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Small But Dramatic Kitchen Changes Can Really Make A Difference

(NC) Kitchen remodeling projects continue to provide hefty returns at the time of a home sale. The 2006 Cost vs. Value report, published by Remodeling magazine, shows that home owners recoup 80.4 percent of the average \$54,200 they spend on major kitchen projects, and get back 85.2 percent of the average \$17,928 spent on minor projects.

You may be thinking to yourself, "That's all well and good, but I don't have that kind of money to spend on a kitchen remodel right now." If that's the case, don't count yourself out, just think on a smaller scale. You can make some dramatic changes in the kitchen just by focusing on one of the attention-getting trends highlighted at the annual Kitchen Industry Show and Convention in Las Vegas.



A good place to start is by taking a long, hard look at your lighting. If you have an older home that has not yet been updated, chances are you have a single ceiling mount fixture in the center of the room that doesn't let off much light and if you're lucky, another one over the sink. Why not upgrade with options that offer more direct light?

These days in home remodels, designers are replacing the old center fixtures with recessed cans and pendants that offer more direct task lighting in the kitchen. They are also installing undercabinet lights to highlight the countertops and toe lighting to accentuate the cabinets. Undercabinet and toe lights are easy to add. All you have to do is tap into the wiring for the outlets that already exist along the wall. In homes with no attic access above the kitchen, however, the cost of installing recessed cans can be a turnoff, but as Norm Brown of Norburn Lighting & Bath Centre in Burnaby, B.C., points out, "You can get around this limitation by instead installing a rail system on the ceiling that allows you to add light fixtures anywhere in the room." Brown is a certified lighting consultant (CLC) and the consulting director of education for the American Lighting Association (ALA).

Among the many options these systems offer, the ability to drop pendants over and island and spotlights onto the counters, art or china, all without cutting holes in the ceiling. They are available in a variety of materials and finishes so there's something that will match just about any décor.

And when it comes to the fixtures, Paige Malouche of Progress Lighting in Greenville, S.C., says there is a lot of mixing and matching of designs. "These days, we're seeing people with what you'd consider to be a traditional kitchen putting in modern lighting fixtures. A popular trend is to hang bronze or brightly colored pendants from track and illum-flex systems," she says.

"There are so many fixtures available it has really turned into a fashion show," adds Monty Gilbertson, CLC of Lighting Design by Wettsteins in La Crosse, Wis. "There's clean contemporary, decorative ornamental, pretty much any look you can imagine, and if you want to take it a step further and address intensity and mood lighting, this can be done by adding dimmers to the fixtures you install."

For more information on lighting, visit www.americanlightingassoc.com or call (800) BRIGHT IDEAS for your nearest showroom.

- News Canada



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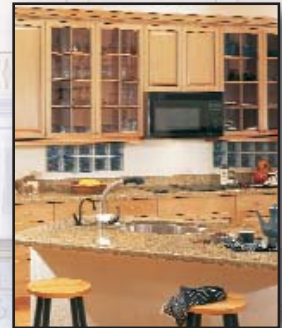
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Paint Perfection: Here are the latest colours and sheens

(NC)—Painting is one of the easiest ways to change the look of a room. Whether you're looking to create an old world feel in the dining room or a modern space in the kitchen, colour on the walls helps tie a room together and injects a little personality in to the space we call home. Before you pick up a brush, consider the following trends and tips for choosing the right colour from The Home Depot Canada:

Paint and light: Choosing paint colour is an important first step in the painting process. Before heading to the store, walk through your home and pay special attention to each room's natural and artificial light. Keep in mind that lighter colours tend to make a room look brighter and sometimes larger, while darker colours create a more intimate atmosphere.

Colour trends: Versatile water colours or shades inspired by the ocean work well with any style from classic to contemporary. For a vintage feel, pale shades of straw, brick or marigold – colours that originate from Victorian times – are now the latest trend in modern style. For the more adventurous, consider a bright shade of watermelon, mango or lime to add punch to the entire room or to accentuate one wall.

Colour personalities: Cooler shades of red, including raspberry, fuchsia and deep pink are a hot trend and a great way to add energy and drama to a room. Meanwhile, fresh orange shades create a happy or social mood, while green sets the tone for a cheerful yet calm atmosphere. A subdued blue creates a more formal space and brings out the best in traditional decors, while a greeny-blue works well with the sleek look of modern interiors.

Supreme sheen: Other than colour, selecting the right paint sheen will affect the look of a room. Sheen is the amount of light reflected from the paint's surface. Flat paint absorbs light, while gloss paint reflects it. Typically, the flat/matte sheen is used on interior walls, while satin finishes are used on exterior surfaces.

Sheen for select spaces: Oil and latex base paints are available in various sheens. Flat and matte sheens give a smooth, subtle and elegant finish that helps hide surface imperfections. Flat and matte sheens work well in living rooms, dining rooms and bedrooms. For a laundry room, bathroom or children's room where washable walls are needed, an eggshell, low-lustre or satin sheen will do the trick.

For more information on the latest paint colours, trends and painting tips, visit homedepot.ca or The Home Depot in your community.

- News Canada

Update Your Wood Paneling

(NC) Pre-finished wall paneling can be either painted or wallpapered if the correct preparation and application techniques are followed.

Prepare to Paint

To paint, nail down loose joints or edges and scrub the surface with an ammoniated detergent to remove any old wax or polish. Rinse by sponging (but not saturating) with clear water and let dry. Prime the paneling with a glossy-surface primer. Finally, apply one or two coats of acrylic-latex wall paint.

The grooves in the paneling will still be visible, but will be much less conspicuous. Some people fill the grooves with wallboard joint compound or spackling, and then sand it flush before painting. This is a tremendous amount of work and the results will often be disappointing.

Wallpaper Preparation

To wallpaper, prepare and clean as described above and remove moldings at the top and bottom of the panels. Apply a heavy-duty liner or backing paper, sold at wallpaper stores. This will span the grooves and result in a smooth surface. After the liner dries, apply regular wallpaper in the usual way. Paint the moldings to match and reinstall.

Remember, these tips are only general guidelines. Since each house and situation is different, contact a professional if you have questions about a specific condition or issue. More home safety and maintenance information is available online at www.housemaster.com.

- News Canada

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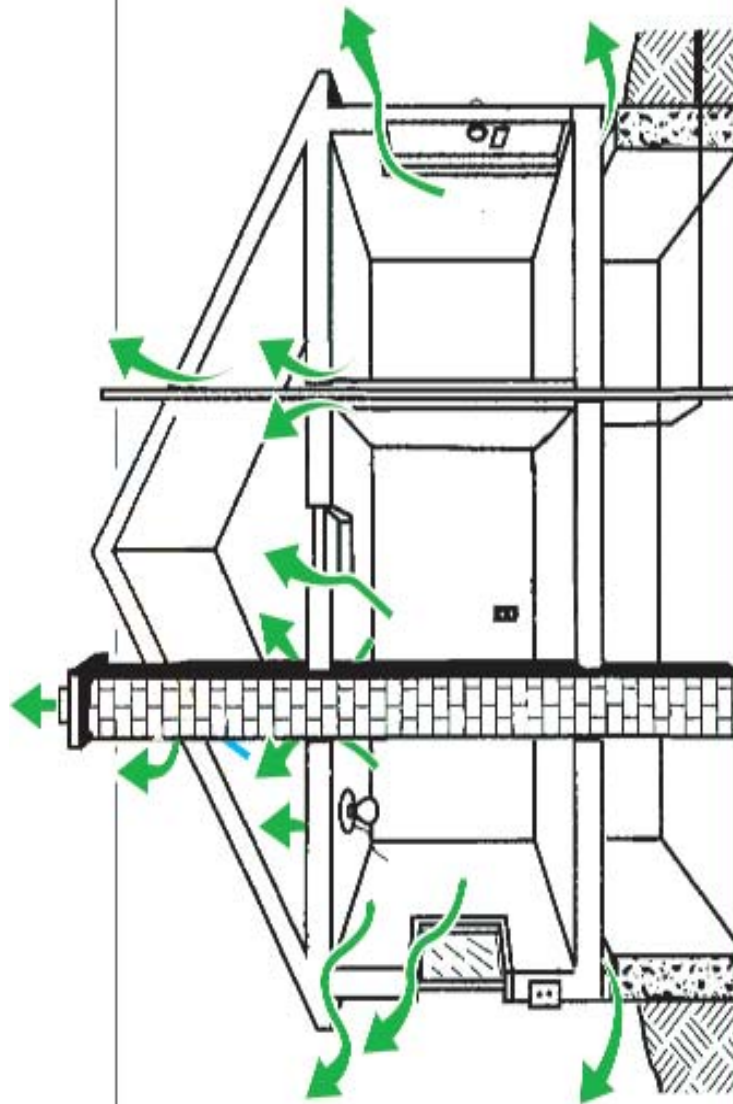
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Beautifying Your Bathroom In Five Simple Steps

(NC)—Given how much time we spend in the bathroom, it's no surprise that this space is considered one of the most important rooms to renovate. Rest assured, upgrading your bathroom does not need to be a long and expensive process. Consider the following five simple projects to enhance your bathroom's look and functionality from the experts at The Home Depot Canada:

1. Renew reflection: Rethinking a bathroom's mirror collection can help eliminate dark areas in large bathrooms and help make small bathrooms seem larger. Define the room's environment by selecting a different shape or frame from the traditional large mirror above the sink. Add a full length mirror on the door or a small mirror on a side wall for extra convenience.

2. Brighten the bathroom: Changing a bathroom's lighting is an easy project that can dramatically change the atmosphere. Choose lights that fit the bathroom's style whether track lighting, vanity lights or wall-mounted lamps. Consider adding a dimmer for evenings when you need a relaxing soak in the tub.

3. Improve ventilation: A proper exhaust fan will cut through steam and reduce humidity that can cause mold and mildew over time. An exhaust fan's capacity is usually rated in cubic feet per

minute (cfm) with an average bathroom needing a 50 cfm capacity fan. Other considerations when buying an exhaust fan include noise level, energy efficiency and built-in lights.

4. Reduce water use: The bathroom accounts for about 65 per cent of all indoor water use so a simple water reduction project can have significant effects on your bills and the environment. Installing a low-flow toilet can cut toilet water use by as much as 50 per cent. A faucet aerator for the sink is inexpensive and reduces the flow of water by 25 per cent to 50 per cent, while providing the same water pressure. Complete the project by switching to a low-flow showerhead.

5. Accessorize: Make the bathroom more stylish by installing smartly selected bathroom accessories and fixtures. Besides the normal racks, towel rings, and soap dishes consider adding a magazine holder, shampoo and soap dispensers, a fun shower curtain or even a towel warmer.

For more information on easy projects and tips that can enhance the bathroom, visit homedepot.ca or The Home Depot in your community.

- News Canada



Cork Flooring Fits Today's Earth-Friendly Lifestyle

(NC)—Growing concern for global warming is causing consumers to pay more and more attention to environmentally responsible products for the home.

This awareness is behind a surging homeowner interest in cork flooring. The many benefits of cork start with its unique natural structure. Composed of millions of tiny cellular air pockets, cork is extraordinarily lightweight and low in density. Those who own cork floors know this is the key to their warmth, comfort and quietness.

You can enjoy these benefits knowing that cork is truly a renewable resource.

Cork floors are made without destroying a single cork oak tree. Cork is grown mainly in managed forests in Portugal and Spain where the bark is carefully harvested, once every nine years, in a centuries-old tradition with hand tools, a process that ensures the forests will remain undamaged. It is not unusual to have a 200 year-old tree still producing cork bark.

When it comes to the home, here's another surprising feature: indoor air quality actually improves with cork flooring. It is hypo-allergenic and insect resistant. Mites and even termites are repelled due to a naturally occurring substance in cork called suberin.

Cork also reduces heat loss in rooms, and body heat loss through the feet. Cork maintains a comfortable ambient temperature, never too hot or too cool. Walk barefoot on a cork floor and the warmth is immediately apparent. The eco-friendly nature of cork is catching on with Canadian consumers. Some flooring companies are just now adding cork to their product lines. Only a few companies, like TORLYS (torlys.com) in Mississauga, Ontario, have complete lines, proven experience and knowledge.

Cork flooring is an easy way to add warmth and beauty to your surroundings and feel good about the environment at the same time. When you know all the facts, it's hard not to give cork a second look. - News Canada

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How To Proof Your Home Against Perennial Allergies

(NC) If you're like millions of Canadians, you may have noticed that your allergy symptoms don't improve in the fall, but in fact usually get worse.

That's probably because you suffer from what doctors call perennial allergic rhinitis. All it means is that your allergies aren't seasonal ones like hay fever and ragweed, which only come at specific times of the year.

So if it's not seasonal, why is it worse now? Well, during the fall and winter, you are probably more exposed to the things that make you allergic. That's because you tend to spend more time locked up indoors where the things that make you allergic year-round are most commonly found. They include dust, mould and animal dander. It may be easier to think of perennial allergies as indoor allergies.

The best thing to do short of avoiding the indoors is to eliminate or reduce the allergens in your home. To ensure your home is an allergy-free oasis, keep it as clean as possible by following these tips:

- Bathe your pets (even cats) regularly. If possible, avoid having your pets enter your bedrooms. Did you know that even after a single entry, an animal's dander will hang around a room for a very long time?
- Remove carpets since they contain over 95 per cent of all dust in the room. If you decide to keep a rug, make sure it is washable and clean it in hot water once a month.
- Encase mattresses and pillows in special allergy covers that are plastic on one side and cotton on the other. This will trap the dust under the



covers so you won't be exposed to it.

- Replace feather, down or kapok pillows and comforters with synthetic ones, preferably foam.
- It's important to clean radiators, vents and the furnace during your fall winterizing efforts.
- Most importantly, vacuum twice a week preferably with a central vacuum cleaner such as the new NuTone central vacuum system.

The latest technology in the marketplace, the NuTone central vacuum system differs from your regular portable home vacuum cleaner because of its special filtration capabilities. An ordinary vacuum cleaner only removes particles

35 microns or larger in size. The NuTone central vacuum system features bags and filters with HEPA filter media able to capture and eliminate up to 99.97% of all particles down to and including 0.3 microns the size of some bacteria. This means the dust you pick up is trapped in the vacuum, not stirred up and blown through the exhaust.

In fact, a recent study conducted by the University of California at Davis School of Medicine's Division of Rheumatology, Allergy, and Clinical Immunology found that study subjects reported a significant improvement in their symptoms of rhinitis and house-dust sensitivity during a three-month use of a central vacuum system compared to a three-month use of their portable vacuums. More information on controlling allergy triggers and central vacuums is available at www.nutone.ca.

- News Canada

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Crawlspaces: How To Tackle The Monster Beneath Your Home

(NC)—When you were a young child, did you ever believe in the stories about monsters under the stairs? At one point or another, you may have decided to run quickly down the steps just in case the stories were true. For some adults today, the monster under the stairs is still alive and well in their minds. They're called crawlspaces and, depending on their condition, they may present a few problems and scares of somewhat monstrous proportions.

As a home's crawlspace is often untouched and rarely used, homeowners may not completely understand one of the main problems the space can impose on the home. As crawlspaces are built directly above the ground, moisture from the soil can seep into the crawlspace and rise through the floors and vents into living areas of the home. What does this mean? Possibly more money spent on your energy bills.

Stephen Molnar, an energy efficiency expert at Owens Corning says that moisture-laden air rising into the home from the moist ground below may lead to condensation and possible mold growth. An un-insulated crawlspace can also lead to higher energy consumption during the heating and cooling seasons. He suggests, "one way to resolve this problem is to properly insulate the crawlspace."

To insulate a crawlspace, install Owens Corning PINK fiberglass batts between the ceiling joists. Chicken wire or metal supports can be used to

secure the insulation. Install Celfort extruded polystyrene rigid insulation along the crawlspace walls and a layer of polyethylene ground cover along the floor to prevent moisture and soil gases from coming into the crawlspace.

Insulating a crawlspace is a simple do-it-yourself improvement that may reduce the amount of money you pay on your energy bills over time. With this home renovation, you can rid yourself of that monster under the home for good.

For more information on insulating your crawlspace, seek the assistance of an Owens Corning insulation expert or visit www.owenscorning.ca. - News Canada



Turn Your Basement Into A Living Space

(NC)—When touring a model home, don't forget to go off the beaten track and visit the basement. Though it may appear underwhelming compared to the freshly painted and perfectly decorated main and upper floors, the basement has the potential to become anything you want it to be. All it takes is a lit-

tle imagination and a plan.

"A finished basement provides homeowners with an additional space to use as a relaxing family room, a game room, quaint bedroom or creative workshop," says Brett Henderson, an insulation expert for Owens Corning Canada. "Finishing a basement can allow you to take advantage of the space, while also adding to the value of your home."

The best time to transform your basement into a living area is when your new home is being built. It's less disruptive and cost effective to insulate prior to moving in. You can then plan and create a space that suits your needs. It's up to you whether you want to take on the challenge, hire a contractor or have the builder do it for you.

Whether your basement is a do-it-yourself project or if you're working with a builder, the project begins with insulation. To finish a basement, start by placing a moisture barrier against the inside of the concrete wall from the floor to finished grade level. Then, build a standard wall frame wall using 2x4 or 2x6 wood studs and place it in front of the concrete wall. Install R-20 PINK fiberglass batt insulation between the studs and ensure the inner surface of the batts are flush with the inside surfaces of the studs. Using PINK fiberglass batt insulation will form a solid thermal barrier between studs and conserve energy to help reduce heating and air conditioning costs. Lastly, don't forget to install a continuous vapour retarder over the entire wall surface and drywall.

Finishing the basement can turn an otherwise dull space into a show stopper. It's up to you, and your imagination, to decide what you're going to do.

For more information on basement insulation, call 1-800-GET-PINK or visit www.owenscorning.ca. - News Canada










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It's Time To Check The Furnace

Q. What is the benefit of having my furnace serviced before each winter?

To make sure your furnace performs its best throughout the winter months, start it up before the temperatures start to drop. You should also schedule an annual furnace tune-up long before winter temperatures hit. Just like your car, annual check-ups and tune-ups are the keys to making sure your furnace runs efficiently and safely. Be sure to use a licensed technician who can identify potential problems before they turn into costly repairs. If your furnace is 18 to 20 years old, it is likely time to replace it with a high-efficiency unit. Investing in a high-efficiency furnace now will save you money in the long run.

Q. I'm looking to replace my furnace. Should I consider upgrading to a mid-efficiency or high-efficiency furnace? What is the difference?

If energy efficiency is your goal, a high-efficiency furnace is the furnace for you. High-efficiency furnaces deliver over 90 per cent efficiency, which is superior to that of mid-efficiency units. Another major difference between newer high efficiency furnaces and the less-efficient mid-efficiency furnaces lies in their ventilation systems. Most high-efficiency furnaces vent through the wall and therefore don't require a chimney. A mid-efficiency furnace requires a chimney liner as well as a chimney that is in good condition.



Q. How can I properly prepare my heating system for the colder months?

To ensure your furnace is in good condition and ready to battle the cold winter months, Direct Energy suggests the following:

- Consider installing a programmable thermostat that will automatically adjust your home's temperature settings. Programming the thermostat a degree or two lower when no one is home can help save up to 10 per cent on annual heating bills.
- Check your furnace filters for blockages. To increase the efficiency of your furnace, replace your filter every two to three months.
- Inspect your registers and radiators to ensure they are free from anything that could restrict air circulation, such as rugs, furniture and drapes.
- Check to see if warm air is leaving the vents.
- Inspect your electrical fuse box for a faulty furnace fuse or breaker.
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More information is available online at www.directenergy.com or toll-free 1-888-DE-HVAC1.

- News Canada

Why Go Granite?

Granite has recently become the material of choice for homeowners remodeling their kitchens as it is both durable and beautiful. Whether it's granite countertops for your kitchen or your bathroom vanities, granite provides you with a natural alternative that is truly a wise investment with a "Lifetime of Beauty". Here are some of the reasons why:

- Once polished, natural granite will maintain its high gloss virtually forever.
- Normal use of kitchen knives, cutlery, and cookware leaves no scratches. Granite can only be scratched by materials which are harder than granite.
- Yes, you can cut on your Granite countertop; although you may dull your knives!. Granite is very hard and the only thing that will cut into or scratch granite is diamond or another piece of granite. Kitchen knives and utensils are no match for the absolute hardness of a granite top.
- Yes, you can put a hot pot on your countertop! Heat has almost no effect on natural granite, making it much safer than synthetic surfaces with polyesters and resins. Pots and pans heated to 900 degrees Fahrenheit will not dull natural granite's lustrous finish, but the use of trivets is recommended to keep your granite counter clean.
- Granite adds value to your home at prices that will surprise you!

Granite is a gift from nature for you to enjoy in your home! So, go ahead and dream, then turn that dream into reality with new Granite Countertops....aren't you worth it?

Editorial information is provided by Tracy Craig of Select Stone at 6 Market St. Quispamsis, NB 847-1171

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Little-Known Tips To Improve Indoor Air Quality

(NC) Clean air is a vital part of good health. Most people are aware of outside pollutants, but the air inside your home can also become polluted, especially in the winter when windows are closed and stale air is recirculated. Improving indoor air quality is easier than you might think. Direct Energy offers the following tips to help keep the air in your home clean so you and your family can breathe easy.

Filter the air - To maintain the efficiency of your furnace and prevent dust from spreading through your house, purchase a high quality air filter for your furnace and replace or clean it every three months. Filtration systems also help clear the air of up to 95 per cent of unwanted pollutants, such as dirt, pollen and pet hair.

Clean your ducts - When it comes to air ducts, out of sight doesn't necessarily mean out of mind. You'd be surprised at what's hiding in the ducts behind your walls, causing potential air quality problems and inhibiting the efficiency of your furnace. The average duct-cleaning visit removes five to six pounds of dust, dirt, debris, pollen and other contaminants, none of which are healthy to breathe in. To keep whatever has built up in your ducts out of the air and out of your lungs, schedule regular duct cleanings every three to five years.

Shed some light on your ducts - Ultraviolet lights are used in hospitals to kill bacteria, and they can do the same for the air in your ducts. When installed inside the cold air return (homeowners aren't exposed to the UV lights) duct near your furnace, they effectively stop the growth of bacteria, fungi and mold.

More information is available online at www.directenergy.com or toll-free 1-888-DE-HVAC1. - News Canada



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Understand Your Home's Natural Heat Flow System

(NC)—With winter just around the corner, homeowners are bringing out winter clothes from storage, packing away their gardening tools, lawn mowers, bikes and rollerblades. And at this time of year, homeowners are also questioning how they can cut costs on their heating bills.

"The first step in understanding how to help save money on your heating bills is to understand your home's natural heat flow system," says Andy Goyda, an insulation expert at Owens Corning Canada. "When you understand how heat travels in and out of your home, you can better understand what you can do to help keep the heat indoors."

Heat flows from hot to cold. You can help prevent warm air from escaping into your cold attic by installing insulation in between the joists of the attic floor and ceiling. Once the cavities are filled, add another layer of insulation running perpendicular, or across, the floor joists to obtain a minimum of R-40. Small pieces of insulation can then be used to fill small gaps. This is an easy do-it-yourself option that can be done using PINK fiberglass batt insulation, found at your local home renovation or hardware store. Consult manufacturer's instructions and your local building code for areas around chimneys or flues. To prevent batt insulation from obstructing the soffit vent, install ready-to-use raft-R-mate between roof rafters. If hiring a professional is more your speed, find one that specializes in PROPINK Blown Glass Fibre insulation, which produces a fast blow rate with minimal dust and static.

In addition to installing attic insulation, remember to do the little things that can make a difference in helping to cut your home's heating costs:

- Use caulking to seal drafts around windows and doors
- Install a programmable thermostat that can automatically adjust temperature

Understanding how heat flows through your home is the first step to knowing how to keep the heat where it should be in the winter – indoors. Completing easy home improvements this fall may help recover your improvement costs through your heating bill savings over time. It will also help make your home a more comfortable place and may save you a few dollars for those holiday gifts this winter. For more information on attic insulation, call 1-800-GET-PINK or visit www.owenscorning.ca. News Canada

The Most Important Tool In Your Kit

If you are a contractor, home renovator or casual do it your selfer the most important tool that you have is your physical well being. When doing construction projects a part of your body especially susceptible to injury or abuse is your feet. We take it for granted that the tools we use are what gets the job done but often don't realize that our feet are essential to using those tools safely and efficiently.

Sturdy work boots especially CSA approved class 1 are better protection than ordinary shoes or sneakers whether from punctures, dropped objects or falls. When working on ladders or steps a steel sole plate will distribute your weight and cause less stress to the arches. If you experience foot pain or fatigue a good quality cushioned liner or arch support is probably a good idea. Hard or uneven surfaces are not kind to your feet, ankles, knees, hips or back and any comfort advantage you can get will be appreciated at the end of the day.

Stockings are another important part of your kit. Absorbent cotton or cotton poly work socks will keep your feet dry and protect them better from friction inside the boot. A good moisturizer to keep skin supple and careful attention to callouses before they become troublesome will keep you comfy on the job or job site. This is the most important part of occupational health when working around tools and other workplace hazards.

If you are tired or hurting because of foot or postural fatigue you will be more at risk of inattention or poor balance which may lead to injury. Be foot smart and work safe.

Terry B. Trask, C.Ped(C)

Tips For Making Your Home Physically Fit To Cut Energy Costs

(NC) Your home can drain your hard-earned energy dollars. Did you know that 10 to 25 percent of the average family's total heating bill literally goes out the window? Heat is drawn to the cold glass of windows to escape a home.

Experts at Hunter Douglas (1-800-265-1363; www.hunterdouglas.ca) offer the following easy tips to make your home physically fit for winter cold.

- Weatherize Seal up holes, weather-strip doors and insulate attic floors. When the fireplace is not in use, keep the damper closed.

- Insulate Add insulation at the window by using window fashions with high energy ratings. One such is Duette shades from Hunter Douglas, which pioneered energy efficiency at the window, with a honeycomb construction that traps air. The new Architella Collection raises energy efficiency to a new level featuring a unique, patented honeycomb within a honeycomb design for additional air pockets.



Louvers with a cellular construction that also traps air are a unique feature of Hunter Douglas Alouette LightLouvers. Country Woods wood blinds made of highly insulating natural hardwood are also very energy efficient.

- Improve and Maintain Your Mechanical Systems Service and clean your furnace annually and change or clean the filters monthly in heating season. According to experts, turning the heat down from 72° to 65° eight hours a day can reduce heating bills by 10 percent.

- Watch Your Windows In winter, for the rare sunny day, open window coverings to let in solar heat. In summer, close them on south- and west-facing windows. Window treatments with neutral white backings, such as Duette shades, also reflect heat.

- Keep the Air Circulating Don't block floor registers, baseboards or radiators. If you have ceiling fans, turn them on low and reverse when using a lot of heat. Warm air rises so the reverse air flow can help circulate the warm air around the entire room. In summer, if you have air conditioning, consider an interior fan to spread the cooled air more effectively.

- Landscape Plant deciduous trees on the south and east sides of your home to keep your home warm in winter and cool in the summer. Plant evergreens on the north and west sides to stop wind.

- News Canada

The Case Of The Disappearing Heat

(NC) Does your home feel chilly and drafty when the temperature drops, regardless of how high you set the thermostat? Heat doesn't just mysteriously disappear; if you're experiencing winter home heat loss, it's likely fixable. Direct Energy offers the following advice on how to keep your home warm and comfortable throughout the winter months and save on energy costs.

Insulation renovation

Precious heat can escape through poorly insulated attics and walls. Insulation acts as a barrier keeping the warm air in and the cold air out. Improving your home's insulation is an easy way to keep it toasty and warm when it's cold outside.

Roof repair

And while you're looking at the attic's insulation, it is important that your roof and attic work together with enough ventilation to help keep your attic space cool and your energy bills down. Consider having a professional inspect your roof and attic ventilation before the cold weather hits and help avoid potential structural deterioration over the winter months.

Window work-up

A significant amount of heat can escape through poorly fitted windows and doors. Caulking and weather-stripping them is a simple yet effective way to prevent unwanted heat loss. If your windows are older, it's a good idea to replace them with an ENERGY STAR certified window.

More information is available online at www.directenergy.com or toll-free at 1-888-334-8221. - News Canada



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Choosing A Home-Security Provider

(MS) When it comes to home security, choosing the right provider can make all the difference. Everyone wants to feel as safe as possible in their home, a desire that leads many homeowners to seek out home-security systems. Unfortunately, not all systems and providers are the same. This means you'll want to do some research before signing on any dotted lines.

Those new to the home-security game may not be exactly sure what to look for. Many times, choosing a company can be confusing, as technology can vary greatly depending on what you might want and what you can afford. The following guidelines should provide some solid tips on how best to approach finding the right home-security provider for you and your family.

- Ask for recommendations. Unless you live on a secluded hilltop, you likely have neighbors who have been living in your neighborhood longer than you. And if you're having security concerns, they may have had similar concerns before you and might be able to recommend a good provider in your price range. If you're skeptical of asking neighbors, ask friends or relatives if they know of any reliable companies.

Another good place to go, according to the Arizona Burglar and Fire Alarm Association (ABFAA), is your local Better Business Bureau. They should be able to tell you if any past complaints have been filed against

a company you're looking into.

- Ask about installation.

Some companies have been known to sell systems faster than they can install them. While it's unreasonable to expect immediate installation, it's not unreasonable to expect your new system to be installed in a timely manner, especially considering your family's safety is at stake. Companies with a long backlog or waiting list for installation might not be too reliable in terms of future response time and should probably be avoided.

- Ask about response time. Response time should be a chief concern for anyone looking to install a home-security system. How quickly a security provider responds is a good indicator of whether or not they're worth reaching an agreement with. Ask for references from some of their current customers who have needed service and try to talk to these people to see what the company's response time was like and how well the call was handled. If the company cannot supply any information with respect to response time, take your business elsewhere.

- Ask about their hiring process. Companies that do not screen their applicants for past criminal backgrounds should be avoided at all costs. Ask how involved their screening process is and what steps they take to ensure their employees are not

sharing confidential client information with anyone outside the company. Your safety should be of utmost importance, and that safety is greatly compromised when using the services of a company that has lax hiring processes.

- Do your research. ABFAA recommends contacting several companies and seeing if they're members of their local security and

alarm regulatory association. Oftentimes, companies in such associations agree to certain standards and must maintain certain levels of competence and conduct to remain affiliated with the association. Make sure when contacting these companies that money is not your only basis for comparison. If one provider provides you with a wealth of information while another does not, ask the latter if they can provide the information at a later date. Get all quotes in writing, and be sure you understand exactly what each quote entails (i.e., installation fees, detection coverage, etc.). EL066886



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Choosing The Hot Tub That's Right For You

(NC) A residential hot tub can transform a home into a vacation destination twelve months of the year. When you decide to join the thousands across Canada already enjoying the benefits of hot tubs, you will first need to choose between the different styles currently available.

Portable hot tubs can be easily relocated within a yard or to a new property. These once-piece units are available in a variety of water jet configurations and seating arrangements. They feature acrylic or composite shells and conceal plumbing and mechanical elements behind a finished cabinet. Portable tub sizes vary significantly, accommodating anywhere from two to more than ten people at a time. They can be fitted with hundreds of different accessories from TVs to lighting and are simple and quick to install.

Often similar to portable units, built-in hot tubs are recessed into a custom enclosure in a deck or floor. They can feature acrylic shells or a concrete base with a mosaic tile finish. The latter allows homeowners to choose the size, shape and design of the tub, matching personal preference and existing décor. This style of tub boasts easier access and a more elegant design but can be difficult to repair or relocate.

For the purist, classic wooden-style hot tubs are still produced by some manufacturers. Made from staves of cedar or redwood, these tubs add a wonderful rustic look to any setting. Many modern wooden models come with built-in liners that help extend their life expectancy.

Swim spas are some of the largest hot tub models available. They are ideal for homeowners who want the benefits of both a pool and a hot tub despite space restrictions. The defining feature of a swim spa is the powerful, fully adjustable main jet that pumps a stream of water allowing swimmers to swim in place. These long rectangular shells can be finished with a custom cabinet or set into a floor or deck. For more information on the different models of hot tubs, or to locate a dealer in your area, contact the Pool & Hot Tub Council of Canada at (800) 879-7066 or, online at www.poolcouncil.ca <<http://www.poolcouncil.ca>> - News Canada

A Fun Pool Is A Safe Pool

(MS) An investment in a backyard pool can be a wonderful addition to a home. Not only will it enhance the curb appeal of the property, it sets the stage for years of fun, memories, and leisure for the entire family all right outside your door.

There are many advantages to pool ownership. Backyard pools offer peace of mind in a sanitary, safe environment, a vacation state-of-mind without the hassles of travel, and life-enhancing health benefits. Swimming, or even just treading water, provides a great cardiovascular workout that is good for people of all ages. Having a pool could put you in the best shape of your life.

Pool owners are quick to point out that a backyard pool becomes the backdrop for some of life's fondest memories: barbecues with family and friends, graduation and birthday parties, family reunions and weddings. Family members once tied to MP3 players, DVDs and video games won't be able to resist the draw of the cool, welcoming pool waters. It's a total backyard experience that can be even further enhanced with landscaping and fragrant gardens.

Layers of Protection

The playback of smiles and happy memories from your backyard pool is guaranteed when you create a safe swimming environment. Taking safety precautions, known as layers of protection in the industry, will ensure that you increase security and reduce the risk of injury.

The Northeast Spa & Pool Association (NESPA) is the Northeast Affiliate of the Association of Pool & Spa Professionals (APSP). Founded in 1958, NESPA represents the pool and spa industry in the Northeast and serves members through extensive training programs, safety promotions, design competitions and compliance education. The organization recommends that you partner with a NESPA member to help you build and operate a safe pool.

NESPA offers this advice to those considering a pool installation this season:

- Get the facts about pool design and operation from a NESPA professional in your area. There's a lot of information and misinformation on the Web that can be confusing.
 - Talk about safety up-front. There are a host of new pool safety products available on the market today and your NESPA professional can recommend barriers (fences), alarms and safety devices around the pool and yard that will delay a child's access to a pool or spa if unattended.
 - On-going maintenance of your pool is essential to proper operation and increases the value of your pool. Time-saving automated pool products are available to increase leisure time and savings, including the luxury of regular valet pool services offered by many local pool dealers.
- To locate a NESPA professional in your area, or to learn more about installing a beautiful, safe pool, visit the NESPA Web site at www.nes-papool.org. Or write to Northeast Spa & Pool Association, 300 J Campus Drive, Morganville, NJ 07751-1250 for educational pamphlets on how to build and operate a safe pool. SH082483



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Move Over Granite, Quartz Now The Hot Countertop Rock

(MS) - So you're in the market for a new premium countertop surface and granite seems like the obvious choice, think again. After all of your research you'll probably end up selecting the highest rated and most popular option available - quartz.

Quartz countertops are the new worry-free, elegant alternative to high-maintenance granite. They are stronger than granite, require no resealing, are highly resistant to scratches and stains, and come in a huge variety of colors.

In fact, Consumer Reports Magazine rated quartz as the top performer among countertop materials such as granite, ceramic tile, stainless steel, laminate, marble, limestone and concrete when it came to resisting prime kitchen hazards such as stains, heat and scratches.

According to the recent Freedonia Group Report on countertop industry trends, there has been a definite shift in the marketplace over the last few years as quartz has become the fastest growing market segment in the industry with 13 per cent growth compared to granite at five per cent.

Quartz surfaces are growing in popularity because they have the appearance of natural stone, but unlike granite, these surfaces never need to be sealed. Quartz is a non-porous material, which means it will not promote the growth of mold, mildew or bacteria.

In your research you will most probably stumble upon a popular brand called HanStone. "Quartz countertops have an aesthetic that can emulate the look of granite, but are also available in unique colors and surface effects not found in natural stone," explained Mark Hanna, President of Leeza Distribution Inc., distributor of HanStone Fine Quartz Surfaces.

"The benefit of quartz is that it doesn't have any of the drawbacks associ-

ated with materials such as granite."

Also of great importance, HanStone is accredited with Greenguard environmental certification.

What is quartz? Quartz is silicon dioxide and it occurs as individual crystals and fine-grained masses in a large variety of forms, patterns, and colors. It is naturally hard and scratch resistant. Quartz actually ranks a 7.0 on

Moh's Hardness Scale, which is used to measure the scratch-resistance of a material. Only diamonds, ranking 10, topaz, and sapphire are harder than quartz.

Most quartz countertops are manufactured with up to 93 percent quartz and seven percent pigments and resins. This prescribed mixture results in a product that is non-porous, exceedingly durable, and more than twice as strong as granite.

The top rated quartz surface in the industry by designers, architects and developers a like is HanStone, because it contains a higher quartz content than the norm and includes clear and multiple quartz colors, bringing greater depth,

dimension and style to its surfaces.

Also of great importance HanStone is accredited with Greenguard environmental certification.

"HanStone's superior quality is clearly evident," added Hanna. "It begins with the natural elegance of quartz, and then uses advanced technology to create a product with dramatic colors, vibrant patterns and a luxurious sheen." Available in 32 colors and patterns, HanStone offers unlimited design flexibility and a beautiful addition to any setting. More information on fine quartz surfaces is available at leezadistribution.com. TF084705




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What Is A Home Inspection?

(NC) Whether you are shopping for a previously-owned house or a brand new house, an inspection provides insight to the condition of the home you are buying. If you are putting your house on the market, an inspection helps hasten the sale and can generate a higher price.

A home inspection is a thorough visual examination of the home and property.

The process usually takes two to three hours, during which time the house is examined from the ground up. The inspection includes observation and, when appropriate, operation of the plumbing, heating, air conditioning, electrical, and appliance systems, as well as structural components: roof, foundation, basement, exterior and interior walls, chimney, doors, and windows.

When conducted by a professional, a home inspection covers about 1,000 check-points in approximately 400 items around the home. Findings should be provided to you in the form of a comprehensive report. It is vital that such a report include an objective evaluation of the condition of the home, clearly relating existing defects and indicating potential problems.

A home inspection report is not a warranty.

Because a home inspection is a visual examination of the home and operating systems, it is not technically exhaustive. There is no assurance, expressed or implied, that equipment will not break down at some future date. However, such protection is available when a home inspection is complemented by a home warranty. When the services are used in conjunction with one another, a home warranty covers the items that were serviceable at the time of the inspection and subsequently fail due to normal wear and tear.

A home inspection does not detect every conceivable flaw.

It is an inspection of those areas and items that can be seen. Home inspectors cannot see through foundation, floors or walls, and cannot inspect areas or items that are inaccessible.

A home inspection benefits all parties involved in the real estate transaction. Further information is available online at www.amerispec.ca for details.

- News Canada

Fix Those Damp Basement Walls

(NC) There are a number of simple ways to reduce moisture on damp basement walls and prevent this from growing into full-scale leaks or a major mould issue.

Check the Source

Make sure your rain gutters are functioning properly and that the downspouts are clear and open. Use long leaders or downspout extensions to carry rain water far away from the foundation. Also slope the ground around the wall so that water drains away from the foundation.



Seal Cracks or Gaps

Check carefully for any cracks or gaps, and seal them with a caulking compound designed for your type of basement wall typically masonry. If problems persist, more extensive waterproofing work may be needed.

Prevention, Not Patchwork

If you decide to obtain an evaluation from a qualified waterproofing contractor, beware of recommendations for major work that is only designed to remove water that seeps in, rather than preventing it from infiltrating in the first place. In many cases, it is more effective to redirect the water away from the foundation than to try and stop it from seeping in once it's there.

Remember, these tips are only general guidelines. Since each house and situation is different, contact a professional if you have questions about a specific condition or issue. More home safety and maintenance information is available online at www.housemaster.com.

- News Canada



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Carpet Then And Now

(NC) Once a necessity for warmth, a barrier for nomadic doorways and floors, or a symbol of wealth and stature of noblemen, carpet has come a long way from its origins. Today carpet has taken on a whole new visage: it's soft, multi-dimensional and most importantly, back in demand by interior decorators for contemporary home décor.

There are conflicting reports as to whether carpet originated with the Persians, the Egyptians, the Iranians, the Turks, the Chinese, or the Mayans. In 1949, Russian archaeologists uncovered the oldest "knotted" rug ever discovered, believed to have been hand-made 2400-2500 years ago. Its ornate beauty was preserved in the frozen tombs of Scythian chiefs in the Pazyryk valley, about 5000 feet up in the Altai Mountains of Siberia.

Throughout history carpet has evolved from simple hand-knotted wool rugs, to tufted hand-loom carpets with a simple backing, typically of jute, flax or cotton. In 1750-1850 the demand for reduced labour costs and increased carpet floor coverage led to the invention of mechanized broadloom weaving machines. In 1906 the first steam-powered Gripper Axminster loom was introduced to tuft patterned carpet. The "modern" phenomenon of wide-width carpet or broadloom began with carpet manufactured in 27 inch wide strips, which were then sewn together to create the wall-to-wall appearance we're familiar with today. It was only as recently as the 1930s that the first mechanized 12 foot wide width carpet tufting machine, developed in Dalton, Georgia, revolutionized the manner in which carpet is manufactured. 90% of carpet sales world-wide are tufted carpets.

The evolution of carpet manufacturing did not stop there. One of the most significant advancements originated in France with the invention of the Jacquard machine, which mechanically generated predetermined



designs, giving us patterns and textures.

After World War II, came the introduction of man-made fibres: nylon in 1947 and polyester in 1965.

Carpet is no longer simply a luxury of kings and the wealthy, and it no longer need look like Grandma's first carpet. Wall-to-wall carpet today is truly a remarkable décor element for the fifth wall of your room. There are a vast array of styles, textures and colours to choose from, to help you express your personal style. Of all types of floor fashion, carpet offers the greatest selection of style, versatility and value. From botanical patterns and waffle-like textures, sisal looking ribs, checkered/argyle patterns, contemporary friezes, to traditional cut piles, your choices are endless. Peerless Comfort® carpet is made in Canada and offers more than 160 styles to choose from. More information is available online at www.beaulieucanada.com.
- News Canada

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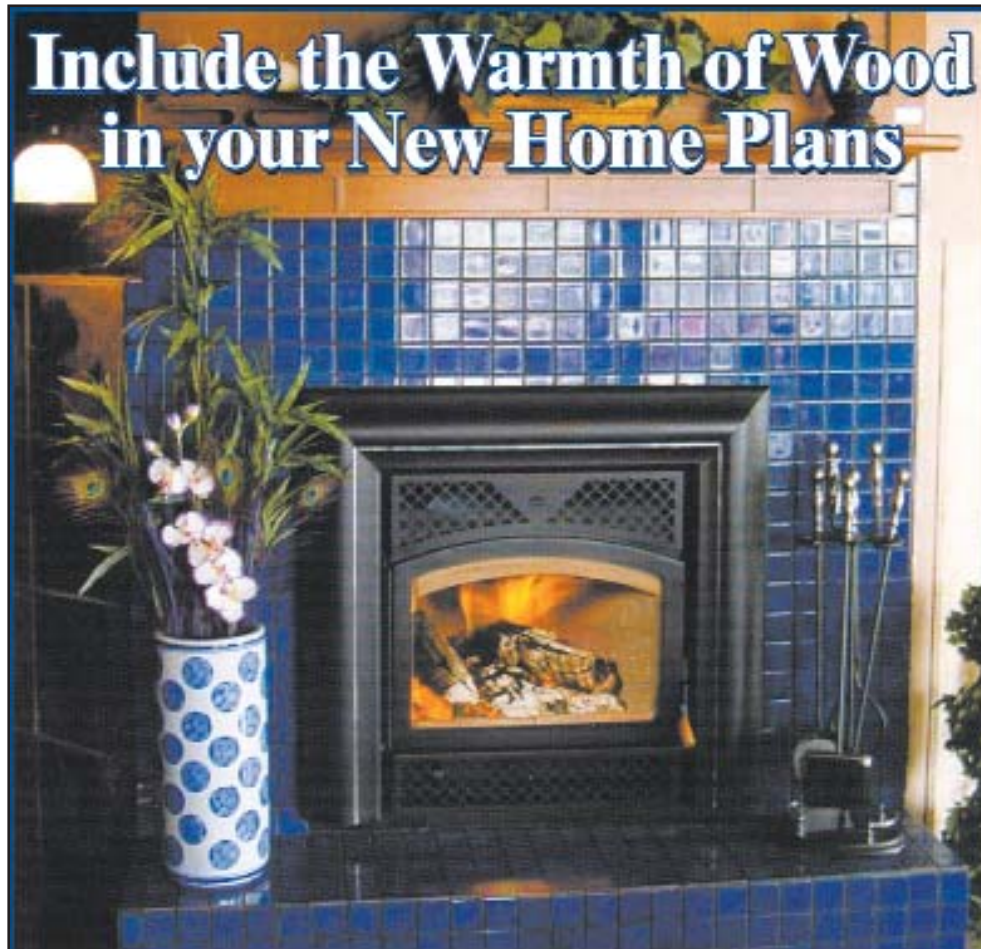
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FIREPLACE OPTIONS FOR THE NEW HOME BUILDER OR RENOVATOR

A fireplace can be a wonderful addition to a family room, a den, a bedroom or even a kitchen. It will add beauty and elegance to the living space and will provide a lovely atmosphere and ambiance to the room when in use. The heating options are wood, pellet, propane, natural gas or electric. But that is only the start. You then can choose from different door finishes (gold, nickel, metallic black, etc), and

different surround trims. You can even opt for a bay window. And finally you can choose from a variety of mantels (cast, wood or stone) to add that final touch of elegance. And do not forget that electric fireplaces have the advantage of being portable. All that is needed is a 120 volt outlet.



A lot of home builders are installing wood burning fireplaces to supplement heat throughout their entire home. This trend could be due to concerns over energy costs or simply a desire to be safe and secure during power outages. In these situations heat is transferred to different zones in the home by ducting the fireplace into the furnace plenum for distribution through the central heating system's ductwork. In other cases homeowners are using ducts to get heat into an adjoining room or two. Ducting can go in any direction, including down to the level below the fireplace!

A popular trend, for homeowners designing large family rooms, living rooms or dens, is to install a gas fireplace with flames that can reach as high as 18 to 20 inches (normal height is 4 to 6 inches). This of course is necessary to ensure that the flame is in proportion to the size of the living space. With numerous options available such as different mantels, firebox liners, log designs and flame patterns, new homeowner's have complete control over the look of their fireplace.

For the homeowner that is looking for an entirely different look there are now

propane and natural gas fireplace wall units and corner units. And for a contemporary look you now have flames that rise over smooth river rock or tumbled glass.

Submitted by John Jones, Sales Representative at Alternatives

Laminate Floors Endure Beautifully The Test Of Time

(NC)—Still thinking of laminate flooring as an easy-to-spot imitation of hardwood? Think again. Chances are, if it were a recently installed floor, you would have a difficult time distinguishing it from conventional hardwood.

Welcome to the new look and new reality of laminate flooring.

While laminate floors are still as versatile and durable as ever, imaging and imprint technology have improved the beauty aspect. Now you can have hardwood-identical flooring in a supremely durable product.

Most laminate flooring has a core of HDF (high density fibreboard) topped with a high-resolution, high-quality imprint of natural wood flooring. It is finished with an extremely hard, clear coating for long-lasting surface protection and performance.

From an environmental point of view, this modern and highly popular flooring is coming into its own. Its extreme durability extends product life for many years, decades in fact, before any replacement will be necessary. A reduced need for new flooring has a place in our throwaway society. Fewer trips to the landfill benefit everyone.

One company, TORLYS of Mississauga, Ontario, (torlys.com) has taken a leadership role in creating an environmentally responsible laminate floor. Installation of their floors doesn't involve messy glues, chemicals or

fumes, or nails of any kind. Their patented Uniclic joint creates a remarkably stable floor, and because the click joint process is reversible, the floor can be re-used up to three times under warranty.

When joints are tight in a hard surface floor like laminate, allergens, mites and dust have a difficult time finding a home. For asthma sufferers, cleaner indoor air quality is excellent news.

Industry research is finding new ways to use recycled materials and wood fibre in the production of laminate flooring. This will mean further reductions in the foresting of hardwood trees, a precious and limited natural resource.

With laminate flooring in your home, the uplift to your décor comes with benefits for your budget, your health, and the environment. - News Canada

Tough Cleaning Jobs Made Easier

(NC) Try these helpful tips from Vim.ca to take the "grunt work" out of tough spring cleaning tasks.

Dirty Job: Cleaning floors without leaving them sticky.

Clean Solution: Wash with Vim Oxy-Gel diluted in water. Its active oxygen formula creates thousands of micro-bubbles that help loosen and lift dirt leaving them residue-free.

Dirty Job: Cleaning patio furniture

Clean Solution: Squirt Vim Cream Cleanser directly onto surface or damp sponge. Rub gently. Let sit for a few minutes. Then hose down and wipe clean.

Dirty Job: Barbeque Grill Burnt-on Grease

Clean Solution: Use Vim Cream Cleanser with steel wool and rub over the grill to take off the rust and grease, then rinse clean. Follow barbeque manufacturer's instructions.

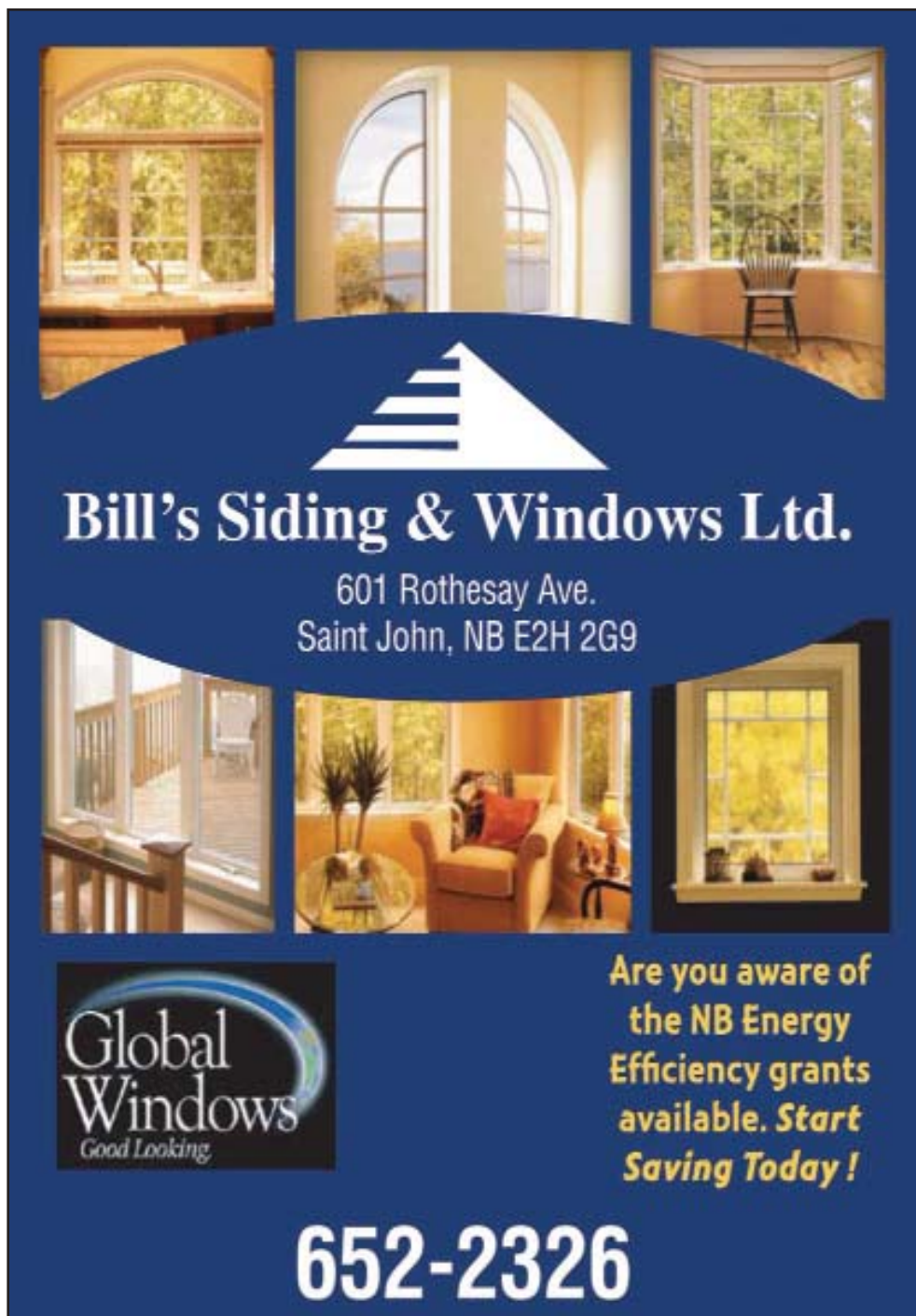
Dirty Job: Removing mould from the bathroom ceiling


Clean Solution: Squirt a little Vim Cream Cleanser on a damp cloth or if the ceiling is too high to reach on a sponge mop. Rub well, then rinse.

Dirty Job: Ridding grout of stains

Clean Solution: Make sure your cleanser is free of heavy dyes. New Vim Oxy-Gel All Purpose Cleaner with active oxygen is lightly coloured, so it will remove old stains without leaving new ones.


- News Canada





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Brush Up On Painting Smarts For Fall

(NC) Once you select colours for your fall painting job, take the time to choose the right type of paint for your project. The type of paint you use can dramatically affect the results, says PARA Paints, offering this "Painting 101" review:

Latex or oil? There are essentially two categories of paint: latex (acrylic or emulsion) and alkyd (oil). Water-based latex paints are increasingly preferred because they clean up easily with soap and water and are more environmentally friendly than alkyds. They're also durable, create very little odour, are less likely to grow mildew, and adhere to almost any surface. Oil-based paints remain your best choice for repainting surfaces already covered in four or more layers of alkyd paint, or any exterior surface that has heavy chalking.

Sheen: The most common finishes (from highest to lowest gloss), are gloss, semi-gloss, pearl, eggshell (satin), velvet, and flat. Semi-gloss and gloss finishes, known for their durability and shine, are used in high traffic areas such as kitchens and bathrooms, and on fingerprint and grime-collecting places like doors, baseboards and banisters. Eggshell paint has less lustre than a semi-gloss, yet more shine than a flat, and is the most common finish for halls and bedrooms. Flat paints are non-reflective, ideal for ceilings, and hiding imperfections.



ing imperfections.

Specialty paints: There are many paints designed for special purposes. Some paints, for example, are formulated to resist mildew

in rooms where steam and moisture build-up is a factor, such as kitchens and bathrooms. Others are created with superior adhesion qualities, making them ideal for painting over trim, cupboards, furniture and ceramic tiles. There are even flat paints, engineered to provide the same stain resistance and durability associated with high gloss paints, for use in high traffic rooms where you may prefer a duller finish.

Primers: Primers come in many forms, so it's important to pick the right one for your job. Like paint, primers are either alkyd (oil) or water-based. Some are formulated to resist mildew while others are designed to seal porous or chalky surfaces. There are even primers with super-adherent qualities to cover previously-enameled or varnished surfaces, and others have anti-rust inhibitors to cover and add protection to steel or iron.

More information is available at www.para.com or by calling 1-800-461-PARA.

- News Canada

Becoming Water Wise

(NC) Although water is one of the most abundant resources in Canada, it is also one of the most mistreated. Simple lifestyle changes can make a huge impact on water conservation.

"We have found that many consumers are becoming more environmentally conscious about their personal footprint and the affect it has on the planet," says Anita Griffin, brand manager for Delta Faucet and Brizo. "This growing trend is shifting how we approach the development of our new products, and is in line with the water-saving products we have in our collection."

Consider the following water-saving tips next time you are looking for ways to be more water wise:

• **Make Every Drop Count:**

Evaluate the plumbing in your home for moisture and repair any leaking faucets, toilets or pipes. Installing new fixtures with low-flow, low-volume capabilities, like Delta Faucet's Water Efficient Showerhead, can save over 30 per cent of the



usual water flow for a shower. Also consider changing the aerators on your faucet from the standard 2.5 gpm to a lower flow 1.5, especially in the bathroom.

• **The Real Green Thumb:** Naturalize your yard using plants, trees and shrubs that are indigenous to your region and don't need a lot of water. If you have to water, do it during the coolest part of the day or at night to minimize evaporation. Put a rain barrel on your downspouts and use this water for irrigation. These cisterns come in all shapes and sizes, and will add a country farm feeling to your garden.

• **The Everyday Conservationist:** Changing the way you do simple activities, like turning off the tap while you're brushing your teeth or shaving, is a quick and easy way to conserve. The stylish hands-free Pascal kitchen faucet from Brizo helps conserve water by automatically turning off once you move your hands away from the spout.

• **Some Like It Hot:** While waiting for hot water from the faucet, save the cold for drinking, cooking or watering plants. Consider installing a tank-less water heater, capable of providing an instant, endless supply of hot water. These systems work on-demand and don't require a holding tank to store pre-warmed water.

• **The Water Watcher:** Be on the look out in your neighborhood for broken pipes, open hydrants and excessive waste. Don't be shy about pointing out leaks and drips to your friends and family members. They may not even realize they have a water-wasting fixture right under their nose. More information is available at www.deltafaucet.com and www.brizo.com.

- News Canada

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10 Tips For New Home Buyers



(NC) While Ontario's new home market continues to ring up healthy sales, as a new home buyer you want to make sure you've made the right decision. Buying a home is the single biggest purchase most of us will ever make and, as with most important purchases, it is vital to do your homework to ensure your new home fits your lifestyle and meets your expectations. An important part of this preparation process is to learn more about all the benefits and resources available through Tarion Warranty Corporation, a private corporation established in 1976 to provide protection for all consumers who purchase a new home or condominium in Ontario. Tarion does this by licensing and regu-

lating Ontario's home builders and managing a guarantee fund to ensure that consumers receive the new home warranty coverage they are entitled to by law. Tarion has provided the following tips to help guide new home buyers through the purchasing process.

1. Choose the type of home that meets your lifestyle - Read the real estate section of your local paper for information about new developments. Also, check out builders' websites for photos and floor plans.
2. Determine what you can afford - Once you've chosen the location and type of home that fits your needs, meet with a financial representative to determine a mortgage amount that you can comfortably afford. This ensures that you spend your time wisely on homes within your price range. You should also consider getting a pre-approved mortgage, which will allow you to shop with added confidence.
3. Research your builder - A simple call to 1-877-9TARION or a visit to www.tarion.com will give you access to information about all registered home builders in Ontario, including their customer service record with Tarion. When you find a builder you like, talk to them about previous developments, and go straight to the source by asking current homeowners questions about their homes and neighbourhoods.
4. Attend educational seminars - These useful seminars are designed to help you learn from industry professionals about the new home buying process and the statutory warranty protecting all new homes built in Ontario. Visit the Tarion website for more information.
5. Talk with a real estate lawyer - It's important that you meet with a real estate or condominium lawyer before signing an Agreement of Purchase and Sale to make sure you understand exactly what is and is not included in the price of your new home.
6. Read the Homeowner Information Package - Take the time to review Tarion's Homeowner Information Package, which your builder will give to you before or during the pre-delivery inspection for your new home. This brochure, which is also available at www.tarion.com, explains your new home's statutory warran-

ty, and the responsibilities of both you and your builder.

7. Prepare for your Pre-Delivery Inspection (PDI) - Be prepared for the pre-delivery inspection (PDI). It's your chance to do a thorough inspection of your new home to identify any items that are incomplete, damaged, missing or not operating properly, and have them taken care of before you move in. This is also a prime opportunity to ensure that everything has been built according to your Agreement of Purchase and Sale.

8. Become familiar with the new home statutory warranty and submit forms on time

You can familiarize yourself with the statutory warranty online by visiting www.tarion.com. Here, for example, you'll find out more about what is and what isn't covered by the warranty as well as the timelines and procedures to follow should a warranty-related item need attention in your new home. Tarion will only accept and act on Statutory Warranty Forms that are submitted on time.

9. Maintain your home through the seasons - You've made a big investment in your home, so you should take care of it year-round. It's important to remember that ongoing maintenance helps to ensure that your statutory warranty is protected. So, after you've moved in, follow an annual maintenance routine and help keep your new home in top shape.

10. Enjoy all your new home has to offer - You've done a lot of research, decision-making and waiting by the time you reach this point. Now it's time to enjoy all the wonderful things your new home has to offer.

More information for new home buyers is available online at www.tarion.com.

- News Canada

Do It Yourself Energy Saving Tips Make Your Life Energy-Smart With Simple At-Home Tips

(NC) Global warming is a hot topic these days and Canadians are taking more of an interest in environmental issues. In fact, 96 per cent of Canadians would be more likely to save energy if it just involved simple changes to day-to-day household activities. Making a difference really can start by taking small simple steps at home, like washing your laundry in cold water.

Detergents specially formulated for cold water washing, such as Tide Coldwater, provide excellent cleaning results in cold water and help save energy by not using your home's hot water heater during the washing cycle.

Switching to a cold water wash can lead to significant energy savings. For example, with this particular detergent you can save up to 75 per cent of the household energy used per load, and if every Canadian switched to Tide Coldwater, enough energy could be saved to light up to 2.5 million households nationwide for one year.

How can you make a difference? Ken Elsey, of the Canadian Energy Efficiency Alliance (CEEAA), offers these additional tips for easy energy-saving solutions in the home:

1. Install compact fluorescent (CFL) light bulbs. Consider replacing standard incandescent light bulbs with CFL bulbs as they use about 1/3 of the electricity.
2. Install a programmable thermostat. Easy to install and easy to use. Wake up to a warm house without wasting energy.
3. Install a low-flow shower head. Low-flow shower heads reduce the amount of hot water used when taking a shower, and the energy needed to heat it. A smart investment, especially for renters, because you can take them with you.
4. Replace old appliances with more efficient models. Investing in new energy-efficient appliances like a refrigerator can save energy and money for years to come. Look for the EnergyStar label for maximum energy savings.

More energy saving tips can be found online at www.tidecoldwater.ca and www.energyefficiency.org. - News Canada

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Home Building Tips:

Build Your House With Sustainable Materials

(NC) Green is now top-of-mind for homeowners as they start to build. While the main objective is to construct a home that is safe, attractive and comfortable, Canadians are also asking about the use of sustainable materials.

- Energy efficiency with windows, doors, and insulation is high on the priority list," says Debbie Snider at Nudura, "but now, people are just as interested in building methods that deliver superior construction without impacting the environment. With these concepts in mind, building technology has experienced rapid advances in recent times and the most innovative is the use of concrete, not wood."

A building system that utilizes stay-in-place concrete forms (consisting of two panels of thick EPS foam filled with reinforced concrete) is considered to be vastly superior to traditional stick framing methods. The interlocking forms make a home easier and faster to construct and by eliminating the wood foundation, it is environmentally friendly as well. It is also a measure for controlling mould.

- Unlike wood materials, this technology does not promote mould growth," Snider explained. "For people with allergies or respiratory conditions it's good to know that the walls of your home are not contributing.

Imagine breathing problems that arise from the wood in your walls!"

And according to Snider, the Nudura "Lego-like" forms take all the labour out of assembling the wall connections from scratch.

- Construction teams are pleased at the ease of using pre-assembled forms," she

explained. "They can be ordered in a variety of sizes to allow for limitless design capabilities. The left-in-place forms deliver a continuous monolithic insulation and sound barrier. Our research shows that homes built with our technology generate less construction waste, are made from a large content of recyclable material, are quiet and comfortable to live in, and require far less maintenance."

As importantly, your new home will be easier and quicker to construct and money is saved with the resulting durability and energy efficiency. It is reported, for example, that buildings using this concrete innovation are up to nine times stronger, provide far more fire protection, far more sound insulation and can produce energy savings of up to 70 percent. More information is available online at Nudura.com. - News Canada



Kitchen Painting Tips

(NC) Haven't got the appetite to tackle your kitchen paint job? Follow this recipe for success from PARA Paints:

Choose the right finish: The kitchen is one of the homes' highest traffic areas, so choose a stain-resistant and washable paint. Semi-gloss and gloss paints are best due to their durability and shine. For a lower sheen, there are also durable and stain-resistant eggshell finishes that perform like a semi gloss, such as PARA's Elite Ceramic.

Use specially designed paints: Mildew-resistant paints are recommended since steam and moisture build-up is common in kitchens. Paints like PARA's Ultra Platinum Plus Kitchen & Bath Enamel, for example, contain a special fungicide to control growth of surface mold and mildew.

Think outside the walls: Besides walls and ceilings, cabinets, countertops, backsplash and range hoods are all good candidates for a fresh coat of paint. Use paint which has superior adhesion qualities, such as melamine latex paints or urethane-fortified enamel. Avoid painting stoves, sinks or tile floors.

More information is available at www.para.com, or by calling 1-800-461-PARA.

- News Canada



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Creating The Environmentally Friendly Yard Is Easy

(NC) Creating an eco-friendly yard is not only smart, it's easy. To get you started, consider the following tips from The Home Depot Canada:

Feed me. Adding compost to the soil adds organic matter, aids in water retention, promotes biological activity and avoids sending waste to landfills. Add compost or composted manure to soil in the Spring and mid-Summer, when planting or transplanting.

Cut it out. Avoid using harmful pesticides, herbicides and synthetic fertilizers. These promote rapid but weak plant growth, destroy soil fertility and are toxic to humans, wildlife and beneficial insects. Instead, treat your plants and lawn to organic plant food and fertilizer from Terracycle. Made from worm poop, Terracycle is packaged in recycled pop bottles and gives plants a powerful punch.

Water wisely. Conserve water this season by adding an all-natural soil conditioner like SoilSponge to garden beds to add up to seven days between watering. Also, use soaker hoses instead of sprinklers and water early in the morning to help cut back on water use.

No bogging down. A peat bog is a natural, highly specialized eco-system that removes carbon dioxide from the air, acts as a cleansing watershed filter and is home to many important plant and animal species. Create a modern-day bog with PeatEliminator a coconut byproduct that improves drainage, soil aeration and pH balance for nutrient uptake.

Retire the old mower. Small engines found in lawn mowers, leaf blowers and weed trimmers are a significant contributor to harmful air and noise pollution, smog and greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs). Retire the old gas guzzling mower to any one of The Home Depot's 155 stores across Canada during Mow Down Pollution (April 19-29) and receive a gift card. Use this cash to buy an eco-friendly push reel mower or a rechargeable battery powered one, made by top brands like Neuton or Gardena.

More information is available online at homedepot.ca. - News Canada

Tips To Flip Over:

Ten easy ways to update your home for resale

(NC) "When looking to purchase a home, prospective buyers consider a variety of factors â from a fair deal in a good neighbourhood to how the home will suit their lifestyle.

"The key to selling your home is to make the purchaser wish they lived there," says Jacqueline Glass, Toronto-based interior decorator. "Making small changes to show prospective buyers the lifestyle that your home offers are often the difference between a bid made or lost."

Glass offers these tips for preparing your home for resale:

1. Steam clean carpets and consider installing hardwood flooring or ceramic tiles.
2. Paint walls in a neutral but pleasing hue.
3. Replace the faucets in your bathroom; stylish and contemporary fixtures, such as the Arzo Bath Collection by Delta, exude a luxury feel at an affordable price point.
4. Change a toilet, sink or counter to a neutral tone for an instant update.
5. Paint the tiles in a bathroom or the kitchen to inexpensively upgrade a space.
6. Do an all over clean-up and purge of your home. Prospective buyers often can't see beyond clutter.
7. Increase the curb appeal of your home by planting flowers or placing planters in the front and back yards.
8. Use a lightly scented oil to add a fresh scent to your home. Similarly, putting on a pot of coffee or baking a cake produces pleasant smells that evoke the feeling of home.
9. Depersonalize your home by removing family photographs to help potential buyers envision themselves in the space.
10. Help the homeowner see the possibilities â "set the table for dinner with flowers, fine dishes and cutlery or run the bath and add floating candles, leaving out a robe or a set of fresh towels to enhance the feel of a spa-like setting.

Check out the latest from Delta Faucet by visiting www.deltafaucet.com.

News Canada

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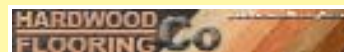


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Five Steps To A Healthy Lawn

(NC) Just follow these five easy steps to keep your lawn at its best:

1. Start with a good soil preparation. If you're starting a new lawn, you'll never regret the investment you make now in improving the soil. Grass grows best in a well-drained blend of topsoil, sand and organic matter several inches deep. Remove any hard packed patches and rake out old thatch to allow the grass to "breathe". Top up with a specially formulated soil for lawns such as C-I-L Triple Mix Plus. It contains composted manure, peat, as well as fertilizer for improved root development.
2. Overseed your lawn every year. Mark Cullen, one of Canada's leading gardening experts, recommends over-seeding your lawn each spring with a quality grass seed. "I do this every spring to help fill in bare spots in my lawn. Overseeding helps reduce weeds too."
3. Fertilize four times a year. Recent research has shown that fertilizing four times a year will actually reduce the amount of weeds in a lawn. A well-fed lawn can actually out-compete many of those annoying lawn weeds. Some people only fertilize their lawn in the spring. However, lawns need a steady supply of nutrients throughout the season to stay green and healthy. In particular, don't forget the fall fertilizer application. It's one of the most important feedings. Cullen recommends applying fall fertilizer in September or October to strengthen your lawn over winter and give it a jumpstart in the spring.
4. Control broadleaf weeds. Weeds will compete with grass for soil nutrients. If your lawn only has a few weeds, you can pull them by hand. Be sure to fill in bare spots with grass seed before more weeds sprout. If your lawn is over-run with weeds, then an application of Lawn WeedOut in May, June or September will quickly bring weeds under control.
5. Control insects. White grubs, chinch bugs, leather-jackets, ants and many common insects could destroy your lawn if conditions favour them. A well-fertilized lawn is your best defense against insect damage. Healthy roots will recover faster after an infestation. For serious infestations, you may need to apply a lawn insect control product such as GrubOut. Timing is very important; be sure to read the label directions carefully. Once the infestation is under control, repair the damage with grass seed and fertilizer. More lawn care tips are available online at: www.cilproducts.ca. - News Canada

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The Difference Is In The Dirt

(NC) Your garden's foundation is the earth in which it is planted. Soil is comprised of minerals, organic matter, which provides nutrients and deteriorates or decomposes over time, moisture and air. Nutrients in soil are steadily diminished as organic matter in compost and fertilizer or plant food is used by plants and eroded by the elements, so it's important to amend your soil and add nutrients regularly. In new subdivisions or developments, the topsoil used is often of poor quality, so amending the soil is an essential step in establishing and maintaining healthy lawns and gardens.

Household composters provide an excellent source of organic matter to add nutrients to soil, but they require some work. The mixture must be allowed time to break down to a desired state, and it must be kept moist and turned for even consistency. Some municipalities provide ready-to-use compost in the spring; you simply bring your own container and help yourself. Or, new this year from Scotts is a line of Pro Blends Professional Quality soils to improve your lawn or garden and grow bigger, healthier trees, shrubs, flowers or vegetables.

Know Your Dirt:

Professionally blended soils to look for this season include:

- Black Earth, great for lawns, provides a three-in-one blend of black earth, compost and manure. The natural, organic-based ingredients will help improve the soil structure by increasing porosity and allowing more water and nutrients to reach the root zone.
- "Topsoil is a blend of topsoil, compost and manure, an organic-based blend of nutrients to promote healthy plant growth."
- Organic Compost is designed for in-ground gardens. It's a professional quality blend of compost and manure, containing essential organic matter from composted leaves and yard clippings. Add it to flower and vegetable beds for healthier plant growth and more abundant vegetables and blooms.
- Containers require a different type of soil altogether. Since container-bound plants tend to dry out faster; choose a container planting soil with a mixture of sphagnum peat, bark fines, compost and perlite to help soil hold moisture, promote strong root growth and better drainage for container gardens. Pro Blends Potting Mix is also enriched with a slow release fertilizer for healthier plant growth. Miracle-Gro Potting Mix contains coconut fibre husks, which hold moisture until the plant needs it. Get the scoop on dirt before you buy blends by reading labels and choosing the appropriate one for your needs. - News Canada



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Bathroom Renovations Can Be Fast And Easy

(NC) The Renovation Symptoms: Fear of time commitments, exceeding the budget, complications. Diagnosis: Normal.

Most people put off taking on their bathroom renovation because they're unsure of what to expect. How much time will it take? How much money? Is it going to be difficult? These are all normal and solvable questions.

How much time you spend renovating your bathroom will depend on what length you extend your renovations. Is it a complete overhaul? Or simply replacing a few fixtures and paint? Consider hiring a contractor if you're not a do-it-yourselfer, or if you just don't have the time. If you plan to take on the project yourself, selecting products designed with the do-it-yourselfer in mind will be your best bet to reduce any unwelcome complications.

"Renovating the bathroom is a solid investment in your home," said Donna Church, a Sterling spokesperson. "But that doesn't mean you have to blow your budget to get the look and quality you want. Look for durable materials that are easy to install and you'll save your wallet and your time."

Replacing the shower and bath is one of the biggest and most important investments you can make in the bathroom. It can be time consuming, especially if you're ripping everything out and starting fresh. Sterling, a Kohler brand, has made the process easier with the Accord Bath and Shower unit. It comes in four pieces three walls and a bathtub and it seamlessly snaps together and requires no caulking. It is made of the lightweight, but durable Vikrell material, so it won't chip or scratch and the do-it-yourselfer can easily manoeuvre it around corners. It's fast, easy, affordable, durable and importantly stylish.

Now that you have a diagnosis and a solution, taking the action to renovate your bathroom shouldn't seem as daunting. Have fun and enjoy the process, after all, you've probably put it off long enough!

For more information on Sterling products, please call 1-800-STERLING
- News Canada

Helping Canadians With Spring Home Improvements

(NC) With spring time comes the blooming of flowers and the sound of hammers as Canadian homeowners get to work on home renovation projects. "Homeowners could save up to 30% on their energy bills* by simply investing in a few energy-efficient home improvement projects," says Andy Goyda, an insulation expert at Owens Corning.

The Owens Corning team makes a few suggestions for some simple spring renovations:

Add insulation to areas of the home

It's a simple equation: adding insulation can help reduce energy usage while helping to increase comfort. As large home improvement projects, try supplementing the insulation on basement walls, in your crawl space, and under floors. It's a great way to minimize heat transfer and save energy.

Insulate Your Pipes

Multi-Purpose Insulation is the perfect size to insulate pipes and to wrap metal ducts. It's the same as Pink Fiber Glass Insulation only in a convenient small bag. Insulation in these areas can reduce heat loss and minimize the irritating sound of running water and air flow.

Patch Up the Attic Gap

Adding a layer of Pink fiberglass Insulation batts in the attic is an easy and cost-effective way to reduce heating costs. Remember, the higher the R-Value, the greater the insulating power.

More information on household insulation is available online at www.owenscorning.ca, or toll-free at 1-800-GET-PINK.

*According to the Government of Canada, you can reduce your home's heating and cooling costs by up to 30%. Learn more at <http://www.climatechange.gc.ca>.

Savings vary depending on the original amount of insulation in your home, climate, house size, air leaks, and personal energy use and living habits.
- News Canada

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The Benefits Of Insulating A Home

(NC) If you've purchased a house recently, you might be planning some renovations. These could include personalizing a room by painting it or replacing old carpeting. However, there are less obvious projects that are just as important, including ensuring that your home is properly insulated.

"Some older houses might require upgrading while newer houses might be missing insulation in key areas," says Chris Adamkowski, an insulation expert at Owens Corning. "Understanding some of the benefits of proper insulation will help you determine what's needed for your new home."

Comfort - A major benefit of insulation is that it will help keep temperatures more consistent throughout your home. Too cool or hot temperatures inside are negative influences on your comfort level. Another comfort factor to consider is noise control. By installing QuietZone acoustical batts and resilient channels or QuietZone Studs as part of an interior wall or floor system, unwanted noises can be significantly reduced.

Cost Reduction - Insulating your home properly will help reduce heating and cooling costs. In winter, less energy is needed to keep the house warm, and in summer your air conditioning needs will be diminished as well. Simply put, there will be less chance of you losing your cool over expensive energy bills.

Environment - A well-insulated home is one that helps to manage energy consumption, and that's a good thing for everybody. To make sure that your indoor environment is also healthy, choose insulation that is Greenguard certified. Greenguard certification means that the product will not have a significant impact on the indoor air quality of a building. It means that the product is being tested on a regular basis for the emission of specific air pollutants and is found to perform within the Greenguard indoor air quality standards. Owens Corning Pink fiberglass batt insulation and QuietZone acoustic batt insulation are certified by the Greenguard Environmental Institute to meet stringent indoor air quality standards. More information on household insulation is available online at www.owenscorning.ca, or toll-free 1-800-GET-PINK.

- News Canada

Rekindle Passion With A Romantic Bedroom Decor Home Design Trends

(NC) In today's fast-paced lifestyle it's becoming easy for couples to lose themselves in the mundane routine of every day living. It's becoming more and more difficult for us to find the fire that burns in our relationships after the hectic work day, trips to daycare, dance recitals and soccer practice.

One solution couples across the country have found to rekindle the flame in their love lives is through a romantic bedroom makeover. "It's amazing the effect a change in décor to our bedroom had on our psyche. It put us



in a more relaxed and intimate frame of mind," said Lena Murphy, a working mom who recently redecorated her and husband's master bedroom in a more romantic theme.

According to Dominique Pépin,

Senior Brand Manager at Sico and Chairholder of the Color Marketing Group, the first step in creating a romantic atmosphere is colour.

"A romantic room needs to exude emotional appeal. It needs to have the ability to elicit emotional responses. Romance is all about the senses and creating the perfect mood," says Pépin. "Choosing the right colours may be the single most important factor in creating the mood of your room."

For many years psychologists have been studying the effects of colours on mood and believe that colours play an important role in eliciting responses. For example, the colour red is a very inspirational colour that can evoke passion and desire. It is no accident that red is the chosen symbolic colour for Valentine's Day as it is often called the most romantic of colours. For interior design, however, a less intense, softer tone of red such as Sico's Rose Essence (6049-75) is far more conducive to romance than the pure hue, explains Mrs. Pépin.

Purple is another colour which is definitively romantic because of its passionate, unpredictable and dreamy characteristics. All of which are featured in Sico's Purple Suspense (6045-83). Less intense tones of orange such as apricot and peach are often included to create a romantic environment because of their purity and innocence qualities.



Blues and greens are calming, intimate colours ideal for romantic decors. Greens like Sico's Kyoto Spring (6168-21) can be used in a room to create a feeling of relaxation. According to Pépin, green is also historically a colour connected with fertility. "In this way it may have a powerful ability to inspire passion in both the conscious and unconscious minds," she adds.

Pink can also have a very beneficial subconscious effect. "Generally pink causes people to feel happier, calmer, and more romantic at a deep psychological level," she says. But depending on your partner's taste and on the hue of pink, this colour may leave some males feeling uncomfortable if this colour is dominant.

Using Sico's romantic colour palette as your inspiration you too can turn your master bedroom into an amorous haven. Before you take the leap, test out your colour choices by surfing to the on-line Virtual Decorator, at www.sico.ca.

- News Canada

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How Much Does Your Mortgage Cost?

(NC) It's a simple question that most people can't easily answer. They know their home's purchase price, their mortgage interest rate and how much they pay their lender each month. But how much is their mortgage really costing them?



According to a survey released by Manulife Bank of Canada*, fewer than one-third of Canadians understand how much their mortgage actually costs.

In that survey, 70 per cent of respondents either didn't know or guessed less than the actual cost when asked how much they might pay for a \$200,000 mortgage at six per cent, paid over 25 years. The answer: including principal and interest, the actual cost to borrow is more than \$385,000, or almost double the purchase price.

Luckily, there are a few ways to reduce that bill. Making frequent, larger, and extra lump-sum payments are some ways homeowners can pay down their mortgage faster and pay less in interest costs. Another way to possibly trim interest payments and pay down your mortgage sooner is by opening an all-in-one account, where your savings and income are applied first against the debt or principal to help reduce your interest costs.

To see how it works, try out an online calculator at manulifeone.ca.

More information about all-in-one accounts is available online at manulifeone.ca, or toll-free at 1-877-765-2265.

* OMNITEL/Maritz Research survey (August 2006) - News Canada

Create Curve Appeal At Home

(NC) Contemporary design was de rigueur a few years ago and still remains strong today. However, the trend is slowly shifting towards more organic, curved and natural lines as designers are finding that fluid shapes are translating well into most design motifs.

Bathroom fixtures with curved lines and sleek silhouettes are very current and add great juxtaposition if paired with bold and modern accessories. The key is to strike the right balance between curved and straight lines throughout your space. Too many curved lines can draw the eyes all over the place, so pepper bold straight lines throughout to create a balanced harmonious feel.

Keep your curves under control by limiting curved lines to baths, shower receptors or sinks and faucets, but not all at once. Bathroom fixtures should always be as beautiful as they are functional and a bathtub with lines that form and follow the body will satisfy both your design and comfort needs. Pair a curved whirlpool with a contemporary faucet and minimal accessories to keep your bathroom stylish and tranquil.

Hytec, a Kohler company, manufactures bathtubs and whirlpools that boast subtle lines that are big on design. These bathtubs are not only beautiful they are extremely durable and easy-to-clean ensuring that you are guaranteed years of continued use. Hytec's elegant Brindisi whirlpool has room for two and can be installed to most bathroom set ups quickly and easily.

No matter what design aesthetic suits your taste and lifestyle it's important to consider function, durability and comfort. The bathroom is one of the most used rooms in your home and should be outfitted with products that can meet your needs and stand the test of time. It's also not a bad idea to consult a designer for a professional unbiased opinion before going ahead with any transformations. What may look terrific in a magazine may not work in your space.

More information is available online at www.hytec.net. - News Canada

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Handy Hints For Building Your House

By J.C. Carroll

(NC) The decision to build your own home puts you in control of the design, the materials, and the workmanship. Imagine building a home, for example, which is at least twice as energy-efficient as neighbouring homes. Or one with walls that are three times more sound resistant, up to four times more fire resistant, and up to nine times stronger than typical wood framed walls.

Information to acquire this for your new house can be found at nudura.com. Here are some additional handy hints as you begin:

Build for resale. No matter how long you intend to stay, don't build to your specific family requirements only. A single loft bedroom with basement kitchen may be perfect for you, but a home of this kind could be very difficult to sell.

Use the best materials your budget will allow. Superior materials provide the best environment for you, and it also pays off at resale. In greatest demand right now, for example, are materials and methods with a commitment to sustainability and energy efficiency and that is achieved with the newest technology in the use of concrete. The Nudura building system for example, provides double the insulation by constructing walls with pre-assembled, concrete forms made with foam panels (EPS) held together with polypropylene webs and filled with reinforced concrete. Combine that with the use of ceiling and floor technology creating an entire building envelope that is design-friendly, much faster, and with less construction waste compared with traditional building methods. Another advantage to utilizing concrete when building is its defense against mould. The Nudura technology does not support mould growth due to lack of gaps in the walls where mould grows keeping the air in your home fresh and cleaner. Money is saved because of durability and energy efficiency and the resulting structure is up to nine times stronger, provides

far more fire protection, far more sound insulation, and can produce energy savings of up to 70 percent in both heating and cooling. Don't overbuild. Buy a land lot in a neighbourhood that suits the design you have in mind. Owning the biggest and most expensive house in the area may be wonderful for you, but future buyers may not think so.



Monitor the progress. Stay involved. Paying attention to the materials used and quality control gives you an invaluable base of knowledge about your home. And, if mistakes are being made it is better to catch them at a time they can be fixed.

Prepare for delays. Try to be as flexible as possible on the completion date. Most construction projects involve dozens of workers, suppliers and subcontractors. Delays are common and since constructing a building is systematic, each delay backs up the entire process. Building with concrete has been known in some cases to cut construction time in half when dealing with trained professionals.

- News Canada



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Pre-Delivery Inspection Is Important Before You Move In

(NC) There is a critical first step all new home buyers in Ontario must take when a new home is ready for occupancy: the Pre-Delivery Inspection or PDI. Much more than just a quick tour, the PDI represents the first opportunity for buyers to view their home in its completed state and thoroughly assess its condition.

All builders of new homes and condominiums in Ontario are required by Tarion Warranty Corporation to conduct a PDI with their customers prior to a home's date of possession. Tarion is a private corporation that protects home buyers according to the terms of the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act, which requires that builders provide warranty coverage on every new home built in the province.

"The PDI is an important starting-off point in the new home warranty process," according to Carol Metcalfe, Manager of Claims at Tarion. "Most builders are committed to constructing a quality product, but today's new homes are large and complex, made up of many different systems and components. The PDI therefore provides homeowners with a prime opportunity for assessing a home's overall workmanship and features."

The PDI takes place when your new home is ready for occupancy, making it the first opportunity to view your completed home and assess its condition before you take possession. During the PDI, you and/or an individual you select to attend (your designate) will be given the opportunity to examine the interior and exterior of the home with your builder or your builder's representative present. The objective of this inspection is to make a written record of all items that are incomplete, damaged, missing, inaccessible or not operating properly.

It is the builder's responsibility to explain how the various systems in your

Should You Stay Or Should You Go?

(NC) Many Canadians wrestle with trying to decide if they should buy a new house or simply renovate. If you're one of them, these five questions could help you make up your mind.

1. Can your current home be adjusted to fit your needs? Is your property big enough for an addition or will your foundation handle the weight of an extra floor?
 2. Has your lifestyle changed since you bought your home? Is your neighbourhood child-friendly? Has a job change increased your commute to work?
 3. Has your neighbourhood changed? Has it been re-zoned and is now too noisy? Was the woodlot out back cleared to accommodate more housing?
 4. Will a renovation add real value to your home for the long term? An addition might meet your short-term needs, but will it fit into your neighbourhood and help increase your home's value?
 5. How will you finance your decision? Can you afford to move? Is there a better way to finance a renovation than with a loan or line of credit?
- Regardless of whether you choose to stay and renovate or move to a new home, an all-in-one account such as Manulife One might answer your financial questions.

If you decide to renovate, it can be a flexible line of credit that is easier to repay than traditional loans. If you decide to move, consider applying for a Manulife One account. It could help you repay your debt sooner than with traditional mortgage products.

Whether you decide to move or renovate, think about renovating your mortgage first. More information on all-in-one accounts is available online at manulifeone.ca, or toll-free at 1-877-765-2265.

- News Canada

home work including the heating, electrical, plumbing and air conditioning thus making the PDI a good opportunity for your builder to go through them with you. It is very important that you understand how to operate your home's systems because not using them properly could affect your warranty coverage.

During the PDI, homeowners should carefully examine the home both inside and out. While inside, they should look for things like chips in brickwork and siding, whether window screens have been installed, and the appearance of the driveway and landscaping.

Additional information on the PDI, including a complete list of things to look for during the inspection, can be found in 'Getting Ready for the Pre-Delivery Inspection,' a brochure produced by Tarion. Copies can be obtained by calling 1-877-9TARION or downloaded from the website at www.tarion.com. - News Canada

Meet Your Match With The Right Air Conditioner

(NC)—With summer drawing nearer, now is the time to cozy up with a central air conditioner. Consider these helpful tips from Reliance Home Comfort, to make your system selection a breeze.

- High on efficiency: Choose a unit with a higher SEER (seasonal energy efficiency rating) to save on energy and efficiency.
- Low on sound: Select a central air conditioner with a low outdoor sound rating – no higher than 7.6B (bels).
- Size matters: Determine the cooling load necessary for your home. An oversized unit will result in an unpleasantly cold and damp home, while an undersized system won't keep you cool enough.
- Installation: Installing the unit correctly is just as important as choosing the right unit. Be sure to follow the manufacturer's guidelines carefully.
- No fuss, no muss: Consider renting a central air conditioner. Check out www.reliancehomecomfort.com for more details. - News Canada



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With some of the most innovative flooring in the industry, you can rest assured that your flooring supplied by Domus is not only beautiful but is in a class by itself. Whether your interest is in Tigerwood, Cumaru, Jatoba, or any other of our superior flooring products, we can meet all of your needs. Our flooring collection comes from all over the world so you can be confident that your floor is a cut above all of the rest. If tile is more your style, don't worry, because we have that as well.

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Home Improvement Plans Should Include Landscaping

The term "home improvement" seems synonymous with structural home renovations and interior decorating. What can be forgotten, especially in the excitement of building a new home, is that exterior decorating can be just as uplifting and make as significant an impact on the "feel" of the home as what happens in the interior. In fact, the exterior of a home sets the tone for how others view your property – is it formal? rustic? relaxed? contemporary? Perhaps different areas of the property each have a slightly different theme. Exterior decorating, or landscaping, can be as simple as lawn installation and a few shrub beds, to a more elaborate design including stone walls, water gardens and walkways. It all comes down to deciding how you wish to develop various theme areas or "rooms" in your yard. Deciding how you wish to use various areas of your yard helps to determine what landscaping features are needed to complete the dream. The best projects come from a plan, whether it involves a consultation with a landscape designer or simply collecting ideas from magazines and gardening/landscaping shows. What's important is

that the landscaping, is thought out before the shovel is in hand. It saves the "two steps back" when all you really want is the "one step forward"! Along with larger landscape features like walls, lawns, shrub beds, and water gardens, accents like metal or wooden sculptures and decorative flower pots are making inroads as the finishing touches for a complete exterior decorating project. These items work especially well when there is a space not quite large enough or suitable for a plant, but the area needs "that little something" to have a look of completion.

Whatever your style or budget, don't forget to look out your windows at the "exterior rooms" to be furnished and take the same care and planning as you do with each interior room. After all, the outside is the first "room" people see when visiting and you want to make a good first impression!

- Lorna Pond, Urban Landscaping, Ltd.



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The 48 Hour Facelift: Give Your Bathroom A New Look In One Weekend

(NC) Today's TV shows often promise "a new bathroom in just two days!" However, while offering great ideas they also feature a large crew. But, with some planning and 48 hours you can give your bathroom a dramatic facelift.

Step 1: Imagine The Possibilities. (Total time: 2 to 3 hours)

Grab a magazine and get inspired. Then, select paint colors for the walls and cabinets and visualize coordinating colors for accent items, like towels. Determine your tastes contemporary, traditional or transitional. This will help when choosing items such as faucets and accessories. Luckily, manufacturers such as Moen offer a variety of faucet collections to meet your desired tastes. Moen collections such as Thea and Bayhill are available at home improvement stores nationwide.

Step 2: Visit Your Home Improvement Store. (Total time: 2 to 3 hours)
Create a checklist before heading to the store:

- Paint primer • Semi-gloss paint • Caulk • Faucet
- Showerhead • Bathroom accessories (towel bars, paper holders, etc.)
- Cabinet hardware • Light fixture • Shower curtain
- Towels • Throw rug

Step 3: Change Faucet and Showerhead. (Total time: 2 to 3 hours)
Changing a faucet is quick and easy. Measure between the right and left handle holes on the sink. For a 4-inch spread, choose a centerset faucet.



If your sink has one hole or an 8-inch spread, choose a widespread faucet.

Replacing the showerhead takes only minutes and creates dramatic results you'll enjoy everyday. Try a new rainshower, such as Moen's Inspire™ 9-inch Rainshower, or a multi-function fixed or handheld shower to provide a variety of invigorating body sprays. Simply screw off the old showerhead, add thread seal tape and screw on the new one.

Step 4: Paint. (Total time: 8 hours)

Prep work is a necessity. Create a clean seam along baseboards, tubs, sinks and countertops with a fresh bead of caulk. Next, prime the walls and apply a semi-gloss or bathroom-specific paint.

Step 5: Add On The Details. (Total time: 1 hour)

When shopping, look for matching accessories, cabinet hardware and lighting fixtures. Some brands, such as Inspirations by Moen, offer a wide variety of accessories, such as towel bars, pivoting paper holders, mirrors, curved shower rods and robe hooks that can tie the room together for a coordinated look.



Now, bring in the soft finishing touches: a new shower curtain and fresh towel sets. Finally with a few decorative items, like soaps and candles, your new bath is complete.

For more information about Moen products call 1-800-465-6130.

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To Call Or Not To Call

(NC) Let's face it - some of us weren't born with the 'handywoman gene.' The very thought of home repair without professional help is terrifying. But Homebasics.ca knows there are some small projects even the most un-handy of people can complete with ease, like these three do-it-yourself tasks.

Fix a hole in your wall - Simply grab some putty, spread it over the hole with a knife (or any other flat object), let it dry and then sand with sandpaper until smooth.

Replace a cracked tile - Grab a knife. Carefully chip out the damaged part of the tile. Spread a thin layer of mortar where the chip used to be. Put the chip back. Seal with a liquid bonding material.

Fix a running toilet - If water keeps rushing into your toilet bowl (the never-ending flush), check if the flapper covering the hole at the bottom of the tank is down. If not, try lengthening the chain it's on. If the valve is closed, but your toilet is still hissing, bend down the float arm (the big bobbly ball on a stick), so that the water level is lowered.

Your local home centre can help you find the products you'll need, and sales staff are great for answering questions. A few small projects, and you'll be calling yourself Ms. Fix-it in no time.

- News Canada



Exit Drills Protect Your Family

(NC) While fires themselves may not always be foreseeable or preventable, in many cases the injuries they cause can be prevented with a family escape plan.

Of course, one of the important steps in fire prevention is to install smoke detectors and check them monthly. But having these safety devices is not enough. According to fire experts, once a smoke detector sounds, you and other members of your household may have less than three minutes to escape. It's critical to have an emergency escape plan and rehearse it regularly:

Chart the Plan: Draw a floor plan of your home, one for each level of the house. Label bedrooms, staircases, hallways, and rooms that could be used as fire escapes.

Survey Your Home: Check each bedroom for two possible escape routes. If you live in an apartment building, do not plan to use the elevator to escape. Make sure everyone, including children and the elderly, are able to open and fit through alternate escape routes like windows. Security bars should have a quick-release for emergencies. Consider keeping fold-away emergency ladders for upper-story windows.

Map Escape Routes: Use markers and arrows to mark the preferred escape routes from each bedroom. Use different coloured markers to show alternate emergency routes. Chart a place outdoors for everyone to meet after they exit. Consider charting individual plans for each bedroom of the house to keep each plan neat and uncluttered.

Remember Guest Rooms: Chart a plan for guest rooms and areas that are used to host sleepovers and other gatherings.

Discuss and Practice the Plan: Hold family meetings to explain the plan. Practice the escape routes at least once a year, particularly when they involve hazardous exits, such as windows.

Families might never need to implement such a plan, but the one time they do, it will certainly be worth it. Remember, when in doubt, always consult a professional. More home safety information and maintenance information is available online at www.housemaster.com. - News Canada

Keep Your Fireplace Fit

(NC) To avoid unexpected mishaps that could ruin an evening around the fireplace, observe some simple precautions.

- Clean fireplaces annually, preferably by a certified chimney sweep.
- Use safety screens and doors for wood-burning fireplaces.
- Before lighting any fire, check to see that flue damper is open.
- Only burn dry, seasoned wood. Green or wet wood will not burn cleanly, increasing the rate of creosote buildup.
- Do not burn wrapping papers or evergreens in the fireplace. These ignite suddenly and burn intensely, increasing risk of a flash fire.
- Use care with "fire salts," which produce coloured flames when thrown on wood fires. Keep them away from children and avoid inhaling smoke from their flames.
- Do not leave the fire unattended, and make sure you have at least one working smoke/fire detector.



Remember, when in doubt, always consult a professional. More home safety information and maintenance information is available online at www.housemaster.com.

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Creative Family Outdoor Projects With Mom In Mind

(NC) Taking mom to dinner or buying her flowers are always popular ways of showing her how much you care. We all know moms are busy and need help getting to overdue tasks, so for something different, why not work on a family outdoor project together or surprise her with a small renovation? Delight mom with the following ideas from The Home Depot Canada to help you get started on a fun, family project:



Plant a herb garden.

Creating and growing a small herb garden is an easy task for families to work on together and has many advantages. Herbs from the garden provide fresh flavour to home cooked meals, add a pleasant aroma to the backyard and can be easily contained in a planter. A cedar planter is perfect for growing herbs as it is naturally resistant to rot or decay. Consider herbs such as rosemary, basil, oregano and parsley and remember to position your herb garden so it gets plenty of sunlight.

De-clutter the garage.

Put a smile on mom's face by cleaning out the garage and moving garden equipment to a newly-assembled storage shed. Utilize the space with several layers of shelving to keep her garden supplies organized. Choose a shed that has large front doors for easy accessibility, is weather resistant and offers locks for security. The Home Depot has plenty of storage sheds that will help minimize the clutter in the garage.

Feed the birds.

If mom is an animal lover, helping her attract birds to the backyard can be a great surprise that lasts the whole Summer and selecting the right bird feeder can help. Consider choosing a feeder with a metal door that blocks squirrels from accessing seeds so that small birds get access to the food. This is a sure way to keep those pesky squirrels from bothering mom's bird watching.

The path to sanctuary.

Adding a stone walkway to any residence will add to the look of the backyard aesthetically and can even increase the value of your home. Begin by considering where you want to build, the shape you want the path to take and always remember to build it wide enough so two people can walk on it side-by-side. Remember, the most important part of any safe and durable walkway begins with a solid foundation. Sand, gravel, flagstone and the correct tools are all you need to get started on the right foot.

- News Canada

Top 10 Tips For Wonderful Windows

(NC) Take a look at the Top 10 "Dos and Don'ts" for exquisite windows courtesy of Mary Dobson, spokesperson for industry leader, Levolor:

1. Do.....think about function first when you make a decision for your windows. Consider factors such as privacy, light control, access to the patio and more.
2. Don't.....be afraid to mix patterns, textures and colours. Remember, a combination of at least three makes the room interesting.
3. Do.....aim for a consistent look on the front of your home. As I always say, the white side of the shade faces the road.
4. Don't.....skimp on fullness when choosing drapery. Double fullness is right for a casual look, triple fullness gives a more formal, sophisticated look.
5. Do.....choose hardware and finials that reinforce the style you are creating. It's all about the details.
6. Don't.....leave cords hanging from your window blinds in rooms where there are children and pets. Cordless or remote control blinds, or a simple cleat, prevent accidents from happening.
7. Do.....install blinds so that they overlap the window casing. Also opt for blackout lining for maximum energy efficiency or room darkening.
8. Don't.....leave windows bare. The sun will fade your furniture, floors, carpets and artwork. The longer you leave your windows bare, the longer it will take you to adjust to the most simple window covering.
9. Do.....trust your own taste. It's your space. Don't canvas the entire neighbourhood or your yoga class for approval.
10. Don't.....be afraid to ask for professional help. The experts at Levolor for example will often will provide home shopping services to be sure you make a good decision.

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Create A Quiet Space For Your Home Office

(NC) A growing number of Canadians are realizing the benefits of working from home. Technologies such as wireless networks, video-conferencing and high-speed Internet have made it easier for Canadians to work from the comfort of their own home office. However, creating a suitable home office environment involves more than simply buying the right desk and computer.

"A home office can be built, or renovated, to help minimize distracting noises, both for the worker and for others who live in the home," suggests Chris Adamkowski, an insulation expert for Owens Corning Canada. "Noise, whether coming from inside or outside your home, can affect your productivity. By properly installing QuietZone Acoustical batts and resilient channels as part of a wall or floor system, unwanted noises can be significantly reduced."

Do-it-yourself renovators can create a quiet office space by following these steps:

1. Install QuietZone Acoustical batts in interior walls between your office and other rooms, as well as in ceilings between floors. Install Pink fiberglass batts in all exterior walls.
 2. Fasten resilient metal channels across the wall studs and the ceiling joists enclosing the office space, according to the manufacturer's instructions.
 3. Wrap pipes with insulation to ensure that you won't be disturbed by the sound of running water.
 4. Fasten drywall to the resilient metal channels. Make certain that screws do not come in to contact with the framing.
 5. Fill in larger holes or gaps around outlets and switches. Apply Acoustic Caulking along the perimeter of the wall to provide a proper air seal. In addition to these steps, homeowners should consider installing solid-core doors to help cut down on noise transmission.
- Renovating a home office to reduce noise can be an easy, and cost effective do-it-yourself project that can help homeowners enjoy a peaceful work environment.

More information on household insulation or noise reduction is available online at www.owenscorning.ca, or toll-free at 1-800-GET-PINK

- News Canada



How To Eliminate Excess Moisture In Your Bathroom

(NC) There's nothing like a long relaxing hot bath or a soothing shower to revitalize the body and spirit. The problem is these necessary indulgences can also lead to steamy mirrors, damp walls and fogged windows - true signs of excess moisture and that your bathroom isn't properly ventilated.

These signs of excess moisture are more than just annoying, they could also indicate developing problems like mold and mildew, ruined insulation, and wood rot. Spot ventilation solutions from manufacturers like Broan can clear the air quickly and efficiently, removing potential problems before they invite themselves into your home.


Today's homes are built airtight for efficiency. But that means moisture and airborne pollutants stay where they are unless they are vented away. Eliminating excess moisture keeps your home dry and comfortable and can help avoid mold and mildew. Volatile organic compounds (VOCs), "outgas" from construction materials as well as allergens, dust, cooking vapor and what the kids bring home from school are more reasons why good ventilation is critical.

"Often times customers are confused by what they need in order to adequately ventilate the bathroom," explained Matthew Cripps, product manager for bath fans at Broan-NuTone Canada. "Using a simple rule of thumb: one square foot equals the need of one CFM. Therefore an average bathroom of 100 square feet would require a minimum of 100 CFM to get proper ventilation."





Other things to consider when buying a bath fan or home ventilation system are quiet operation, blower power, and decorative design, or you may want something that's virtually invisible.

Conventional fans are noisier and less appealing visually than newer products like the Broan Quiet Series Fans, Cripps added. The Quiet Series Fans offer extremely quiet operation while also consuming less energy ultimately costing less over time. And this is important if you're going to spend all your time reconnecting in your new bathroom spa. More information on bath fans can be found online at www.broan.ca.

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Keep Your Foundation Fit

(NC) Most homeowners view their foundation or concrete floor slab as a massive and invulnerable object. It is indeed quite strong; however, foundation damage can occur from tree roots or detrimental soil conditions; and of course, water intrusion is also a concern.

Some simple tips can help keep foundations fit and solid for many years to come. Many foundation threats can be avoided with some long-term planning. Avoid planting trees and even large shrubs close to your foundation. Over the years, growing roots could push against foundation walls and draw moisture from the soil under foundation footings.

Water seepage problems or even heavy stains or efflorescence on foundation walls can indicate the presence of soil-moisture conditions that can contribute to foundation movement. Efflorescence is a white or gray powder that forms on masonry surfaces and is typically an indication that moisture is or was present in the wall.

Checking and improving the exterior grading and drainage is a first step to keeping moisture away and minimizing the potential for excessive soil pressures that could adversely affect the foundation. Maintain a positive slope away from the foundation (a minimum 15 degree angle is usually enough) so that roof and surface water will not seep in.

Also check your gutters and downspouts to be sure they are functioning properly and direct water away from the foundation. If these basic measures do not work, subsurface foundation drains or other grading and drainage work may be needed.

If your basement or crawlspace has a sump pit and pump, be certain that there are no obstructions near the pump that could impede its operation. Be sure that the pump's discharge line directs the water far away from your foundation wall; otherwise, you could end up with "re-circulating" water. If you are in an area vulnerable to power outages and you rely heavily on your sump pump, consider supplementing it with a battery-powered backup model.

Paying close attention to current and possible future stresses on the foundation can prevent costly and time-intensive repairs in the future. A home's structure is only as strong as its foundation, so keeping it strong and watertight should be every homeowner's priority. Remember, these tips are only general guidelines. Since each house and situation is different, contact a professional if you have questions about a specific condition or issue. More home safety and maintenance information is available online at www.housemaster.com. - News Canada

All This From Just One Blind

The beauty of sheers, flexible light control and it all stacks in a flash by Siobhan O'Connor

(NC) There are a whole lot of reasons for dressing up a window or a patio walk-out. One is to control the natural light pouring in from outside, another is for privacy, and yet another is enhance the look of the room. You can do all of that with just one installation, using Perceptions, from Levolor Window Fashions. It's a freely-adjustable vertical blind with a sheer fabric attached to the front of the vertical vane. It also comes with a BackStacker, a unique feature from Levolor that sweeps this blind smoothly out of the way when you'd rather have a clear view of the outside.

"Perceptions is very flexible, with a softer, less techno look that will harmonize with just about any room style," says Mary Dobson, spokesperson in Canada for Levolor Window Fashions, and a frequent presenter on Citytv's CityLine. "This year we've added a selection of stronger, more vibrant, colours to the range of fabrics Mocha, Dijon, Everglade and Chili Spice will all look great with 2007 palettes. In all, there are 22 fabrics to choose from."

Choice of fabric is key to the success of your Perceptions window treatment. The range stretches from the flimsiest of sheers, almost transparent, to the semi-opaque "Seclusion" collection. And this year, for the first time, Perceptions fabrics will also be available by the yard. Mary reminds us that the "layered look" is increasingly popular in window treatments, and now it's possible to make your own matching drapes and swags to complete the look you want.

"You'll also find a wider selection of valances," says Mary. "There are fabric valances to give a more decorative look, and a new collection of rods in five different finishes, with a variety of end caps and finials 15 options in total. Simple or ornate, laid back or bold and beautiful, Perceptions will adapt beautifully to any style or any location."

You can see more online at www.levolor.ca - News Canada




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Finding The Right Barbecue This Summer

(NC) The warm summer weather is upon us and this means backyard barbecues and gatherings with family and friends are beginning. To help choose the most appropriate barbecue for your family, the barbecue team at Canadian Tire has put together some information to make it easy. There are a wide range of barbecues available, each with different features. It's important to consider your needs when making your decision.

Natural Gas A natural gas barbecue runs off of the gas line from your house. It is easy to light, operate and clean. It also gives you the ability to control the cooking temperature and is relatively inexpensive to maintain because you do not need to purchase or refill gas tanks. A natural gas barbecue should always be installed by a trained gas technician.

Propane A propane barbecue runs off of a propane tank and many are portable and easy to operate. When considering this kind of barbecue, keep in mind that tanks need to be filled and it's often difficult to know when they are going to run out. It's best to look for propane tanks that have a gas gauge, which will let you know when gas is low. Try to keep an extra propane tank around, just in case you run out of fuel in the middle of grilling or entertaining.

Added Features

There are many value-added features that can make outdoor cooking easy and more enjoyable.

Cooking Surface There are many different types of cooking surfaces. Chrome is widely available, however is hard to clean and can rust. A porcelain coated surface is non stick, making it easier to use and clean, however keep in mind that it may chip over time. Stainless steel and cast iron are also available and are very durable. Cast iron takes longer to heat up, but retains heat better than stainless steel. When examining cooking surfaces, look for a thicker, heavier-gauge cooking grate which will last longer and distribute and retain heat better.

Rotisserie Burners Rotisserie burners are used for spit roasting items such as chicken, roasts and turkey.

“ Side burners Side burners are a great feature for those who want to



enjoy the convenience and experience of total meal preparation outdoors. Whether you are using your Side burner for light cooking such as warming sauces, Wok cooking or boiling corn, you will need to look for a Side burner offering higher BTU's.

Rear Rotisserie Burner - Expand your cooking potential with the addition of a Rear rotisserie infrared burner. A ceramic infrared burner will perfectly sear meat from the outside, trapping all of the flavours and juices of the meat as it self bastes to produce succulent results every time. A rotisserie kit is required, so look for a kit that includes a spit rod and forks for maximum taste.

Infrared Sear Burners These burners get extremely hot. They are used to seal in flavor and create restaurant-style grilling. Great for steak!

What is BTU?

BTU stands for British Thermal Units and is a measurement of the amount of heat created by the burner. The number of BTUs should not be the deciding factor for choosing a barbecue. A grill with higher BTUs doesn't necessarily produce more heat. Other factors include the size of the grill and how well the cooking surface holds and distributes heat. Don't buy a grill just because it has high BTUs. Make sure you compare BTUs with the size and the shape of the grill. Smaller more compact grills can produce higher cooking temperatures with lower BTUs. Remember that the higher the BTUs the more frequently you will be getting your tank filled. - News Canada

Conserving Energy In Your Home This Summer

(NC) The warm Canadian summer is quickly approaching and many Canadians are looking for ways to stay cool at home and reduce energy costs at the same time. The energy management team at Canadian Tire has the following tips for beating the heat without breaking the bank:

• **Thermostat timer** A programmable thermostat timer will allow you to minimize the number of hours your air conditioner is running, but still keep the house cool. There's no need to keep the air conditioner running if no one is home. Program it to turn on about an hour before you get home so it's comfortable when you get in. A programmable thermostat can save up to 33 percent on energy costs.

• **Dimmers** Install dimmers on all your lights. They can reduce energy consumption by 20 percent and with the long summer hours of daylight, you don't need the full strength of bulbs.

• **Motion sensors on exterior lights** Installing motion sensor lights on the exterior of your home means the lights will automatically turn off when not detecting motion.

• **Energy efficient light bulbs** CFL bulbs use up to 78 percent less energy and save money on your electricity. CFL bulbs have the advantage of lasting up to ten times longer than traditional bulbs and, because you won't have to replace them as often, you'll create less landfill. This

quick and easy solution will pay off in the long run both in your pocket and for the environment.

• **Low flow items in the bathroom** - Switch to a low flow toilet and showerhead and save up to 52,000 litres of water per year. Fixing any leaky faucets can also reduce wasted water.

• **EnergyStar appliances** When purchasing new appliances look for the EnergyStar symbol.

• **Research** You can learn more about ways to save energy, money and the planet online at canadiantire.ca/advancegreen.

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Give Your Yard A Fresh Look For Spring

(NC) With warmer temperatures on their way, many Canadians will be heading outdoors to work on their yard. To help you get started, the lawn and garden team at Canadian Tire has the following tips to point you in the right direction this season.

- Test your trimmer to make sure it's working properly and doesn't need any new parts. If it's time to trade in the old trimmer, consider the following before investing in a new one:
- The size of the area to be trimmed.
- If the trimming area has heavy or light grass and brush coverage.
- The versatility you will need from trimmer attachments.
- A trimmer with spring assist starting technology, such as the Troy Bilt trimmer available at your local Canadian Tire, will make it easier to start on the first try.
- Before using the lawn mower for the first time this Spring, check the following:
- The blades for sharpness and damage.
- Make sure the cutting deck is clear of old debris.
- That the pull cords are in good working condition.
- The spark plugs. Spark plugs should be checked annually to make sure that your lawn mower will not misfire.
- The oil levels. A lawn mower should be given an oil change annually.
- Start your garden out right by tilling the soil. The Yardworks cordless tiller is a tiller and edger in one, making it a great investment.
- Rid your eavestroughs of leftover leaves and debris that have built up through the fall and winter. This will help melting snow, ice and rainwater run freely.
- Check garden hoses for leaks and store hose neatly in an accessible place. To help make the chore of winding the hose easier, use a self-winding reel.
- When choosing garden tools, look for ones with gel grip handles and ergonomic designs that will be easier on both your hands and your back.
- News Canada



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Everyone Knows How To Use A Ladder, Right?

(NC) Using a ladder to hang pictures and decorations, change a light bulb, clean gutters, or trim overhanging tree branches is much safer than using a chair or other makeshift booster. However, every year thousands of emergency room visits and even deaths are caused by ladder-related accidents. Here are some issues to avoid:

• **Overreaching:** Leaning too far to the side or climbing too high on the rungs.

• **"Walking the Ladder":** A dangerous practice where a ladder user decides to try to move a ladder while standing on it. The user stays atop the ladder and attempts to shuffle the ladder's legs to the desired position.

• **Inappropriate Ladder Type:** Pay attention to a ladder's ratings. Duty ratings define the load-bearing weight of ladders. They are designed to support one person plus materials and tools.

• **Insecure Footing:** Check that ladders have secure footing. This helps prevent slippage and tilting.

• **Electrical Dangers:** If you are working on or near electrical lines, use non-conductive wood or fiberglass ladders.

• **Adjustable Ladders:** If using an extension ladder, stepladder, or multi-use articulating or telescoping ladders, make sure all latches are locked in place before stepping on the ladder and use extreme care when closing to avoid injury to fingers or hands.

Remember, when in doubt, always consult a professional. More home safety information and maintenance information is available online at www.housemaster.com.

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Choosing The Right Renovation Can Add Value To Your Home

(NC) Renovations can be both exciting and overwhelming at times. So before you take on such an endeavor it is important to assess the reason for your renovation. If one of your objectives is to increase the value of your home, it is always beneficial to have an understanding of the different types of renovations that will provide you with the most return on your investment.

The four greatest playback potentials are considered to be:

- Bathroom Renovation (75-100%)
- Kitchen Renovation (75-100%)
- Interior Painting (50-100%)
- Exterior Painting (50-100%)

The ten average playback potentials are considered to be:

- Roof shingle replacement (50 80%)
- Furnace/heating system (50 80%)
- Basement renovation (50 75%)
- Recreation room addition (50 75%)
- Installing a fireplace (50 75%)
- Flooring (50 75%)
- Constructing a garage (50 75%)
- Window/door replacement (50 75%)
- Building a deck (50 75%)
- Central air conditioning (25 75%)

Six lowest playback potentials are considered to be:

- Landscaping (25-50%)
- Interlocking paving (25-50%)
- Building a fence (25-50%)
- Asphalt paving (20-50%)
- Adding a swimming pool (10-40%)
- Installing a skylight (0-25%)

Source: Appraisal Institute of Canada 2006

Although the potential return on investment is a factor to consider when Renovating, it is key to consider how the renovation will enhance your lifestyle and overall enjoyment of your home.

Financing your renovation

What is affordable, achievable and realistic? Finding a cost effective option is helpful when planning a major home improvement. There are several borrowing options available which include a home equity line of credit, a mortgage refinance and a personal loan. One of the more popular financing options is the home equity line of credit. In simple terms, a home equity line of credit is a form of revolving credit backed by the portion of the home's value that you own outright. The equity in your home acts as the security for your line of credit reducing the risk to the lender; in return, the lender may be able to offer more

favourable terms such as a lower interest rate compared to other types of credit.

For example, the CIBC home Power line of credit offers a lower interest rate to help you save on interest while you borrow. You can access up to 80% of your home's appraised value minus any balance owed on the existing mortgage and any other encumbrances on title. To illustrate, if you have a home with an appraised value of \$200,000, \$100,000 outstanding on your mortgage and you want to borrow up to 80 % of your home's value, you can access up to \$60,000:

- 80% of the value of your home: \$160,000
- Less the outstanding mortgage: \$100,000
- Funds available to be borrowed: \$ 60,000

How do you know a home equity line of credit is right for you?

You should consider a secured line of credit if you:

- have built equity in your home
- would like to use the equity in your home to your advantage by securing a lower interest rate
- would like to borrow money when you need it, without having to reapply it is like having a reusable loan
- wish to repay your balance and have that amount available again
- like the flexibility of an interest-only payment option or paying as much as you want
- want quick and easy access to your funds, i.e. cheques, branch, ABM, telephone or online banking

If you are considering home renovations and need more information on how to finance your summer plans call 1 800 465-CIBC (2422) to speak to a CIBC advisor or visit www.cibc.com. - News Canada




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Protecting Your Backyard Habitat

(NC) Whether you have a small yard in the suburbs or an acre in the country, your private green space serves as habitat for wildlife from a variety of native and non-native plants to insects, birds, and other animals.

With habitat loss and degradation taking their toll on biological diversity in Canada and around the world, habitats on private lands can play an important role in providing food, shelter, water, and the other necessities to a wide range of species.

Here are some tips on how you can help preserve and create valuable wildlife habitat in your own backyard:

- Restore native plant communities. The wildlife in your area co-evolved with these species, and depends on them for food and shelter.
- Plant a variety of trees from fruit and nut-bearing species to evergreens and deciduous trees. Trees provide critical food and shelter for birds and animals.
- If you have a forested area on your property, leave a few dead or dying trees standing. These "snags" provide homes for cavity dwellers, such as chickadees, woodpeckers, and squirrels.
- Piles of rocks and logs serve as homes for small animals, such as chipmunks and snakes.
- Eliminate the use of pesticides and other chemicals in your yard.
- Put up bat houses and birdhouses as shelters, and help control insect pests naturally.

If you have a large property whose natural features have been preserved, consider donating the land or a partial interest in the land, such as a conservation easement to a qualified recipient through the federal Ecological Gifts Program. In addition to knowing that their cherished piece of land will be protected in its natural state forever, donors receive significant tax breaks. For more information, visit the Ecological Gifts Program web site at www.cws-scf.ec.gc.ca/egp-pde or call (800) 668-6767. - News Canada



What's Your Environmental EQ?

(NC) What do you know about the environmental costs of your actions and how much you could save by going green? Test your "EQ" with this short quiz and learn ways to ease the burden on your wallet and the Earth.

1. How much money could you save each year by getting rid of your second car and using public transportation? a) \$60 b) \$600 c) \$6,000
2. What percentage of cars have at least one tire that is over- or under-inflated? a) 50% b) 70% c) 90%
3. In an older home, what percentage of total heat loss comes from air leakage? a) 15-25% b) 25-40% c) 40-50%
4. If every Canadian changed one traditional lightbulb to a compact fluorescent bulb, the energy and pollution saved would be equal to that of how many cars being taken off the road? a) 660 b) 6,600 c) 66,000
5. How many trees does a typical Canadian use each year in the form of paper? a) 4 b) 8 c) 12
6. How far does the average meal travel before it reaches the typical Canadian's plate? a) 25 km b) 250 km c) 2,500 km

Answers:

- 1- C. In addition to saving money on gas, insurance, and parking and reducing air pollution and fuel usage, transit pass-holders can now claim a federal tax credit.
- 2- B. Improperly inflated tires can use up to three percent more fuel; check yours at least once a month.
- 3- B. Keep the heat in by inspecting the seals around your doors and windows and replacing any worn weatherstripping or caulking.
- 4- C. Compact fluorescents use at least two-thirds less energy than standard incandescents and last up to 10 times longer.
- 5- A. Reduce, re-use, and recycle.
- 6- C. Eating foods that are produced locally reduces the amount of energy burned and air pollution created by shipping. - News Canada

Think Sink

(NC) The kitchen sink is a must-have item for the kitchen. You could live without a toaster or a microwave or even the coffee pot, but what would life be like without the kitchen sink? It's an interesting thought, but since chances of that are slim, you should think more about what your kitchen sink can do for you, rather than what you would do without it.

Today's homeowners are savvy. They seek out the latest and greatest technologies and styles to make their homes last longer and perform better. It's the home advancement movement and it's happening all around us. But advancing your home doesn't have to mean a complete renovation.

This brings us back to the kitchen sink. And yes, technology and style are key to the perfect kitchen sink. Think quieter, more durable and stylish.

"Stainless steel is a great option for homeowners looking for a durable material that will work well with their existing décor," said Donna Church, a Sterling spokesperson. "And with more style options available, you can make multi-tasking in the kitchen easier."

Sterling, a Kohler brand, offers stainless steel sinks that provide multi-tasking features such as double basins in a variety of sizes. They've also introduced a new technology 'SilentShield' that reduces unwanted noise and vibration.

So, next time you're washing dishes or preparing food, think about your relationship with your sink. Could it be quieter? Have an extra basin? Be a little bit bigger? Maybe it's time for a new sink. Just think about it and change the way you interact with your kitchen sink.

For more information on Sterling products, please call 1-800-STERLING. - News Canada



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Water Conservation Tips For A Beautiful Garden

(NC) Having a lush, green lawn and healthy garden helps Canadian homeowners create a backyard oasis that family and friends can enjoy all spring and summer long. To help gardeners achieve a lush environment while conserving water, the lawn and garden team at Canadian Tire has put together some helpful tips.

Timing is everything

- Water your plants early morning or late afternoon after the sun sets, to prevent water from evaporating and to maximize moisture. Water can also act like a magnifying glass and burn your lawn, so waiting until later in the day will ensure you prevent this from happening.

- While weather conditions may vary throughout the summer, the general rule of thumb is to water every four to seven days for between one and three hours, saturating the ground to a depth of six inches. Be careful not to over-water the lawn as it's just as harmful as under-watering.

- Using an outdoor timer, like the two-zone timer, enables you to program watering tools to run at any frequency and for any duration of time, ensuring you don't over-water. For added convenience, look for the new remote control sprinkler at Canadian Tire, so you can turn water on and off from the convenience of inside the house or the other side of the yard. Watering directly to the root

- Consider the area that requires watering and choose the appropriate tool. For example, to help provide nourishment to trees, select a tree-base soaking hose that directs water to the base of the tree or to water flower beds, choose a direct drip watering system that focuses water flow on the desired area.

- Sure to be a hit this spring, micro-irrigation systems are inexpensive and easy to set up. They come with tubing, hardware and multiple spray heads to enable gardeners to create a customized watering system. Focusing water directly on the root, micro-irrigation systems help conserve water consumption while effectively providing nourishment to your garden and shrubs.

- To maintain a beautiful lawn without depleting water supplies, choose a tool like the self-propelled travelling sprinkler that automatically pulls itself along a customized track, enabling the water to reach all areas of the yard equally and efficiently. A rotary sprinkler, such as the Yardworks one available at Canadian Tire, allows you to choose whether you want 90 degrees, 180 degrees or 360 degrees of coverage, so it's perfect if you want to target one specific area.

- News Canada

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Keep The Energy Bills Down When The Temperature Goes Up

(NC) Sweltering summers don't have to mean high energy consumption at home.

According to Dave Walton, Director of Home Ideas at Direct Energy, homeowners can easily keep their homes cool while keeping energy usage down, helping themselves and the planet. Here are a few of his tips:

Anyone home? - A programmable thermostat can help regulate the temperature of your home in both summer and winter. Programming the thermostat a degree or two higher when no one is home during the day in the summer will contribute to energy savings.

Lights, lights, lights - Switch from incandescent lighting to high efficiency compact fluorescent bulbs. They use at least two thirds less energy, generate less heat and have a significantly longer bulb life - almost 10 times longer.



Windows & doors - Up to 30 per cent of the cooling in your home is lost through poorly fitted windows and doors. Caulking and weather stripping around windows and doors, and upgrading to energy efficient windows can save money.

Insulate your worries - Most homeowners relate insulation to heating bills and winter, but a properly insulated home will keep the temperature regulated in the warmer months by keeping the hot air outside from coming inside your home.

Renovate means update - When remodeling, homeowners should consider replacing their aging heating and cooling systems with the latest high efficiency equipment. For central air conditioning, units that meet 13 SEER requirements (an energy efficiency rating for air conditioner units known as Seasonal Energy Efficiency Ratio) will deliver as much as 30 per cent more efficiency compared to an older, 10 SEER system.

Windows and fans - Open windows to maximize air circulation and install energy efficient ceiling fans to move the air. If you already have ceiling fans in your home, check the direction of the blades they should move the air downwards in the summer and upwards in the winter.

More information is available toll-free at 1-888-DE-HVAC1 or online at www.directenergy.com. - News Canada

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Working On Waterworks

(NC) Don't let aging kitchens and bathrooms become all washed up. Showers, baths, sinks and faucets are all frequently used, so it's worth investing in stylish units that will also stand up to daily use. Whether you're ready for an upgrade or need something as part of a larger renovation, keep in mind the following suggestions from The Home Depot Canada:

DISTINCT SINKS.

- If you have a large bathroom with extra storage for toiletries, consider a pedestal sink instead of a stand or a cabinet to create a clean look.
- Instead of a traditional inserted basin, whose top is level with a counter, install an eye-catching glass or ceramic vessel that sits on the counter, turning the basin into a showpiece.

- If you like the look of a one basin sink in the kitchen, but want the convenience of having a second washing space, try a one and a half basin sink. The smaller basin is perfect for food preparation or washing small utensils and cutlery, while the large basin helps tackle larger dishes.

FAUCET FACTOR.

- Choosing the right kitchen faucet is partially determined by the number of basins and size of your kitchen sink. Look for one with a long neck that reaches into the basin, a head that swivels or a pull-out handle.
- A faucet with a high arc is great for adding simple style to any bathroom.
- Bathroom faucets that swivel are excellent for keeping the sink clean. Depending on the bathroom style, elegant turn handles may be a great alternative to a single lever.

SHOWER POWER.

- If there's extra space in the basement, think about adding a shower stall. Not only will it be useful during the morning rush, but it can also be used to get cleaned-up after a DIY project.
- For a more vintage look in the bath, look for traditional cross handles or a handheld showerhead that affixes to the top of the faucet instead of suspending from above.
- If there is a senior in your household, make sure a bathtub is fitted with support equipment. Handles and bars can easily be added to bathtubs that don't offer proper support.

For more information on the best water and plumbing products for your household, visit homedepot.ca or The Home Depot in your community.

- News Canada



How Safe Is Your Garage Door?

(NC) Don't overlook your garage when considering the safety features in your home. The garage door is typically the largest moving object in a home; and because of its size and weight, special care should be taken to maintain safe operations.

- **Mounting tracks and hardware:** If not positioned and attached properly, the door might come off the track and fall.

- **Corner Brackets:** Usually attached to the high-tension cables that lift the door, if these brackets are loose, they could disconnect and fly off at dangerous speeds.

- **Springs:** Due to the high tension in the cables that are attached to these springs, any repairs or adjustments should only be made by a qualified service company. For safety, consider enclosing extension springs in a metal tube or installing a safety cable inside the extension spring.

- **Panel Section Joints:** Never attempt to operate the door by placing fingers near or in the joint between door sections. Monitor children who might be tempted to insert their fingers in these small openings. Some garage doors are equipped with finger-protecting joints that minimize this danger.

- **Entrapment Protection with Automatic Door Operators:** Recently manufactured doors should have some type of safety device, such as an electronic eye or a pressure-sensitive control, which detects objects obstructing the door. Check these safety features periodically according to the manufacturer's guidelines. Consider replacing or retrofitting older automatic garage doors that do not have these modern safety features.

Remember, when in doubt, consult a professional. More home safety information and maintenance information is available online at www.housemaster.com.

- News Canada

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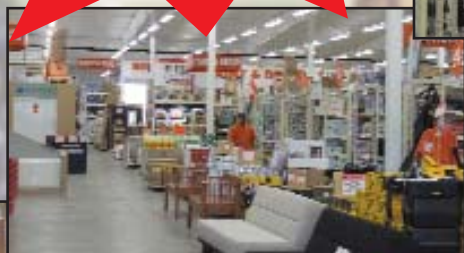


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