit of water.

### Avoid Reaching

Cleaning can be a pain in the neck -- and back, and everywhere else for that matter. Treat your cleaning like a workout. Stretch your neck,



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shoulders and torso beforehand. Also, look for implements that reach so you don't have to. For example, a versatile tool like the Everywhere Duster, with its washable microfiber head, pivots to work in hard-to-reach nooks and crannies from floor to ceiling, such as window sills and molding.

### Work Smart

Mopping can be a tricky task when you're using a conventional mop and bucket. Rather

than push an ever-increasingly dirty mop around your floors, seek out smart cleaning tools that work for you. A built-in washing spinner at the bottom of the bucket can help keep things cleaner as you go. For example, the Spin Cycle Mop features two spinning mechanisms -- one to wash and one to dry -- so you don't drip dirty water on the floors that you're attempting to clean.

Use microfiber cloths and dusters that hold onto the

dirt they gather so you don't leave a trail of dust as you move from room to room. These materials are machine washable, so your post-cleaning tasks are a cinch as well.

For more cleaning tips, visit [www.Casabella.com](http://www.Casabella.com).

The fresh feel that spring cleaning affords does not need to come at a great cost to your happiness. With a few tweaks to your routine, you can make it simpler and more enjoyable.



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# Eliminate Kitchen Counter Clutter



(StatePoint) Birds are chirping, flowers are blooming and the ever-daunting spring cleaning checklist is looming. As you take on tasks this year, make the kitchen a top priority.

In addition to a little extra deep cleaning, it could be time to rethink its organization. With a few inspired solutions, counters can be freed from clutter, allowing more space for food preparation and cooking.

## CAST OFF AND GET CREATIVE

The easiest way to make room in the kitchen is to clean out excess. Go through dishes, pots, pans, appliances and utensils. Consider giving away anything you haven't touched in the past year or simply don't like.

Find creative ways to clear the counter. Use a Lazy Susan to store supplies in hard-to-reach corners. Reimag-

ine a cake stand as a shelf to elevate favorite spices, salt, pepper and olive oil, while leaving an area around the base for additional storage.

Rethink nooks and crannies, such as the top of the fridge, which could house a decorative display of cookbooks, bowls or baking canisters. Tops of kitchen cabinets can hold stainless steel or copper pots and pans, allowing for easy access when needed.

## ARRANGE BY USE

When choosing appliances to occupy prime countertop real estate, think about how often they are used. Everyday multi-tasking tools deserve a spot on the counter.

Save space with versatile appliances like the Vitamix S55, a personal blender with four convenient pre-programmed settings that can prepare everything from smoothies and whole-food juices to soups, sauces, vinaigrettes, frozen desserts and more. Plus, because of its compact size, it leaves plenty of room for other kitchen tasks.

You can also arrange serving ware according to how often it reaches the table. Store items such as holiday dishes and platters in the back of cabinets or open shelving. Place everyday items like bowls and salad plates in easy-to-reach cabinets and drawers. Cooking utensils should be housed in a holder close to the stove.

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## WORK WITH YOUR WALLS

The usual kitchen organization employs drawers, cabinets, shelves and countertops. However, you can also work with your walls to make your kitchen more efficient. Apply hooks to hang pot holders and aprons, ensuring they are a safe distance from the stove. Install a pot rack, which will make room in cabinets for appliances that are not used often -- just make sure your walls or ceiling are strong enough to support the extra weight.

To squeeze extra space out of your kitchen, hang

magnetic strips for items like knives and kitchen scissors, freeing up drawers and removing the knife block from the counter. Spices can also be hung on the strips with the use of magnetic canisters.

If you simply minimize what's kept on countertops and reimagine everyday items, you can optimize the functionality of your kitchen, making it a more user- and guest-friendly destination.



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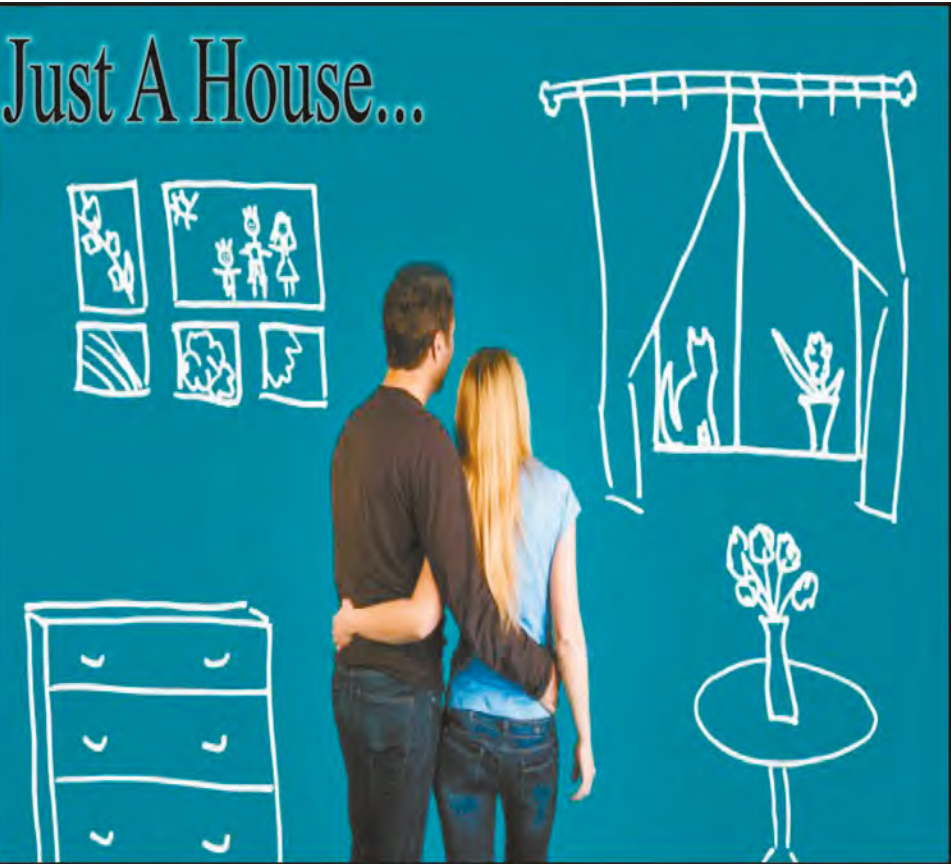
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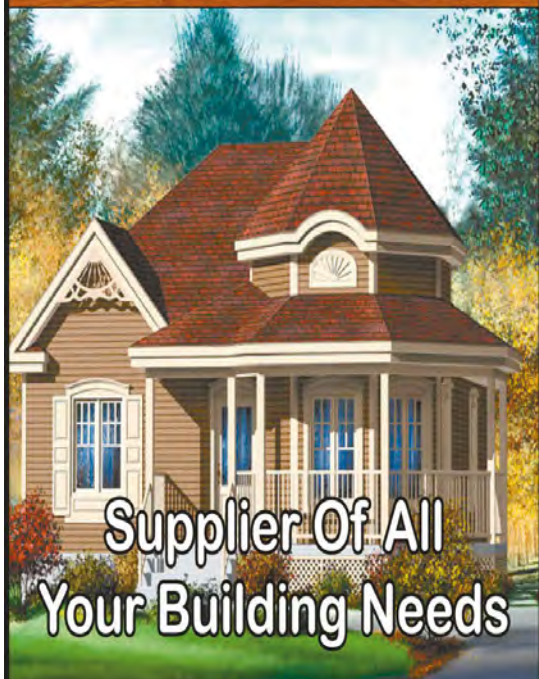
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# Small Paint Projects To Transform Your Space

(NAPS)—Giving your home personality and adding a dash of character can be achieved easily and affordably with small

paint projects. The experts at Dutch Boy Paint are a great resource for unique project ideas and helpful how-tos that will

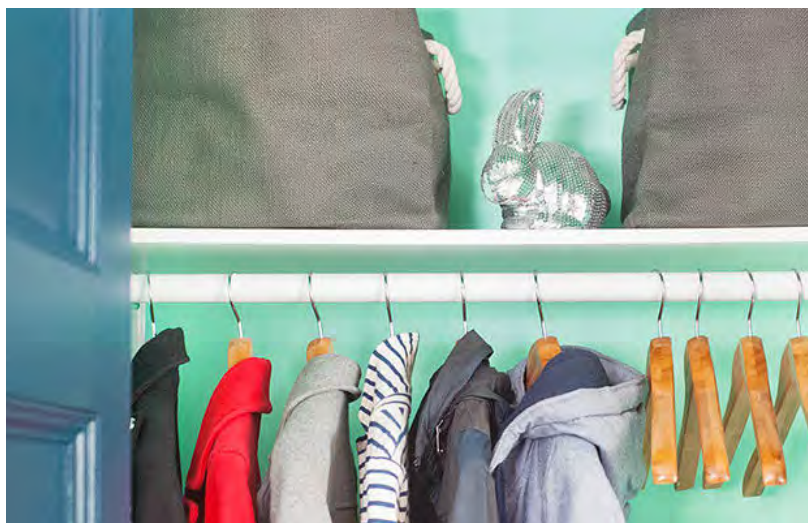
assist you with transforming your space into a haven that reflects your personality and style.

**1. The Grand Entrance:** Personalize your front door by painting it an unexpected hue. It will bring character and personality to your home and offer fresh curb appeal.

Color expert Sue Wadden suggests a stately shade, such as red or purple, to wake up a simple cottage-style door and accentuate a front garden. A bold yellow hue

that has warmer undertones can energize an otherwise neutral exterior, and a bright pop of orange makes for an unexpected statement.

Complement your newly painted front door with colorful, eye-catching address numbers. Choose a color that complements the front door or a contrasting hue that offers an interesting accent. Numbers



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such as cream, beige or gray. Or, if you're looking to be a bit more daring, choose a shade such as turquoise, navy blue or mint. A striking color will make the room feel fun and inviting. You can also incorporate the island color in a few new accessories such as a rug, curtains or dishware to create a feeling of harmony throughout the room.

**3. Rethink your Wardrobe:** For an element of surprise, paint the interior of your closet. A vibrant shade will dress up your everyday routine and give your wardrobe an exceptional room of its own!

ored diamond or chevron pattern for an unexpected pop of color. A frame wall with favorite pictures or prized album covers centered in painted blocks puts a spin on the traditional. Or create big-time graphic impact with an oversized DIY wall clock.

Add perceived dimension to a room by creating non-traditional stripes with three or even four colors. Angled stripes painted in different widths are less structured and provide a unique design, and an

exaggerated single stripe of color can rescue plain walls.

A headboard painted directly onto the wall creates an element of decorative surprise in the bedroom, and a stenciled one can add definition and polish. Choose from a premade design, such as a rectangle or whimsical silhouette, or create your own. No matter the shape, a bold hue or using two shades of the same color are both visually interesting and impactful.

With Dutch Boy Paint's unique paint project ideas and wide variety of paint colors and finishes, the possibilities of creating a distinct identity for your home that embodies your personality and lifestyle are easy. Check out the store locator on DutchBoy.com to find your closest retailer.

Learn More  
For even more ideas and inspiration, visit [www.dutchboy.com/inspiration](http://www.dutchboy.com/inspiration) or find Dutch Boy Paint on Facebook, YouTube and Pinterest.

may be painted directly onto the door or a section of siding.

**2. Make a Splash:** The kitchen is the perfect place to have some fun with color since it's often the communal area of a home. Instead of traditional tile, cook up a scene-stealing space by giving your backsplash a makeover. Stencil in a design, favorite quote or food-inspired words.

Don't forget to consider the other colors at play in the space before selecting the backsplash paint color. If the kitchen has dark

cabinets, choose a lighter shade to keep the room from feeling heavy. For white or light-color cabinets, both brighter and darker paint colors work well for this space; and for a pop of brightness that's also durable and stain resistant, use Dutch Boy®

Platinum® Paint in semi-gloss.

If you have the whole weekend, further customize your kitchen by painting the island a hue that complements the other colors in the room. If you'd like to keep the space neutral, select a subtle shade for the island

**4. More to Adore:** Make a personal statement in the bedroom by transforming walls into exceptional works of art.

Instead of adorning walls with framed artwork, paint a multicol-



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(NAPS)—The charm of an older home is an attractive selling feature. Less appealing are the inefficiencies of an older heating, ventilation and air-conditioning (HVAC) system or the absence of a cooling system. Updating to an HVAC system improves comfort and often makes good economic sense, but it requires careful planning. Asking the right questions and enlisting the help of a qualified HVAC contractor can make it possible to create a comfortable, efficient environment without

spoiling the character of these classic structures.

#### **Step 1: Determine how much equipment you need**

Ask your HVAC contractor to conduct a “Manual J” load calculation to determine your home’s unique heating and cooling needs. This calculation analyzes everything that affects air temperature in your home—things like windows, orientation to the sun, and duct leakage. Using this calculation, your contractor can recommend the right-size equipment for your home.

#### **Step 2: Determine the location of the unit and inspect ductwork**

Ask your contractor where the new equipment will be located and whether your ductwork is properly sealed, insulated and sized for the equipment. Dust and debris in the ductwork can reduce the HVAC system’s efficiency and damage its components, so have the ductwork inspected before shopping for a new system.

Your contractor should also inspect the home’s electrical system to be sure it provides enough power to handle a new,

upgraded HVAC system.

#### **Step 3: Discuss your efficiency and “stage” options**

Whether shopping for a furnace, air conditioner or heat pump, always check the efficiency of the unit you are considering. The efficiency of a fuel-burning furnace is expressed as the annual fuel utilization efficiency (AFUE). Air-conditioning systems are rated according to their seasonal energy efficiency ratio (SEER) and heat pump efficiency is expressed as the unit’s heating seasonal perfor-

mance factor (HSPF). Generally speaking, a higher AFUE, SEER or HSPF means increased efficiency and reduced operating expenses.

If you’re in the market for a new furnace, choose from a single-stage, two-stage or modulating furnace. Single-stage furnaces operate at full capacity all the time. Two-stage furnaces have two separate heating settings—a lower setting that is used when the furnace turns on and runs during milder winter days and a higher stage for colder conditions. Modulating furnaces, such as

the York® Affinity™ Series gas furnaces, can run at any speed within a set range, allowing them to choose the precise speed that’s most efficient for the given heating demand and offering the most energy-efficient heating solution.

Also, consider installing a programmable thermostat to control your new HVAC system. These thermostats offer accurate, reliable, energy-saving performance, and in some cases they include Wi-Fi® support to work with mobile devices to easily program a system remotely.

#### **Step 4: Understand your warranty**

Finally, be sure to check the warranty coverage offered by the equipment manufacturer. Your contractor should be very clear about what’s covered. Also, ask whether an extended warranty is available and what advantages it offers.

To learn more about energy-efficient heating, ventilation and air-conditioning (HVAC) products, visit [www.york.com](http://www.york.com), [www.youtube.com/yorkhomecomfort](http://www.youtube.com/yorkhomecomfort) and @YorkHVAC on Twitter or call (877) 874-7378.

# Add Your Personal Style to Your Home



(StatePoint) You may feel locked into the style you inherited when you purchased your house. But you have more power than you think to transform your reality home into your dream home.

To make a big style impact, consider these upgrades and projects:

## Stunning Curb Appeal

Don't settle for a drab or standard home exterior, particularly when it comes to your roof. A beautiful, colorful update will enhance your home's exterior design and boost curb appeal.

For long-term durability, consider a polymer slate or shake roofing product, like those from DaVinci Roofscapes, which are offered in 50 standard colors and a variety of striking color blends.

However, picking the right exterior color scheme and style can be daunting without guidance, say experts.

“Many homeowners are afraid to shake things up with color because they don't want to make a mistake,”

says Kate Smith, a color trend forecaster with Sensational Color.

Luckily, free resources can provide guidance and tips on understanding your home's exterior features and how to play off them with color ac-

cents. For example, Smith has written a free 36-page guide, “FRESH Color Schemes for Your Home Exterior.” The guide explores color options for seven different home styles and eases the process of choosing color palettes to comple-



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**“Decorative glass windows add character to a space because they become the view. They serve as their own artwork for the room with the added benefit of providing privacy in the home.”**



ment your home exterior. To download the free guide, visit [davinciroofscapes.com](http://davinciroofscapes.com).

### An Interior Oasis

An ancient tub, a leaky toilet -- these are bathroom features to bid farewell to forever. Your bathroom should be more than just a functional space; it should be an oasis from busy, stressful days.

Whether you are looking for customary bathroom elements or a spa-like whirlpool system, seek out a collection, rather than a la carte replacements, to achieve a coordinated look. For example, the Affordable Style Designer Series suites from Mansfield Plumbing, come in a variety of unified traditional and modern designs.

If you want a bit more from your bathroom, consider new products, such as the MicroDerm Therapeutic Bath, which silently infuses millions of oxygen-rich microbubbles into bathwater to relax, clean and exfoliate skin.

### A Touch of Elegance

Give your interior spaces privacy and

elegance by re-thinking windows. In key rooms, consider replacing standard windows with privacy windows.

Decorative glass windows add character to a space because they become the view. They serve as their own artwork for the room with the added benefit of providing privacy in the home.

Those from Hy-Lite include square, geometric and oval shaped windows in both fixed and operable styles and in various sizes, so they can be used as a focal point in a room or to create a striking accent wall of windows. Create an eye-catching

space in the kitchen with acrylic block windows, or complement your home's architectural style with one of the fashionable silk-screened windows featured in their Home Designer Collection.

If you're unsatisfied with your house, consider making key upgrades and replacements that will add elegance, beauty and a touch of your own personality.





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# Wood Finishing Ideas That Will Have You and Your Guests Floored

(NAPS)—While often overlooked, your floors are your home’s greatest canvas and one of its true untapped features. Replacing your hard-wood floors can

be expensive and time consuming, but refinishing them will not only restore the richness and elegance of the wood to a beautiful appearance, it will also protect it from

everyday wear and add value to your home.

To ensure that your floor finishing is a success, consider these tips from Minwax® spokes-

such as in a closet. All woods react differently to stain, so what you see on a sample in the store or online may not be the same as how your wood ac-cepts and responds

absorption and only by sanding off any old finish can the pores be opened to receive your new coat of stain. Never sand after you ap-ply your stain.

◦ **Note the Date**  
Plan carefully so you can exit the room without walking across wet stain. Also plan to complete the staining of the

longer the stain sits on the wood, the darker and richer the color will be. During your test, note the amount of time that lapses between applying the stain and wiping off the excess so you can repeat this for the color you desire.

## ◦ **Remove Excess Stain:**

Never let stain sit on the wood for longer than the label directions recommend. And always remove any stain that the wood does not absorb. Allowing stain to dry on the wood surface will prevent your clear protec-tive finish from adhering.

## ◦ **Between the Lines:**

When staining in sections, stop your stain application at

**“All woods react differently to stain, so what you see on a sample in the store or online may not be the same as how your wood accepts and responds to the stain you apply.”**



person and wood finishing expert, Bruce Johnson:

to the stain you apply.

## ◦ **Sand Away:**

Don’t skimp on the sanding before you stain. Stains depend on open pores for adequate

## ◦ **Test it First:**

Always test any stain you are considering on an inconspicuous spot,

## ◦ **Brush it Off:**

Dust is the enemy of a smooth finish. To remove all the sanding dust from the pores and joints, use the bristle attachment on a shop vacuum. Then wipe the floor with a clean, damp cloth.

entire room in one session to avoid lap marks that are darker in color.

## ◦ **Timing is Everything:**

Keep in mind that the final color of any stain is determined in part by how much stain the wood absorbs. The

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a joint between two boards rather than in the middle of one board. Individual boards may accept the stain slightly differently, so a slight change in color between boards will not be as noticeable as a change in color created by stopping in the middle of a board.

◦ ***Give it Time***

Do not apply your first coat of clear protective finish until the stain is completely dry. If a clear finish is applied over a wet stain, the stain will be pulled back out of the pores

of the wood and will mix with the finish, creating a 'muddy' effect. Or worse, your protective finish may not adhere to the floor. You should allow 24 hours for your stain to dry before applying the finish.

◦ ***Protect Your Floors***

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# 5 Maintenance Tricks Every Renter Should Know



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(StatePoint) One of the biggest benefits of renting versus buying a place of your own is that you usually don't have to worry about stressful maintenance tasks, like replacing a roof or hot water heater.

While most rental agreements include a landlord who takes care of

major maintenance worries, there are a few things you can do to keep service calls to a minimum, and protect your security deposit in the long run.

## Avoid a Deep Freeze

If you have a manual freezer, defrost it at least once a year or when more than a quarter inch

of frost has formed. When defrosting, remember to warm it up slowly. Empty the contents of the freezer, place towels underneath, and let the ice melt at room temperature. Use a blow dryer if you're pressed for time. Once melted, wipe your freezer clean, bring it back to the appropriate temperature and restock.

## Root Grout Problems

Gaps and chips in your shower grout are worth calling your landlord about, because they could lead to significant water damage. Luckily, a regular cleaning routine can ensure you do your part to ward off unhealthy mold and mildew and help



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ensure there are no cracks that could lead to problems in walls and floors. A good scrub made up of baking soda, vinegar and a little warm water should do the trick.

vents to avoid potential maintenance issues and fire hazards.

### Keep Clogs at Bay

It's common knowledge to not pour oil and grease down the sink, but avoiding other solids like coffee grounds will also keep your pipes flowing. If you have a sink with a garbage disposal, avoid dumping chemicals in the drain to clean it. In the bathroom, remove hair from drains right away rather than washing them down.

### Dodge a Dust Up

If your heating and air conditioning units are easily accessible, vacuum the vents before using them for the first time each year, or ask your landlord to do so. Regular cleaning and filter changes ensure proper air flow. Check that furniture and curtains don't cover

### Insure Your Peace of Mind

Starting around \$10 a month, renters insurance, a must for any savvy

renter, will not only cover your belongings (since your landlord's policy usually doesn't), but will also cover temporary living expenses and personal liability if

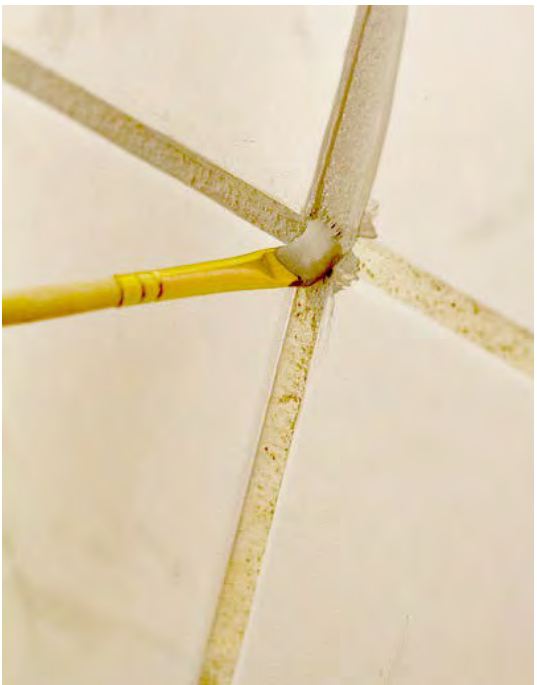
you have to relocate during major repairs.

Some insurers, like Erie Insurance, offer a generous multi-policy discount for those who want to purchase both renter's insurance and an auto policy. In some cases, the discount actually pays for the renter's policy.

While tenants should definitely reap the benefits of being a renter, performing small tasks around your

home or apartment can mean more comfortable day-to-day living, and fewer visits from the landlord.

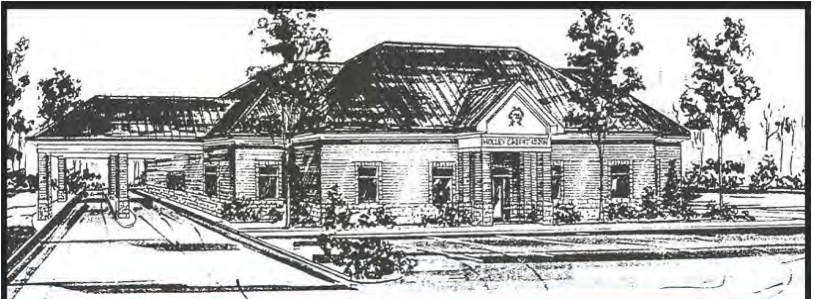
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# Get Smart, Go Green

(StatePoint) Going "green" has increasingly moved from a trend to a global initiative. But the best place for individuals to start minimizing their impact on the environment is in spaces where they spend the most time.

Here are some ways people are reducing their carbon footprints at home and work.

## Flooring

For homeowners, there are many different types of green or eco-friendly flooring options today. For example engi-

neered wood floors have a wood veneer, which uses far less material than solid hardwood floors. They're also more dimensionally stable.

Today's modern laminate floor options are made from recycled wood fiber. There are many more eco-friendly options -- ranging from bamboo and cork to natural linoleum, sisal fiber area rugs, seagrass and coir mats (made from coconut husks) -- along with stones and tiles, carpeting and natural wood.

These modern trends are offered

by brands like Floor Coverings International, a mobile flooring franchise, which also offers greener options in traditional hardwoods. Their "Epic" option uses 50 percent less newly harvested wood than conventional flooring and is sourced from domestic forests. Epic (shorthand for Environmentally preferred, Peak performance, Installation advantages, Complete product offering) is certified at Cradle-to-Cradle Silver, eligible for LEED credits and meets GREENGUARD indoor air quality requirements. More information can

be found at [www.FloorCoveringsInternational.com](http://www.FloorCoveringsInternational.com) and [www.FlooringFranchise.com](http://www.FlooringFranchise.com).

## Lighting

The lighting industry is going green. GE recently announced that it will stop selling traditional lightbulbs by the end of 2016.

Residential LEDs -- especially ENERGY STAR rated products -- use at least 75 percent less energy and last 25 times longer than incandescent lighting. Widespread use of LED lighting has the greatest potential impact on energy

savings in the United States. By 2027, widespread use of LEDs could save us more than \$30 billion at today's electricity prices.

Luckily, pioneering companies like LED Source are actively retrofitting major chains and other businesses with LED lighting. As North America's first franchisor of LED lighting, they are helping businesses go green and save money in the commercial, entertainment, and residential markets. More information can be found at [www.ledsource.com](http://www.ledsource.com).



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## Shop Green

A new green retail revolution is giving homeowners more earth-friendly choices. At the forefront of this movement are brands like SuperGreen Solutions, a franchised chain that offers a one-stop-shop for

a range of energy efficient solutions for commercial and residential customers, as well as expert advice and guidance through in-home consultations on the best products for each customer.

They also offer rebate advice, tax credit guidance, sales, installation and after-sales service. More

information can be found at SuperGreenSolutions-Franchise.com.

There are many ways to get on board this important trend and go green. Start by making smart swaps and upgrades to improve efficiency and lower bills.



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# Tune-up Your Lawn And Garden Equipment

(NAPS)—Before you get out your mower, trimmer, blower, chain saw or pruner this season, there are a few steps and safety procedures you should review.

First, preparing your cold-weather outdoor power equipment for storage is important,

says Kris Kiser, president and CEO of the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI).

“Your snowblower may have worked hard all winter, so it’s time to give it a good cleaning,” said Kiser. “Remove any dirt or debris. Drain the fuel tank, and

cover your snow-blower so it is protected from dirt and debris. Store your equipment in a safe place where it won’t be exposed to corrosive chemicals or moisture.” Next, make sure the engine in any equipment is in good working order. Here are tips to help:

- Check the fuel tank. Fuel left in the tank over the winter months should be drained or it could damage your equipment. Most fuel contains some level of ethanol, which contains corrosive alcohol and can phase separate. Drain the tank responsibly and put in fresh fuel that contains 10 percent or less ethanol (E10 or less). Dispose of old fuel properly.

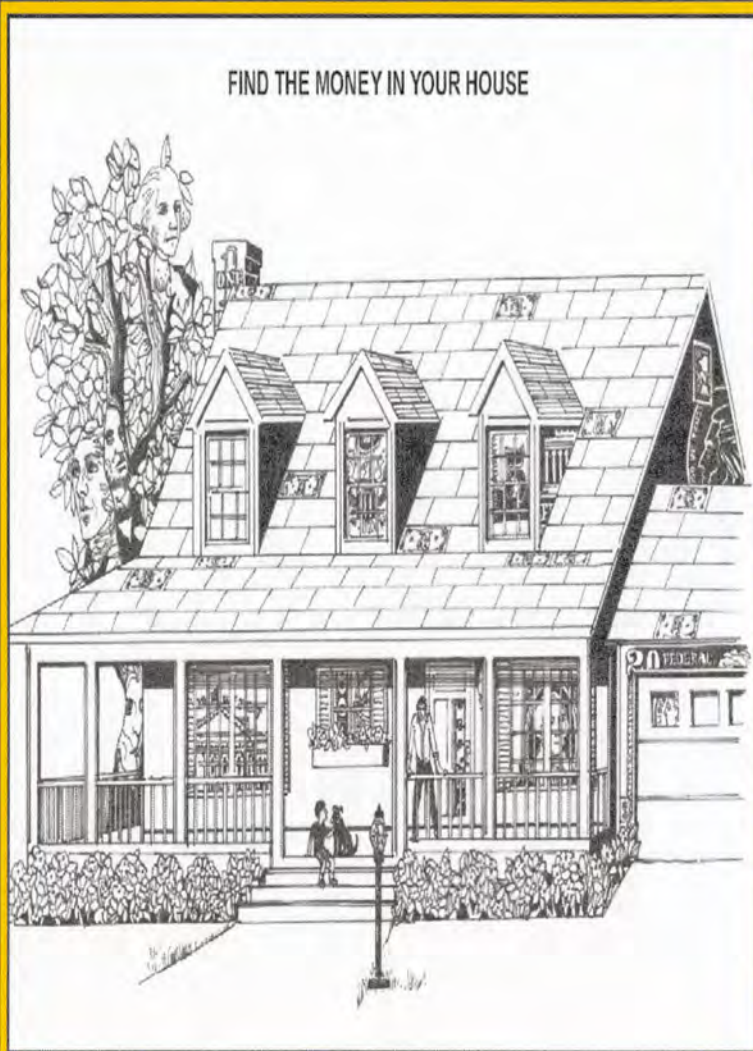
- Inspect your equipment. Check for loose belts and

missing or damaged parts. Examine all cables, brakes and wheels for signs of wear and damage. Make sure no safety features or guards have been disabled or removed. If

you find anything concerning, replace the parts or take your equipment to a qualified service representative.

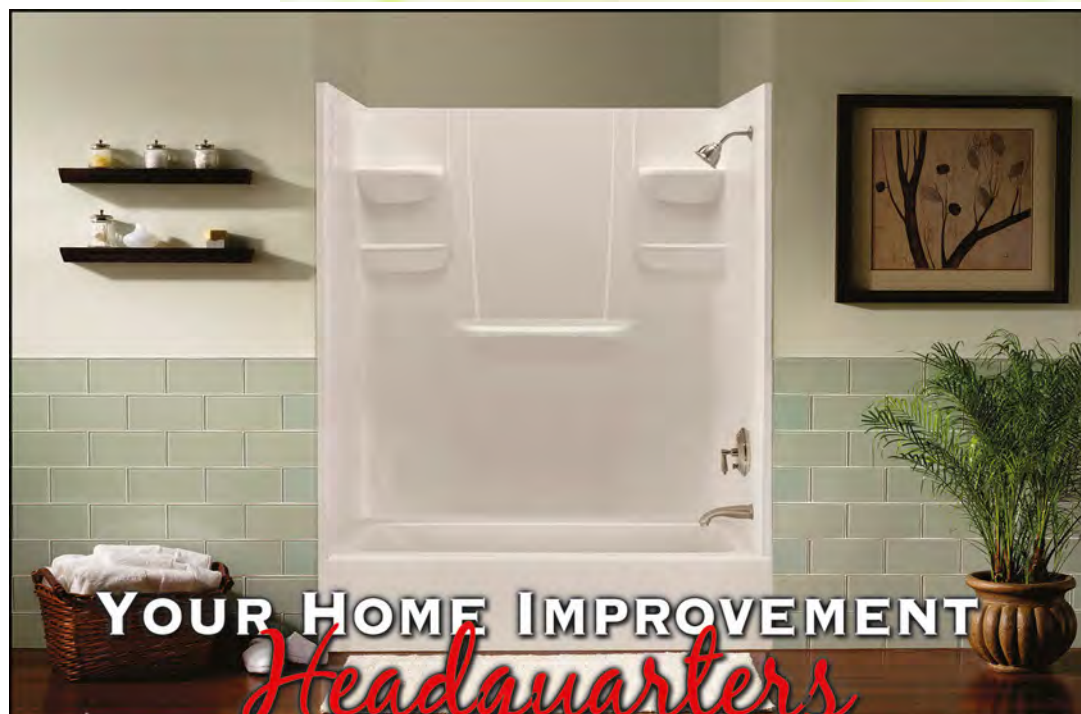
- Replace old oil. Run the engine for a few minutes

to warm up existing oil so it will drain more easily. Stop the engine, remove the drain plug and empty the old oil (tilt the mower back to get it all out, if necessary). Replace the



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**“Install the new plug, being careful not to overtighten it, which could prevent the mower from starting.”**

plug and refill the engine with oil recommended by the product manufacturer. Properly dispose of the drained oil.

- Install clean air filters. Engines and equipment run much better with clean filters. Paper

filters need to be replaced. Some foam filters can be cleaned and put back in.

- Change the spark plug. Pull off the spark plug wire and remove the old plug with a socket or spark plug

wrench. Install the new plug, being careful not to overtighten it, which could prevent the mower from starting.

- Examine and sharpen your cutting blade. Have your lawn mower's cutting blade sharp-

ened so you can get a clean cut on your lawn and not tear the grass. Sharper blades mean your lawn will be healthier and your lawn mower will operate more efficiently. Replace nicked or broken blades, which can

come from hitting rocks or other debris.

- Check the undercarriage. Always disconnect the spark plug before working around the underside of your mower. Use a wire brush to scrape any old grass clippings

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or dirt sticking to the underside of equipment.

- Clean the equipment. Dirt, oil and grass can stick to equipment. Give everything a good cleaning so the machines can run more efficiently and last longer.

- Fuel equipment with E10 or less. Don't use gasoline with more than 10 percent ethanol (E10) in outdoor power equipment. Some gas stations may offer E15 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 other lawn and garden equipment not designed for higher-ethanol blends.

- Store fuel properly. Label fuel storage cans with the purchase date of fuel. Never leave fuel that is more than 30 days old

in outdoor power equipment.

- Review the instruction manual. Read the operator's manual and re-familiarize yourself with the controls and what they do on the equipment.

Make sure you know how to stop the machine quickly if needed.

Learn More For lots of other safety tips, go to [www.opei.org](http://www.opei.org). For further information on proper fueling,

go to [www.Look-BeforeYouPump.com](http://www.Look-BeforeYouPump.com).

An annual tune-up can extend the life of your outdoor power equipment so it runs better and uses fuel more efficiently.



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