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# The Splendor of the Fall Season



**MICHAEL  
TIMM**

As fall arrives our landscapes begin a transition from summer splendor to winter rest. But just because summer is fading away, it doesn't mean our landscapes have to as well. More and more people are embracing the fall season and realizing their landscape isn't done for the year and has much more to offer. It's out with the old summer design and in with the new fall/harvest motif.

Most people start with new plants. With annuals starting to look bad, perennials going into slumber, and trees and shrubs starting to show their fall wardrobe, the landscape is beckoning for a rebirth. Your local garden center should be full of gorgeous mums, asters, fall flowering Black-eyed Susan's, flowering kale and cabbage, pansies, annual and perennial grasses,

and even pre-made fall containers. There are probably even some fall flowering trees, shrubs and perennials available, and most likely on sale. Nothing says you have to stick with fall colors either. A lot of these fall blooming flowers come in bright colors for those with bright personalities. There are reds, purples, yellows, bright oranges, two-tones and white for example. So broaden your horizons. Sadly, a lot of people stop here. There is so much more that you could do to enhance your fall landscape.

Garden centers also usually offer things such as hay or straw bales (big and small), corn stalks, pumpkins (in many shapes, sizes and colors), Indian corn, decorative squash, and even dried flowers. Make yourself a nice display using these props along with the beautiful plants and containers you have chosen. This is a good start.

There are also a ton of decorative hard goods available to use as props. Everything from whimsical spinners, bird baths and fountains, colorful pottery, statues of animals and just about anything else, wind chimes, bird and butterfly houses, and metal and wood works are usually still available.

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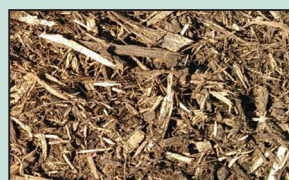
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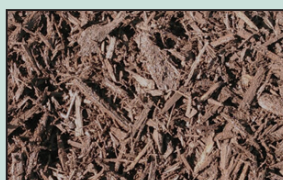


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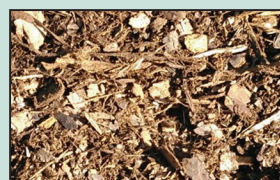
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# Select and size awnings



JAMES  
DULLEY

**Dear Jim:** We need to block the intense heat from coming through my windows and door glass. We want to install awnings, but are not sure what is the proper size or material to get. What do you recommend? - Alex T.

**Dear Alex:** The sun shining in through windows and doors can quickly overheat a room. This is the same basic greenhouse effect which is warming the Earth. The sun's short-wave-length heat energy easily passes through glass into your house. Once in there, it becomes long-wave-length energy. Glass is relatively opaque to this, so it stays trapped indoors.

Closing curtains and drapes can help trap the sun's heat near the window, but it has already gotten indoors through the glass. In contrast, awnings block the sun's direct rays before entering your house so they more effective for reducing air-conditioning cost. Studies have shown awnings can reduce cooling needs by 24 percent in Boston, 21 percent in Phoenix, and 17 percent in St. Louis.

From an energy-saving standpoint, the size of the awning is more important than the material. It should shade your window or door from the direct sun's rays, especially



The underside of these aluminum awnings is coated with a light reflecting material to brighten the room while shading the window. - Photo credit - Aristocrat® Awnings by Craft-Bilt

mid afternoon when it is hottest. Even though the sun is most intense and direct around noon, it is very high in the sky, so just the roof overhang is often enough to shade windows.

If you remember your high school trigonometry, it is possible to calculate the size (projection from the wall) of a fixed awning needed for shading windows and doors. The size depends upon the latitude of your area. As your location is farther north, the sun is lower in the sky so a larger awning is needed.

If you are not a math whiz, just make a test awning from cardboard to determine the proper size for a fixed awning. Fixed, hood-type awnings with sides are a good choice because they increase the shading period throughout the day.

An adjustable awning is often the best choice because its projection can be changed

with the seasons of the year and actually throughout the day if needed. Keep in mind; you probably want the sun to shine in the window during winter for free solar heating. The awning can be adjusted high enough to allow the sun rays in yet still provide protection from rain.

The two most common materials used for awnings are aluminum and cloth fabric. Aluminum awnings are extremely durable and, unless they are damaged from an impact, can last a lifetime. Fabric awnings are generally more attractive and offer more design, color and styling flexibility.

Another advantage of fabric awnings is the adjustable ones can be lowered almost flat against the window. This provides protection from harsh weather and driving rains. Adjustable aluminum awnings typically cannot be lowered as far, but their strength provides excellent protection.

The following companies offer window awnings: Awntech, (800) 200-5997, [www.awntech.com](http://www.awntech.com); Craft-Bilt, (800) 422-8577, [www.craftbilt.com](http://www.craftbilt.com); Eastern Awning, (800) 445-4142, [www.easternawning.com](http://www.easternawning.com); and General Awnings, (888) 330-3115, [www.generalawnings.com](http://www.generalawnings.com).

**Dear Jim:** I have always heard that you should keep a refrigerator and freezer reasonably full to make it operate most efficiently. How do I determine what "reasonably full" means? - Lindsay F.

**Dear Lindsay:** Reasonably full means having the shelves of the refrigerator portion almost completely covered with a typical array of various-size containers, bottles and cans. It is important to allow space for air to circulate freely around inside the refrigerator portion.

Although the freezer portion also needs some air flow through it, you can pack more frozen foods in tighter. Keeping it full also helps keep the freezer portion cold if there is an extended power outage.

Send inquiries to James Dulley, Newspaper Name, 6906 Royalgreen Drive, Cincinnati, OH 45244 or visit [www.dulley.com](http://www.dulley.com).



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## Splendor

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They may even be on sale at this time of the year. You can even use or make your own props. Old tools and equipment are popular; old milk cans, crocks, and just about anything else you can find. People are even painting their old tools, wagons, wheel barrels, wooden doors, windows and whatever else they can find with flowers, vines, or other outdoor themes and placing them around for display. The possibilities are endless.

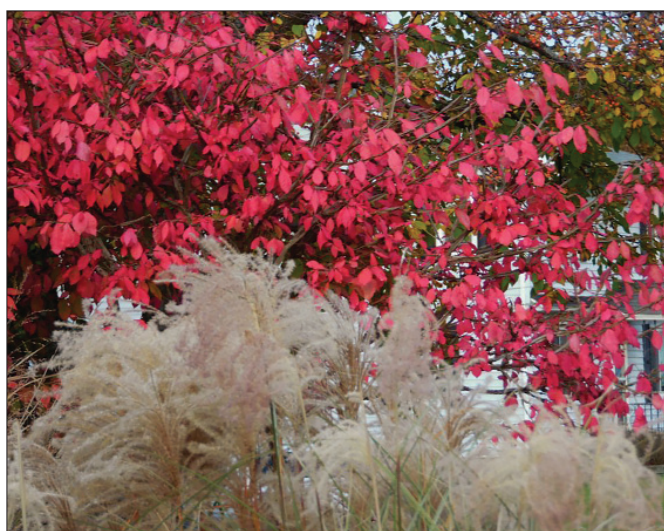
Get the kids or grandkids involved and make it a family tradition. This is a great way to get them interested in gardening at a young age. It also boosts their creativity. This may get

them to stop associating fall with yard cleanup and work, and give them something to look forward to as well. Make it a contest to heighten their interest. If they wish to carve pumpkins for their displays, save the seeds and roast them or use the flesh for pie. Now they have a treat as well!

Fall is a wonderful time of year for not only us but our landscape. So instead of calling it quits for the year, think of what you can do to enhance your landscape. Be creative, be whimsical, be crazy, and most of all Have Fun! Happy Gardening!

Michael Timm

*(Michael Timm is chief horticulturalist for Ebert's Greenhouse Village in Ixonia.)*



Ornamental grasses and a burning bush.





# Transform a playroom into a space that grows with the family

METRO — Parents typically make certain changes around a home to ensure it's accommodating to children. Childproofing is a necessity, but entire rooms also may be transformed with children's enjoyment and well-being in mind.

It's common for homeowners to set aside rooms for children to play and explore. These playrooms may initially feature infant swings and bouncers, and eventually start to accumulate the toys that kids receive on holidays and birthdays. Easels, building block sets, puzzles, video games, books, and so much more fill these playrooms where young children spend the majority of their time engrossed in imaginative play. But as children grow, playrooms may no longer be necessary. Homeowners can ensure these rooms evolve with the family, and here are a few ways to do just that.

**Make it a home theater/gaming room**

The National Institutes of Health says children between the ages of eight and 17 spend an average of 1.5 to 2 hours playing video games each day. It's impor-

tant for parents to monitor their children's gaming, particularly when kids participate in social platform games that involve people with an internet connection chatting and working together. One way to do so is to locate the gaming setup in a central location, like a home theater room.

**Establish a hobby space**

Trade in kids' toys for "toys" that everyone in the family will enjoy. Turn the room into one where family members can explore their passions. This may include scrapbooking, painting, yarn crafts, collecting, photography, and more.

**Create a quiet learning spot**

As children grow up, they may need to spend more time studying. Transforming a playroom into a library or a study space can provide that out-of-the-way spot to get homework and studying done. Adults in the home also can use it for reading, paying the bills or any other task that requires concentration and quiet.

**Build a home gym**

If the space is large

enough, bring in some workout equipment and make the play space one that encourages exercise and fitness. You may not even need large equipment and can utilize interlocking foam tiles that already may be in the playroom. With some free weights, resistance bands and even your own body weight, you can perform a number of beneficial exercises.

**Expand your living space**

If the playroom currently abuts another room that can use some more real estate but is separated by a wall, take down the wall to increase the square footage.

**Set it aside for guests**

Clean out the toys and bring in a bed and nightstand. Now you'll have a dedicated spot for overnight guests to stay, or a room that visiting older children (and eventually grandchildren) can call their own.

Playrooms are much-used areas when children are young. These rooms can evolve as kids get older and families' needs change.

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## How to make a home more cozy

METRO — The meaning of the term “cozy” varies as it pertains to home decor. For some, cozy may mean intimate spaces with lots of quilts and throws. For others, cozy could indicate bright and airy spaces enhanced by plenty of fresh foliage.

Regardless of how they define cozy, homeowners typically want their homes to be inviting and comfortable. With that in mind, the following are some ways to impart a cozy vibe to any living space.

■ **Make use of a fire-place.** Flames lapping wood (or faux wood in the event of gas-powered fireplaces) can put anyone in a tranquil state of mind. Fireplaces add instant ambiance and make great places for people to congregate and engage in conversation. During warmer months when the fire isn't blazing, decorative candles can be lit to mimic the same feel.

■ **Add texture in the design.** Texture can be anything from a raised pattern on wallpaper to a knotty area rug to a mosaic piece of artwork. A home with texture tends to create

cozier impressions than one with all sleek and smooth surfaces.

■ **Enjoy a soft rug.** Although many design experts say hardwood floors or laminate options are easier for allergies and keeping a home clean, a soft rug underfoot can be welcoming. Rather than wall-to-wall carpeting, place area rugs in spots that can use some cozying up, such as beneath beds and even under the dining table.

■ **Light candles.** The warm, flickering light of candles adds cozy vibes in spades. According to The Spruce and Paula Boston, a visual merchandiser for Festive Lights, candles can be used throughout a home to create instant atmosphere. Exercise caution with candles and fully extinguish them before retiring for the evening.

■ **Update bedding for the season.** Crisp and light cotton and linen are cozy materials when the weather is warm. But when the temperature starts to dip, flannel or jersey bedding makes a bed that much more inviting, says Real Simple.

■ **Invest in lots of pillows.** Pillows can instantly

make a spot more cozy, whether it's the living room sofa or an outdoor lounging nook. Look for materials that are durable for the space in which they're being used.

■ **Think about warm lighting.** The transition from incandescent light bulbs to halogen and LED is beneficial from an environmental standpoint. However, LEDs illuminate with a more stark, blue light that can seem clinical in home spaces. Look for bulbs where the “temperature” can be customized. The more the color spectrum leans toward warm light, the more cozy a space will feel. This can be enhanced by putting some lights on dimmer switches, and toning down the brightness as needed.

■ **Install a bookshelf.** Even for those who are strict devotees of e-readers, a shelf full of actual books interspersed with some well-placed knickknacks can make a room feel more cozy. Books add texture, the feel of hallowed halls and libraries, and visual appeal.

Making a home more cozy doesn't have to be complicated. A few easy modifications can improve interior spaces.



## Prevent home electrical fires

METRO — A person's home should be a safe haven. Too often, however, there may be dangers lurking in a home that can compromise the safety of residents.

Electrical fires are no joke. The Hartford insurance company says electrical failure or malfunctions account for almost 34,000 home fires per year. The National Fire Protection Association says they can contribute to 440 deaths and \$1.3 billion in direct property damage annually.

Older homes may be most vulnerable to electrical fires, as such structures were not designed to handle the demands of modern living. The insurance experts at Nationwide say half of all homes in the United States have electrical systems that were installed before garage door openers, high-tech coffee makers, and many computers became must-have items. And the Electrical Safety Foundation International says homes built before 1973 with overloaded electrical systems pose a number of safety threats.

Overloaded circuits are not the only contributor to electrical fires. Damaged wiring characterized by worn, frayed or loose wires can cause fires. Malfunctioning appliances or those improperly maintained also can create home fires. Another contributor is poorly installed extension cords and power strips, as well as faulty outlets and switches around homes.

Homeowners can take various steps to reduce the risk of electrical fires at home.

■ **Install arc fault circuit interrupters.** AFCIs are special types of circuit breakers that help prevent fires caused by nicked or frayed wiring. An AFCI gets tripped and cuts off power when an electrical problem is detected before a fire can start. In 2022, the National Electric Code started requiring AFCIs in bedrooms, and by 2017 they have been mandated



throughout homes.

■ **Conduct a home electrical inspection.** All homes more than 40 years old should be inspected to ensure their electrical systems can handle modern demands, says Nationwide. A qualified electrician can make recommendations regarding replacing breakers and suggest other modifications to improve safety.

■ **Utilize a monitor.** Ting from Whisker Labs monitors a home's electrical network using a smart plug-in sensor that is designed to detect hazards. The company indicates micro-arcs and sparks that develop are precursors to electrical fires.

■ **Turn to automatic shut-offs.** Timers and smart home devices can

give homeowners control of electrical components like appliances or lights from a remote area. This enables users to turn an appliance on or off to reduce overheating or avoid additional risk factors for electrical fires.

■ **Don't go DIY.** Choosing to work with a professional electrician rather than doing electrical work oneself can help reduce electrical fire risk considerably. Electricians know how to work on electrical systems safely to prevent damage to wires and components, and also safeguard themselves against shock.

Risk for electrical fires at home can be reduced with technology and other strategies.



## Senior-friendly interior renovations

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

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

■ **Revamp entryways and staircases.** A 2020 study of 1,000 adults in the United Kingdom found that 28

percent of individuals age 65 and older who don't exercise regularly struggle with activities like walking up stairs. The study, commissioned by Total Fitness, also found that 14 percent of men and women over 65 who regularly engage in moderate exercise still find it challenging to climb up and down a flight of stairs. Seniors facing similar challenges can install a ramp at their home's entryway so they can comfortably go in and out. Inside, a chair lift can ensure seniors are not struggling to move from one floor to another.

■ **Raise the outlets throughout the home.** They're easily overlooked, but outlets, particularly those outside the kitchen, tend to be close to the floor. AARP notes that's no accident, as outlets are



generally placed at a height equal to the length of a hammer to save time with measuring when buildings are being constructed. Outlets close to the floor can be difficult for seniors with mobility issues to

reach. Relocating the outlets a little higher off the floor is not an expensive renovation, but it can make a home more accessible for seniors who have difficulty bending down or getting down on one knee.

■ **Install door knob**

**extensions.** Verywell Health notes that nearly half of all people age 65 and older have arthritis or another rheumatic condition. Arthritis can make it difficult for seniors to grip and turn door knobs. Door knob extensions can make it easier for seniors with arthritis to open the doors in their homes. Such extensions are roughly five-inch levers that can be installed over an existing door knob, making it easier to grab and pull down. Extensions save seniors the hassle of turning the knob, which some may find painful and almost impossible.

■ **Renovate the bathroom.** Bathroom renovation projects can be costly, but seniors with mobility issues should know that bathrooms can pose a particularly dangerous threat. The Centers for Disease Control

and Prevention notes that roughly three million older adults are treated for fall injuries in emergency departments each year. A 2019 analysis published in The Journals of Gerontology noted that 22 percent of in-home falls resulted in a change in the person's walking ability. Replacing a step-over shower with a zero-step alternative can make it easier for seniors with mobility issues to get in and out of the shower, thus reducing their risk for falls. Grab bars along shower walls and a chair inside the shower can make it easier to bathe and towel off safely.

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

## What attracts pests to a home?

**METRO** — No homeowner wants pests to invade their homes or their yards. However, it's easy for pests to find their way into and around a home. In fact, certain conditions may be inviting pests to a property.

■ **Garbage:** Piles of garbage offer food and shelter to pests. Removing garbage piles and cleaning up food waste promptly can make a difference.

■ **Stagnant water:** Mosquitoes breed in standing water, which is water not affected by waves, current or a filtration system. Anywhere water has pooled, mosquitoes may be breeding.

■ **Moisture or standing water:** Additional sources of water and moisture may attract pests like gnats, mosquitoes, stink bugs, and certain spiders. Damp areas are of particular concern, especially when combined with darkness.

■ **Firewood:** Firewood may attract a variety of pests, including termites

and weevils. Firewood also may contain eggs that were laid before trees were cut down. If firewood is needed, it should be stacked far away from a home.

■ **Clogged gutters:** Ignoring clogged gutters can lead to pest problems. Mice, squirrels, birds, ants, and spiders may be attracted to damp leaves in clogged gutters. Leaves offer shelter, nesting material and possible food sources of insect life.

■ **Dirty dishes and indoor trash:** Leaving food-covered dishes in the sink invites pests. Leftover food attracts cockroaches, flies, ants, and more. Even

if time is short, it's best to wash dishes or load them into the dishwasher. Overflowing trash also draws pests into a home.

■ **Clutter:** Clutter provides hiding places for all sorts of rodents and insects, which can hide out in cluttered areas and remain comfortable. Going room to room and clearing out extraneous items may help reduce pest populations. Focus on the garage and basement, in particular.

Pests are attracted to certain conditions, and remedying these issues can help reduce pest infestations.



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## FAQ about garage remodels

**METRO** — Homeowners tend to want to maximize all of the space they have in their homes. For some this may involve turning a garage from a utilitarian space into one that serves multiple purposes.

According to The Mortgage Reports, a home-buying and improvement resource, garage renovations can increase the value of a home and add living space. Garage remodels can create additional storage space, provide an area for a home gym or even create room for a home office. Prior to beginning a garage remodel, homeowners may have some common questions about the process.

### How much does the renovation cost?

Several factors will ultimately determine the final price of a garage remodel, but HomeAdvisor says the national average for a garage remodel falls between \$6,000 and \$26,000. Most homeowners come in at around \$15,000 for a total garage conversion.

### Will I recoup the investment?

A garage conversion adds value to a home if it creates new and usable living space. The firm Cottage, which pulled together a team of builders, architects and technologists, advises the

average garage conversion provides an 80 percent return on investment. That ROI varies depending on location.

### How can I upgrade the flooring?

Garages traditionally feature concrete floors. Although durable, concrete floors can feel damp, hard and cold underfoot. Both vinyl plank and epoxy flooring options can elevate the design and functionality of the garage.

### Can I have the best of both worlds?

Sometimes a garage needs to serve many purposes. Lofting the garage means a homeowner can still park cars or utilize the lower space as a living area, all the while items are stored overhead. Some flip this design scenario and have the loft area as a bedroom or finished living space, while the lower portion remains a traditional garage area. Another thought is to finish only a portion of the garage. This works well for two- or three-car garages where there will be room to park a car and the remainder will serve another purpose.

### What are other ways to improve the garage?

Installing more windows or improving on the lighting in the garage can be

important. The garage improvement experts at Danley's say window installation enables people to circulate air in the garage without having to open the garage door. Improving the lighting means the garage can still be enjoyed or utilized after dark. Spread out lighting in the garage, and use a combination of overhead and task lighting just as one would in the home itself.

### How do I deter bugs or other pests from entering?

Insects often want to hunker down in garages, and they may find it easy to get inside a garage. Keeping the garage clean and organized is the best way to deter pests and to spot infestations before they become problematic, indicates Mosquito Joe pest control company. Reducing water and humidity in the space, weatherproofing at the base of the garage door and other entry spots and utilizing insect repellents to make the garage less hospitable also can decrease the risk of insect infestation.

Remodeling a garage can add value and plenty of usable space to a home. Whether a garage houses cars or hosts neighborhood game night, a garage renovation can be well worth the investment.

## What is duct balancing?

**METRO** — Homes can sometimes be an enigma, with problems arising that seemingly make little sense. One example of a problem that might not add up is when certain areas of a home feel much warmer or cooler than others, even when a heating and cooling system is running and operating efficiently. The culprit in such instances may be an imbalance in a home's HVAC system. When an HVAC system is running yet there's a noticeable temperature difference in certain rooms of a home, such as one room being particularly warm in summer or especially chilly in winter, that disparity could be a result of an uneven air distribution through the ducts in the home. In such instances, duct balancing might be a solution. Duct balancing involves adjusting the dampers or registers to correct issues such as uneven distribution of air,



poor airflow and pressure imbalances with the heating and cooling system. Duct balancing is a relatively inexpensive fix, but it's best left to HVAC professionals,

as the job requires unique knowledge of heating and cooling systems and special tools to adjust the dampers or registers.

## Did you know?



**METRO** — Homeowners with an eye on home improvement projects should know that kitchens and bathrooms tend to be the most costly rooms to renovate. An affiliate of the National Kitchen and Bath

Association told Architectural Digest in 2023 that kitchens and bathrooms require the most labor-intensive renovations, which contributes significantly to the high costs of such projects. Labor is indeed

a significant cost when renovating a home, as the Construction Labor Market Analyzer indicates labor cost percentages in construction are between 20 and 40 percent of the total budget of a given project. The final cost of any renovation project will depend on a host of variables unique to each home, including the square footage of the room being remodeled and the materials homeowners choose. However, homeowners looking for less costly renovations may want to consider revamping their dining rooms and closets, each of which are projects that can make a difference and tend to require a less significant financial commitment than projects like kitchen and bath remodels.



# Elevate the backyard experience

METRO — Chances are no one wants to replicate the side effects of the global pandemic anytime soon. Despite all of the upheaval it brought to so many people's lives, there was at least one silver lining to the pandemic: a newfound appreciation for backyards and other outdoor living areas. Back in 2021, OnePoll, on behalf of the landscaping company TruGreen, found survey participants reported spending 14 hours outside every week, which marked a three-hour increase than before the pandemic hit.

Outdoor spaces like patios, decks, yards, and even front porches remain popular places for homeowners and their loved ones to congregate. Various studies have shown that those who spend more time outside in nature have lower levels of stress, anxiety and depression.

Being outside is strongly associated with improved mental and physical health. Homeowners who want to maximize the potential of their outdoor spaces can look to these ideas to take backyards up a notch or two.

**Establish a gathering spot**

A well-designed yard has one or more dedicated gathering spots, particularly areas that enable comfort underfoot. Homeowners can give consideration to hardscape that enables individuals to spend time outdoors without standing in soggy or buggy situations. Whether they're traditional decks, platform decks, concrete or paver patios, or areas separated from the lawn with pea gravel or another type of rock, homeowners can make the yard more useable through



these spaces.

**Invest in an outdoor cooking area**

Grilling, smoking and even making brick oven pizzas outdoors is a major compo-

nent of backyard entertaining. Outdoor kitchens can increase the convenience of prepping, cooking and serving food outdoors. Grills and other cooking gear can

be built into weather-resistant counters and cabinetry.

**Install a pergola**

A pergola or another structure is the perfect way to add

privacy to a gathering spot and create more shade and weather protection when Mother Nature does not want to cooperate.

**Think beyond the summer season**

When making backyard improvements, homeowners can incorporate ideas that make the yard more functional during different seasons. For example, a fire pit or outdoor fireplace can be a spot for making summer s'mores or sipping mulled cider in the fall. An enclosed three-season room offers the opportunity to see nature and enjoy it without bearing the full brunt of chilly temperatures.

There are many ways homeowners can enhance the functionality and appeal of their backyards.

# How to make renovation projects go smoothly

METRO — Homeowners are spending big bucks on home renovations. According to the Joint Center for Housing Studies at Harvard University, home improvement project spending continues to increase. It's predicted to go from \$472 billion spent in 2022 to \$485 billion in 2024.

Those targeting a specific home renovation likely know there is much that goes into the process from start to finish. Patience is a requisite virtue with any remodel, as even a thoroughly conceptualized plan can encounter a few bumps along the way. Although there is no way to completely remove renovation-related obstacles, there are ways to make projects go more smoothly.

■ Establish a clear plan from the beginning. Now is not the time to be on the fence about details. A vision



for the renovation is essential, and should include details about layout, materials, colors, and design.

■ Manage your expectations. Again, this speaks to a need for patience with a project but also involves

flexibility. Being too rigid when choosing materials can require waiting for back-ordered supplies to come in. Wanting contractors to bend to your schedule can delay the project even further. Creativity and

flexibility are key.

■ Establish a budget. It can be easy to spend beyond one's means, especially when issues crop up. Black House Real Estate stresses the importance of creating a budget before starting a

renovation, which may involve working with a local professional to help. Houzz advises preparing for worst-case scenarios by adding anywhere from 1 percent to 20 percent to the budget. Commit to sticking to the budget no matter what comes down the pike.

■ Assemble a good team. Thoroughly research all contractors who will be involved with the renovation. These include designers, architects, builders, and more. Be sure they come highly recommended and research online reviews. A good team removes some stress from the project because you'll know the work is in experienced hands.

■ Prepare the space for the remodel. Any work you can do will help save on labor costs and make it easier for the team to get started on the project.

Clear out clutter and personal items. Ask if it would be helpful for you to handle some demolition, whether that's pulling up old tile, removing drywall or another task.

■ Have an escape hatch at the ready. Home renovations can cause upheaval to daily life, and that can mean stress on top of already chaotic schedules.

If money and situation allow, plan a getaway during a particularly tough stretch of the project so the noise, mess, and disruptions will not induce headaches. Consider spending a few nights at a hotel or a friend or relative's house to escape the constant grind of the project.

Home renovation projects add value and functionality to homes. Such undertakings can go more smoothly with some sound planning.





The Brooklyn, Mequon



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