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(NewsUSA) There's no such thing as too much storage space. And that goes double for thoughtfully designed, carefully constructed cabinets, closets, shelves, and other home stowage solutions.

“The most successful built-in storage answers a specific need,” notes Linda Jovanovich, of the American Hardwood Information Center. “It might be micro scale,

like a drawer to store and charge electronic devices, or a macro project, such as outfitting an entire mudroom, but its usefulness, durability, and aesthetics will depend on how good the planning, materials, and execution are. Hardwood’s versatility, strength, and good looks make it an ideal starting point when considering most home storage problems.”

Here are six inspiring examples

of what Linda is talking about:

1. In-drawer charging station

Smart phones, tablets, and other personal electronic devices, along with their tangle-prone power cords, are a perennial source of clutter. A dedicated drawer equipped with a charging outlet, as shown in this Chappaqua, New York custom kitchen by Studio Dearborn, gets the gadgets out of the way-and looking great against the blond wood mill-work-while they power up.

2. Pots and pans drawers and pull-outs

Studio Dearborn tackles an even bigger problem-how to keep pots, pans, and other culinary equipment close to a cooktop without creating a jumble-in this Sleepy Hollow, New York custom kitchen. A deep center drawer holding bulky sauce-pans is flanked by a pair of vertical pullouts for smaller utensils and bottles of cooking oil, a practical and elegant solution.

3. Kitchen island storage

A custom kitchen in Chicago by 210 Design House

featuring Plain & Fancy cabinetry makes exemplary use of the center island’s inherent storage possibilities. Open shelves and deep cubbies not only help break up a visually massive piece of solid-walnut furniture but also provide neat pigeonholes for magazines and attractive display space for silverware, ceramics, and wickerwork.

4. Under-stair storage

The wedge-shape void beneath a staircase is often underutilized real estate in multilevel residences. Specht Architects makes the most of this no-man’s-land in a tiny New York loft with a triangle of custom built-in cupboards and drawers. Exquisitely calibrated to use the maximum available space, the storage wall also creates an almost sculptural work of decorative design.

5. Built-in wine storage

The space at the top of a staircase can be almost as problematic as the underside. In remodeling an Omaha, Nebraska house, Steven Ginn Architects and designer Marilyn Offut use custom hardwood shelving,

cabinets, and wine-storage system to create a welcoming and practical cellar in what otherwise could be a wasted nook.

6. Mud room built-ins

Making the most of this Denver, Colorado mudroom’s generous dimensions, Terra Firma Custom Homes has provided separate alder cubbies for each member of a family. While all share a bench for taking off boots, there are individual under-seat recesses for storing damp footwear, hooks for outdoor clothing, and wire-mesh-fronted lockers for personal items.

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(Family Features) Installing or updating a deck can transform your outdoor living area. Not only is a deck aesthetically appealing, but it also allows you to create additional space for a wide range of uses, whether it's a lively entertainment zone or tranquil, relaxing retreat.

If you're planning a deck build or renovation in 2022,

consider incorporating one or more of these design trends identified by Westlake Royal Building Products, a leading manufacturer and distributor of materials for home remodeling, building and construction.

Creativity in Design

While decking design features used to be reserved for

luxury upgrades, creative flair is increasingly mainstream. Some options for incorporating greater depth and style into your deck design include mixing and matching boards to create patterns, inlays and focal points or utilizing two-tone designs for more visually interesting aesthetics.

On-Trend Colors

Classic lumber-toned decks never go out of style, but adding some flair with an eye-catching color is a subtle way to elevate your deck's aesthetic appeal. Some designs incorporate color throughout while another way to bring color to your deck is through distinctive inlay design or other design features.

Working with a product like Zuri Premium Decking gives you a selection of six on-trend colors, including Hickory, a true mid-tone brown, as well as Chestnut, Walnut,

Pecan, Brazilia and Weathered Gray. The planks feature minimal grain repetition to capture the look of true exotic hardwood with no painting, staining or resealing needed, and all are backed by a 25-year warranty against color shifting.

Multi-Seasonal Spaces

Once you create an incredible outdoor space, you'll likely want to use it as often as possible. That's why many homeowners are designing decks with multiple seasons in mind. Features like retractable walls can help you block cool breezes and trap the warmth of space heaters or a fireplace while roofs provide shade and fans help circulate the breeze during warmer months. Decks built with clean, simple lines can offer a connection to nature as well as convenience for homeowners transitioning from indoor to outdoor spaces.

Popularity of Composite Decking

Weather patterns can cause substantial damage to a home's exterior materials, including a deck where natural wood is prone to drying out. This creates an upkeep cycle that requires ongoing investments of time and money. An alternative to natural wood, such as Zuri Premium Decking by Royal, combines the low-maintenance, high-durability properties of composite decking with the exterior environment-defining presence of exotic wood. The result is an authentic look with zero-maintenance upkeep.

Bringing the Inside Out

A deck's design elements were once limited to predictable furnishings like a picnic table and grill, but those days are gone. Homeowners seeking to create an outdoor oasis are bringing ameni-

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ties of the indoors outside. You'll find outdoor kitchens and weather-proof TVs, rugs and furniture, allowing homeowners to incorporate the convenience and comfort of indoor living rooms and kitchens into their outdoor spaces despite elements like snow, wind and rain.

Masonry as an Accessory

If you love the look of masonry but have your heart set on a deck, you can take the path of many homeowners and incorporate masonry as an accessory or design element. Mixing building mediums provides texture, which creates an immersive tactile experience through sight and touch. Options like a fire-

place or firepit, pillars, skirting, bench seats, planters, water features, kitchen or bar space and walkways can all complement and enhance the decking so you get to enjoy the best of both worlds.

Clean Sight-lines

A deck is an ideal vantage point when you have a beautiful view to enjoy and using the right materials can enhance that experience. Creating a

clean, sophisticated and unobstructed view is easy when you outfit your deck with the right lighting and use cable or glass railings, which provide safety along with clear views of the landscape beyond.



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3 SPRING HACKS TO PREP THE INSIDE OF YOUR HOME FOR WARM WEATHER

(StatePoint) With warmer weather on the way, it's time to deal with the associated household hassles of the season. Here are three hacks that will help you create a healthy, comfortable home during the months ahead:

Beat the Heat

Beyond having your HVAC unit serviced and changing your air filter regularly,

you can beat the heat at home with a few smart strategies. One change you can make today that will also reduce your carbon footprint is to swap out your heat-emitting incandescent light bulbs for cool LEDs. Likewise, appliances that are not in use but plugged in could be generating unnecessary warmth, so unplug when you can. Finally, use shades and blinds strategically to block out the sun and prevent a

greenhouse effect indoors.

Banish Flying Bugs

Fruit flies, gnats and flies tend to proliferate indoors in the warmer months. Not only do these creatures come with a serious ick factor, they can harm your houseplants and even put your family's health at risk by carrying germs

from dirty surfaces to clean ones.

A safe and easy way to defend against buzzing invaders is to plug Zevo Bug Traps into outlets around your home, especially in areas where these bugs enter your home and gather, like garages, entryways, covered porches, trash cans, drain pipes and kitchens. Rather than relying on chemical insecticides, they use multi-spectrum light technology



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trapping tips, visit zevoinsect.com.

Master Mold

Thriving in warm wet environments, mold is something to watch out for at home, especially during spring and summer. Much more than an eyesore, mold is bad for your home's infrastructure and bad for you. Mold can cause a number of allergic reactions and can sometimes even be toxic.

However, you can reduce the risk of mold forming by

managing your home's humidity. Use fans and other ventilation in bathrooms and the kitchen when showering, running the dishwasher and doing other tasks that invite humidity. Test the humidity of various rooms in your home with a hygrometer and use a dehumidifier where needed. According to the EPA, the ideal indoor humidity is between 30 and 50%.

Employing warm weather hacks at home can help you maintain clean, comfortable spaces, all season long.

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(StatePoint) One of the best ways to achieve instant curb appeal, according to the experts, is to effectively layer shrubs, plants and flowers in your front yard. Doing so can create a cohesive visual experience that naturally guides visitors to the front door.

Landscape designer Doug Scott describes plant layering in art terms: “Just like in a painting, you need to have a background, a middle ground and a foreground. Each layer serves a purpose, and there’s no more important place for them to be on full display than your home’s entrance.”

To help homeowners understand the purpose of plant layering and identify the best types of plants for each layer, Scott has joined forces with Exmark, a leading manufacturer of commercial mowers and equipment for landscape professionals and serious DIY-ers. Here they break it down for you:

1. Background: The background layer should consist of taller evergreen shrubs to ensure that no matter what’s in front of them, you and your visitors will always have something green to look at. This layer provides a cohesive backdrop and a bit

of living color in every season.
2. Middle Ground: Here’s where to step it down a notch in height and add interesting shapes, colors or stripes that provide contrast against the darker green of the background layer. Herbaceous perennials, like lavender, are a good choice for this purpose.

3. Foreground: Finally, the foreground layer should help transition the planting beds to your lawn space or sidewalk, and should therefore be lower than the back two layers. It’s also where you can keep things fresh and get your hands dirty

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throughout the year by changing out annuals with the seasons. Or, if you want a lower-maintenance entrance, you can choose smaller perennials, evergreens or creeping ground covers. Use the foreground layer as an opportunity to add pops of color at ground level and draw attention to your home's entrance.

Scott lays out a few other important tips to keep in mind:

- Choose plants consistent with your home's style.

For instance, if you have a craftsman home, you should probably skip tropical plants. Or, if your home is more minimalist, avoid an overabundance of different plants.

- Don't obstruct views of your front door from the street with plants. Likewise, visitors shouldn't have to maneuver around plants as they make their way down the sidewalk. Neither is convenient or welcoming, so you'll either need to keep pruning plants to size, or choose plants that

won't overgrow their space without a ton of pruning.

- To make your entrance "the star" it should be, the plant material in the rest of your front yard shouldn't be distracting. Rather let it frame the intended view.

Scott offers more plant layering tips in "Making an Entrance," a recent episode of "Done-In-A-Weekend Projects," an original series from Exmark. To watch the video, visit Backyard Life, which is part of a

unique multimedia destination with a focus on helping homeowners make the most of outdoor spaces. There you can also download additional tips and view other Exmark Original Series videos, including "Dream Yards," "Living Rural," "Prime Cuts" and "Done In a Weekend – Extreme Projects."

Through effective plant layering, you can boost curb appeal and give your home the grand entrance it deserves.

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(Family Features)
Long among the most popular areas for homeowners to undertake improvement projects, bathrooms can be some of the easiest rooms in the house to renovate without spending a fortune.

If you're looking to update one of the most-used spaces in your home, consider these easy and cost-effective ways to give your bathroom a facelift.

Accessorize with Color

There are numerous ways to create

a new look without lifting any tools. Replacing linens and other soft surfaces like rugs, window treatments and shower curtains can help brighten up your space. Adding a fresh coat of paint is another low-cost way to modify the look and feel of a space. With a variety of paint colors and finishes to choose from, you can add a splash of color as an accent or go all out to create depth and contrast.

Update Cabinetry and Light Fixtures

Keeping your existing vanity and other bathroom cabinetry, especially if they're in

good condition, can be a cheaper option than replacing all the cabinets. To create an updated look, add a different coat of stain or paint, replace the hardware and add pullout shelving or drawer dividers.

Replacing old, out-of-date light fixtures with modern, efficient options - including the appropriate bulb selections for each fixture - is another cost-effective way to help the space look and feel brighter.

Install a Heated Towel Rack

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example, a heated towel rack can save time and money while providing comfort and convenience. Companies like Amba Products offer a variety of styles and finishes to fit almost any decor that produce radiant heat to gently warm and dry towels, which can save time, water and energy by not having to do laundry as often. In addition, the racks can help eliminate moisture, resulting in less growth of mold and mildew. Some freestanding

models come ready to use and take as little as 5 minutes to set up.

An option like the UL-certified Jeeves Wet-Rated Kit allows homeowners to install a high-quality, stainless steel heated towel rack inside moisture-rich environments like wet rooms, shower alcoves and walk-in showers or above bathtubs to make their bathrooms more functional while adding a touch of comfort.

Swap Out Decor and Accessories

A quick, inexpensive way to transform your bathroom is to update the decor and other design elements. Installing a new toilet seat, faucet or showerhead and adding matching accessories, such as a toilet paper holder, shower control knobs or a toothbrush holder, can make the space feel new and interesting. For even more impact, add

artwork that matches the theme of the room, greenery or floating shelving.

Add Accent Tile

You can create a luxurious look with your backsplash, flooring or shower by adding a pop of colorful tile. Cheaper than purchasing an entire room's worth of tile, creating a chevron or herringbone pattern in one of these oft-seen areas of the bathroom can make a fresh statement.

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5 TIPS FOR ORGANIZING YOUR HOME OFFICE

(Family Features)

When temperatures creep up again, it signals time for an annual tradition: spring cleaning. While big projects like windows are hard to overlook, don't forget smaller areas that need attention, too, such as your home office.

Making sense of a year's worth of paperwork and clutter can take some serious time, especially as many people have been working from home more than normal, but getting organized can help you tackle home management tasks more efficiently. Making the office a priority can reduce frustration when it comes to spending additional time in your office while working from home.

These five tips can help get you started:

1. Make sure you have furniture that can adequately store your stuff, including plenty of space for files, reference books and computer equip-

ment. Pieces need not be costly to be functional and there are plenty of attractive options available online and at both small and major retailers.

2. Arrange the space with its intended use and your own work style in mind. For example, if you don't need ample space to spread out over a large, flat work area, eliminate that space - it's simply an invitation for clutter.

3. Place items you rely on frequently, such as a calculator or ruler, within arm's reach so they can easily be put away between uses. Capture these items in containers and bins to keep the space looking neat and free of clutter.

4. Establish a filing system that lets you keep track of important papers you need to keep and have a shredder handy to help you discard any sensitive documents. Whether you alphabetize, color code or use some other method,

group paperwork into segments for categories such as bills, banking, health care, auto, insurance and so on for easy access in the future.

5. Tangled cords can make even the most organized spaces look messy, and they may pose a fire or tripping hazard. Get control of your cords by storing devices you

don't use regularly and securing the remaining cords with twist ties or clips. Remember to use a surge-protected power strip to minimize the chance of damage should a power surge occur.

Find more tips to make your workspace tidy and organized at eLivingtoday.com.

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Tips to Add Farmhouse-Style Elements to Your Home Design

(StatePoint) When it comes to home design, farmhouse style represents a total intersection of beauty and practicality, making it no surprise that many are embracing this traditional look today. Whatever architectural

style your home is, adding key design elements can help you get in on best aspects of the farmhouse trend. Here are a few renovations to consider:

• **An Updated Porch:** Adding a front porch or

expanding an existing porch will not only add charming farmhouse-style curb appeal, but extend your outdoor living area as well. Be sure to take as much care decorating your porch as you would any other room of



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your home. Include comfy furniture, like rocking chairs and a porch swing, complete with cushions. Add potted plants for a touch of vibrant greenery, lantern wall sconces for illumination, and outdoor rugs for coziness. Don't forget the entryway. Make it more inviting with seasonal wreaths and a cheerful welcome mat.

• **Board 'N Batten Siding:** Imparting a rustic, handmade quality to any home, even those built-in contemporary styles,

"board 'n batten" is a centuries-old siding design that encapsulates the appeal of farmhouse-style homes. The term "batten" refers to the strip of molding placed across the joint between boards. The resulting look boasts an attractive geometry of strong vertical lines balanced by a sense of texture across the horizontal face. While the look is traditional, you can pair it with the very latest in siding technology. For example, CedarMAX Insulated Siding from ProVia comes in many styles,

including board 'n batten. This complete thermal cladding system offers continuous insulation for maximum energy savings. With five times greater impact resistance than regular siding and a weather barrier shield, this is not just a charming aesthetic upgrade, but one that will improve the comfort of your home for years to come.

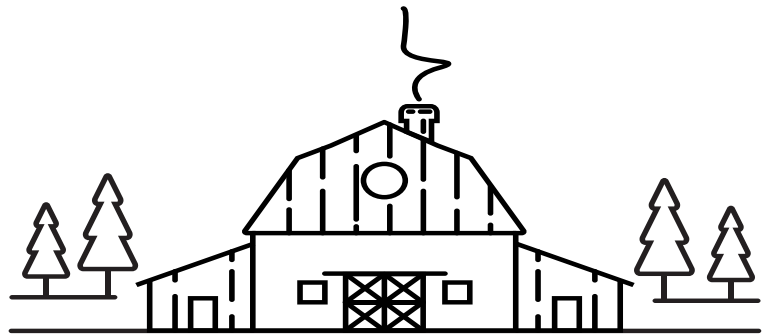
• **Metal Roofing:** There's a reason metal roofing plays prominently into the design of authentic farmhouses -- they are

built to last. That's truer than ever today, thanks to advances in metal roofing technology. Offering superior color retention, long-term reliability, energy efficiency and environmental friendliness, architectural-grade metal shingle roofing is an upgrade that can add both beauty and value to your home. In the case of ProVia's Metal Slate Roofing, which is designed to look like classic quarried slate shingles, you can draw on the beauty of nature in shades of gray and brown, while

enjoying proven protection from hail, wind, rain, and corrosion.

beige, grays and creams, shabby chic furniture -- think wicker, distressed wood and reclaimed lumber -- and hardwood flooring. Consider dusting off a few hand-me-downs or visiting antique shops and estate sales for one-of-a-kind finds. Above all, be sure to prioritize comfort, warmth, and practicality.

To embrace everything that a home should be - an inviting place to gather together - add farmhouse-style touches to your home, indoors and out.



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3 Affordable Kitchen Upgrades to Consider

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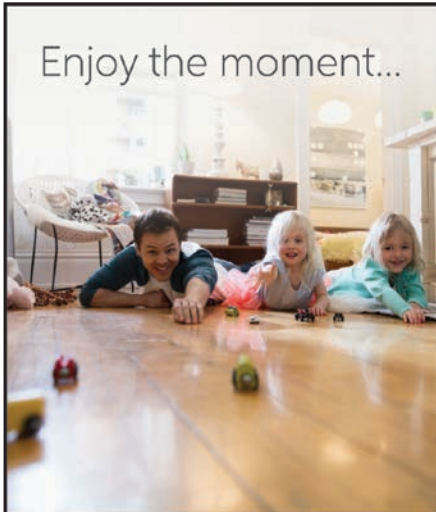


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(StatePoint) Is remodeling your kitchen on your wish list? Afraid of how much it'll set you back?

HomeAdvisor puts the average kitchen remodel price in the \$12,567 to \$34,962 range. However, you can buck the trend of costly, complicated updates. Consider these three renovations, all of which will improve the look and functionality of your kitchen, without costing you thousands of dollars:

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Refresh Fabrics

Reupholstering just one chair means shelling out \$150 to \$600, according to HomeGuide. If that's beyond what you're willing to pay, but you're not ready to replace

a beloved set of kitchen chairs, you can update their look on a budget and in just a few minutes with stretchable seat covers. A good choice for families with kids or pets, these covers are typically machine-washable and can be swapped out as

often as you like to suit your mood. From geometric designs to citrus vibes to florals, they're offered in a range of patterns that will look great with any style.

New Granite

Surfaces

Countertops are the most common feature upgraded during kitchen renovations, according to a 2022 Houzz study, which found that nine in 10 remodelers performed this update. The same





survey found that 35% of homeowners are splurging to make it happen. If you’ve looked into granite countertops, you probably learned that it can cost thousands of dollars and take months to have them custom-made and installed.

Adding this touch of luxury to your kitchen doesn’t have to bust your budget, involve contractors or mean supply chain hassles. It can actually be an easy, one-weekend DIY project. Using a LuxROCK Solid Surface Granite Countertop Kit from Daich Coatings, you can transform your countertops and island surfaces at just a fraction of the price of a professional granite countertop instal-

lation. For about \$300, a kit covers 40 square feet of space. This functional and decorative blend of real stone with stunning mineral highlights can be used to give a smooth appearance to countertops, tables or any other surface. And because the authentic stone surface resists stains, heat and impact and is food safe, it’s a great solution for the kitchen.

Each kit includes a prime coat, stone coats, clear epoxy and a clear coat finish, as well as all the tools needed. This revolutionary and exceptionally easy resurfacing project doesn’t require any artistic skills to be a success. Nor does it require technical skills, as sinks, plumbing fixtures

and existing countertops don’t need to be removed before application.

If you’re someone who likes the flexibility of changing things up every few years, it’s simple to update granite surface colors using another LuxROCK kit when you’re ready. Both this U.S. patent-pending kit and the brand’s textured countertop kits are available online at The Home Depot and Lowe’s.

Optimize Your Pantry

Pantries are often tucked away, but you can still give them an eye-catching makeover. For

fresh pops of color, paint the pantry door and wallpaper the interior. Group items by height, then use customizable shelving to stretch storage real estate. You may also wish to transfer kitchen staples to uniform containers. This will offer a tidier, more visually appealing look, while helping you make better use of limited space. Whether you opt for mason jars, ceramic canisters, or BPA-free plastic cubes, label containers carefully.

It’s the heart of the home, but that doesn’t mean you need to break the bank to create your dream kitchen. With ingenuity, you can improve its look and functionality at an affordable price point and in just a weekend.

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