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**David Reid - Editor** Tel: 642-5029 Fax: 642-5766  
Email: dreid@specialtyads.ca

**John Gardner - Account Executive** Tel: 847-9323  
Cell: 653-0993 Office: 672-6144 Fax: 642-5766  
Email: 2gardner@nb.sympatico.ca

**Deborah Landers - Account Executive** Tel: 672-6144  
Cell: 663-1380 Fax: 642-5766  
Email: deborah@specialtyads.ca

**Bob White - Account Executive** Fredericton, NB  
Tel: 506-472-3027 Fax: 888-362-4950  
Email: bob\_white@rogers.com

**Eric Dobbelsteyn - Prepress/Production**  
Email: egdobbel@nb.sympatico.ca

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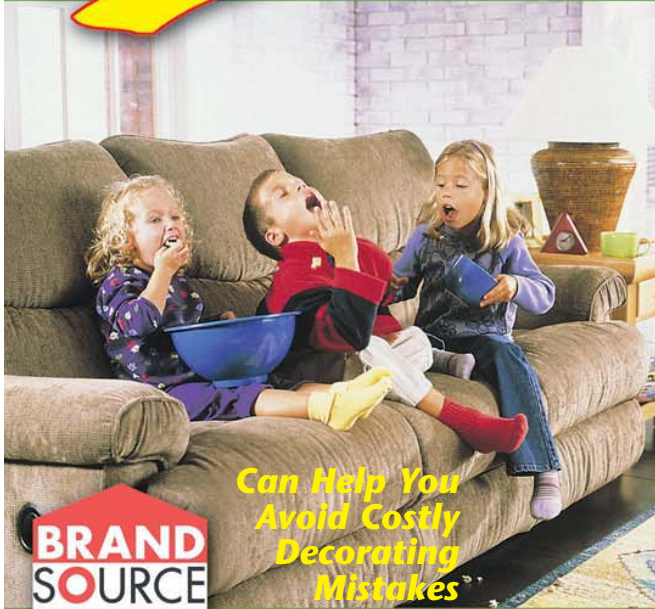
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## Keep Cool And Save Money This Summer

(NC)—The start of spring and warmer weather means that many families' thoughts turn to upcoming summer plans. Vacations, summer camp and trips to the beach are fun yet costly summer activities. There are ways to save money now to prepare for expenses down the road, especially if you cut back on the amount of energy – and therefore money – your home consumes.

“Plan ahead for the summer heat”, says David Flood, insulation expert at Owens Corning. “Insulating your attic in the spring will save you money during warmer seasons by preventing warm air from getting trapped in the attic – causing you to use more energy to keep your home cool this winter.”

How does insulating an attic keep your home cool? The attic controls the temperature in your home. If properly insulated, the attic will block in warm air in the winter and cool air in the summer which will determine the cost of your energy bills. An under-insulated attic will cause your home to store unnecessary heat, using more air conditioning to combat the hot air.

To get started, measure the amount of insulation you will need to reach the recommended standard of R-50. To do so, install up to 15 inches of PINK™ FIBERGLAS® insulation batts, made from natural\*\*\* materials and over 70\*\* per cent recycled content, to the attic. Place the insulation on the floor along joists, laying boards on top to walk on and cut



holes around electrical fixtures or anything that produces heat. Next, make sure your attic is properly ventilated, to further reduce the attic temperature.

PINK™ insulation, made with EcoTouch™ PureFiber™ technology – the newest innovation from Owens Corning, will ensure that your home is re-insulated with products that are sustainable. Prepare now so that you can enjoy summer to its full potential.

More information on insulation can be found at [www.owenscorning.ca](http://www.owenscorning.ca).

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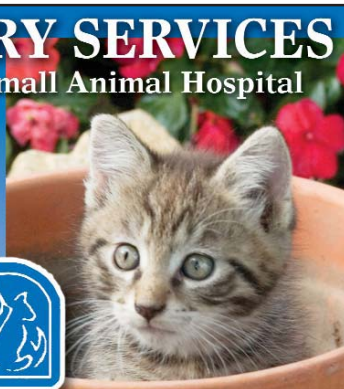
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## Take Spring Cleaning Outdoors

(NC)—Now that the wintry weather is gone it's time to think about spring cleaning. And while many of us focus on indoor activities like cleaning out closets and drawers, don't forget to roll up those sleeves and tend to your lawn and garden. See below for some tips from The Home Depot on how to get your lawn in top order for the warmer weather:

**Get raking** – As soon as the lawn is dry, lightly rake up left-over leaves and debris to help it breathe and grow. Just remember not to disturb any new grass plants.

**Activate & aerate** – Aerating your lawn at the start of the season is key to ensuring a healthy, green turf because it lets water, air and fertilizer get down to the root. To aerate, remove plugs of sod to loosen the soil. Depending on the size of your lawn, you may want to consider using a manual aerating tool. Smaller lawns can be easily aerated with a spike aerator that removes plugs from the turf.

**Woeful weed** – Start weeding early to prevent seeding and spreading. By using an environmentally preferred and ergonomic option like the Fiskar's weed remover, not only can you remove the entire weed, but you can do it without all the back-breaking work of bending down for each weed. Another great option is Scotts Ecosense Weed B Gone. Killing weeds and not lawns, this ready to spray liquid starts working within a few hours of application

**Banish bare spots**– A quick fix for improving the look of your yard is to repair the discoloured patches. Clear away dead-looking patches with a shovel, sprinkle grass seed on newly exposed soil, add fertilizer and keep the area moist until it sprouts.

For more information on how you can get your lawn and garden in tip top shape visit [www.homedepot.ca/gardencentre](http://www.homedepot.ca/gardencentre) or your local The Home Depot store. [www.newscanada.com](http://www.newscanada.com)



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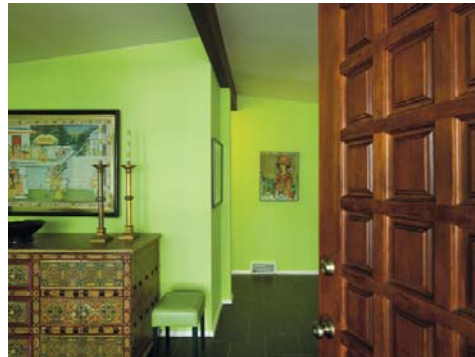
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## Let Colour Express Welcome In An Entry Or Foyer

(NC)—First impressions are important. It's a tenet that guides what we wear, what we say, and how we behave when meeting someone for the first time. It also influences the design of a building lobby, a restaurant, or shop, establishing the image of a business. So, when you open the front door of your home to guests, what impression does your entrance make? What does it say about you, your family, your personality, and your style?

"A home's entrance is the extension of the welcome mat," said Benjamin Moore Paints colour expert Sharon Grech. "So, whether it's a postage stamp size that's just a step in from the outdoors, a long narrow corridor, or a grand and spacious foyer, don't neglect it in your decorating plans. Even if there's no room for a lick of furniture, give careful thought to your colour choices, because that can set the tone for all that's inside the hub of your life."

Let a cheerful green greets guests, such as pear green 2028-40. According to Grech, it's a crisp, bright hue on the cool side of the colour




spectrum that also can take on a sunny glow. A bold blast of colour like this also can help announce that your decorating style is very daring and bold.

In the tiniest of entries, Grech suggested one colour is best for both walls and ceilings.

While most people end up using the same colour in the entry that adds continuity with the other interior colours, Grech advised to think about what's on the other side of the door. "If you live by water, go with a blue or other calming watery hue reflective of what's in view. Or, if you're surrounded by woods, think about an earthy tone."

More colour ideas can be found online at [www.benjaminmoore.com](http://www.benjaminmoore.com).

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## Bamboo Flooring

When you are planning to buy a new floor or floors for your home and you are considering bamboo flooring, your first question is; what is a bamboo floor? Bamboo is technically a grass. Natural bamboo floors are beautiful to look at. They give a natural warm glow that in turn gives your home a sense of sublime beauty. A bamboo floor is very hard and resistant, in comparison to a timber floor. It is 73% harder than for instance Jarrah wood flooring. It is wonderfully smooth and easy to clean. It is a natural, reliable, eco friendly, and long-lasting product that gives a unique lustre.

You may ask yourself which supplier of bamboo flooring should you choose? Choose a Bamboo specialist that has Bamboo floors on display, so that you are able to view the floor. As a bamboo floor is best chosen using your sensory perception; that is with your sight and touch. You need to see a whole floor or at least a large section of a floor, you need to be able to feel the smooth texture and of course, you need to be able to compare the various colours and the different finishes available.

Choose a bamboo flooring specialist, who has a wide range of colours and finishes to choose from. When you seek the service and products from a supplier who only specializes in bamboo flooring and does not sell all sorts of different products, then you will be sure that the service staff know what they are talking about and that they will have plenty of product knowledge and therefore be able to give you expert information and advice on choices, installation and care.

It may be difficult to know if the bamboo flooring of your choice is of high quality. If you choose a either prefinished 100 % compressed natural bamboo boards, or raw 100% compressed natural bamboo boards that are sanded and polished after installation, your bamboo flooring will not delaminate and split apart, as for instance cross laminate bamboo flooring is more likely to do. 100% compressed bamboo floorboards are also less likely to become cupped and warped. So for a longer lasting beautiful bamboo floor choose a 100% natural bamboo flooring product.

Make sure that your supplier provides you with top installation service

or recommends a highly qualified and experienced installer who is specialized in the installation of bamboo flooring and stairs.

Preparation of the surface prior to installation is also very important. For the best results the floor needs to be completely cleared from carpet, tiles, vinyl or linoleum, etc. Any underlay should be removed, as well as any glue, bond crete or paint residue, because this affects adhesion. In other words; the floor should be stripped down to the raw concrete. Your supplier should be able to recommend someone dependable to do this job for you.

Good luck with your purchase and enjoy the perfect feeling of well being and ambiance in your home that only a natural bamboo floor can give you.

About the Author: Yvonne Curran is a professional Writer at Webarena Web Design Perth. More information on bamboo flooring perth is available at [perthbamboo.com.au](http://perthbamboo.com.au)

## Home Improvement Secrets From The Garage

(NC)—Auto buffs have been keeping a secret from do-it-yourselfers for years: automotive body fillers, like 3M's Bondo, can do wonders on your home improvement projects. The secret is out.

Using body filler as a home improvement solution makes perfect sense. They have the ability to dry in only 20 minutes and are paintable in under an hour. Traditionally used in the automotive world as the solution for dents and deep scratches in the body of a vehicle, reach for body filler when you're faced with filling or repairing wood, metal and aluminum, repairing drywall, concrete, masonry and many fibreglass repairs.

Automotive body fillers have good weather resistance when used under an exterior-grade coating and compatible with all types of house paints and primers. They can be drilled, tapped, routed, and carved, and resist weakening or cracking where extreme temperature changes occur. More information is available at [www.bondo.ca](http://www.bondo.ca).

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# A Beginner's Guide To Going Green

(NC)—Many Canadians are looking to make their home a more environmentally friendly place, but just don't know where to start. But fear not – going green doesn't have to require drastic measures. Check out these small changes you can make to give your home an eco-makeover.

**Hang-dry your laundry** – hanging your laundry out to dry is a great way to reduce your energy consumption, cut down on your hydro bill and give your clothes a fresh scent. It's also a great way to involve the kids by letting them help hang clothes on the line. In the winter, a drying rack is a great way to bring your clothesline indoors.

**Pull the plug** – turning off appliances you aren't using is a great way to save electricity, but go one step further and unplug what you aren't using to reduce phantom power usage. Using a smart power strip that senses when things are turned off and cuts power loss is also a great way to save time and energy.

**Clean green** – naturally-derived cleaning products like the Clorox Green Works family of products are a great way to reduce harsh chemicals in your home. Made from plant-based, biodegradable cleaning ingredients, Green Works products are at least 95 per cent naturally derived, and provide a gentle, yet effective clean. You can also eliminate paper towel waste by cutting up old bathroom towels to make reusable cleaning cloths.

**Skip the bottle** – staying hydrated is important, but plastic bottles are piling up in landfills at an alarming rate. Storing a pitcher of water with a built-in filter, like those available from Brita, in your fridge is a great way to get great-tasting water without bottled water waste. You may also want to consider bringing a reusable water bottle to work and on the go. Not only will you save money, you'll have water whenever you need it. Let the kids pick out their own special water bottle for their lunch boxes to make going green fun.

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## Don't Delay...These Two Simple Tasks Will Keep Your Family Safe

(NC)—Never put off until tomorrow what you can do today.

Most people not only relate to this phrase, many will say it was coined specifically for them. At some time, all of us can be guilty of putting off the simplest of tasks. Most are harmless, but some can be deadly.

A home safety expert with Kidde Canada, the leading smoke and carbon monoxide alarm manufacturer in the country, urgently reminds us to never procrastinate those things that can keep our families safe.

"All deaths from fire and carbon monoxide poisoning are tragic," says Carol Heller of Kidde. "But preventable fire and CO poisoning deaths are the saddest and most frustrating since we have the power to change the outcome by taking just a few simple steps."

Heller offers these home safety tips to help protect your family from fire and CO tragedy.

### CO Prevention:

- Install one CSA-approved CO alarm on each level of your home and outside sleeping areas.
- Test all CO alarms monthly and replace them every five to seven years.
- Change the batteries at least once per year.
- Have a licensed inspector check heating systems and other fuel-burning appliances annually, including fireplaces.

- Keep clear all exhaust flues or ducts used by water heaters, ranges and clothes dryers (snow, ice, leaves, garbage etc).



Photo Caption: A CO alarm and an annual heating system inspection is essential to protecting your family from carbon monoxide gas.

### Fire Prevention:

- Install one cUL-approved smoke alarm on every level of your home and outside or in sleeping areas (if you sleep with your door closed).
- Test all smoke alarms monthly and replace them every 10 years, whether battery operated or hard-wired.
- Change batteries at least once per year.
- Prepare a fire escape plan with your family and practice it, ensuring you identify two exits from every room if possible. Consider buying a two-storey safety ladder to ensure there is a second escape route via a window.

REMEMBER: Escape is always your first priority. More fire and carbon monoxide poisoning safety tips can be found at [www.safeathome.ca](http://www.safeathome.ca) and [www.endthesilence.ca](http://www.endthesilence.ca).

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## Look Before You Leap Into Buying A New Home

(NC)—Got the bug to buy a home this spring? You're not alone. Millions of Canadians get the urge to splurge on new digs this time of year.

If house hunting is on your spring to-do list, follow this advice from federal, provincial and territorial governments in the Canadian Consumer Handbook at [www.consumerhandbook.ca](http://www.consumerhandbook.ca). The information is factual, unbiased and contains practical advice for making what could be the biggest purchase of your life.

Really think about what is important to you in your new home – a two-car garage, main floor laundry, no rear neighbours or a view of the city. Once you've established your priority list, establish your price range based on your financial situation. Compare mortgage rates, terms and conditions at a number of financial institutions. Mortgage rates and conditions vary widely so shop around.

Unless you're in a building trade, you won't necessarily see the faults in a home you're considering, so you may want to hire a home inspector. Keep in mind that home inspectors are not subject to industry regulation in most provinces. You will want to do some homework to find a reliable inspector. Ask friends and neighbours for references, and ask those inspectors you're thinking of hiring about their training, experience and membership in professional organizations. Your inspector should always provide you with a written report.

If condo living is what you're after, research the building thoroughly – who built it, how old it is, maintenance fees, by-laws, rules and restrictions for such things as gardens, outside decorating or pets.

These are just some of the topics covered in the 'housing' section of the Canadian Consumer Handbook. For further information on housing, the Handbook offers contact information for each province and territory. The sections on landlord and tenant problems, mortgages and moving are worth reading so that buying the house of your dreams doesn't turn into a nightmare.

[www.newscanada.com](http://www.newscanada.com)

## Top Ten Dream Home Features

(NC)—If you were given a chance to design a dream home, what features would you choose first?

Take a look at the most popular wish list in 2011 from Nudura, a leading firm in building technology:

1. Curb appeal. Home exterior, driveway, and landscaping must attract admiring attention.
2. Concrete and natural stone, rather than wood framing and brick. These homes ([nudura.com](http://nudura.com)) are not only beautiful, they are stronger, more sound resistant, and far more energy efficient than wood frames and brick.
3. Maximum energy efficiency throughout from top to bottom.
4. Solar panels in the roof to generate a personal energy source.
5. A large, designer kitchen with natural stone countertops and futuristic appliances, cabinetry and waterworks.
6. Natural hardwood flooring like Brazilian cherry and sustainable bamboo.
7. A sunroom, a front porch, and a backyard finished patio.
8. Vessel sinks, or freestanding bowls above the bathroom countertop, accompanied by wall-mounted faucets.
9. Bedroom walk out or balcony.
10. Designer bathtubs and walk-in shower with marble tile, a seating bench and rainfall showerhead.

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## Six Easy Decorating Tips By Jackie Morra

(NC)—Getting started on a new renovation or decorating project is not as difficult as it seems if you follow the process I used for my own bedroom renovation.

How do I decide on flooring? The floor area sets the tone and feel, and is the second largest space next to the walls. Research the right product for your lifestyle. The key to longevity is to take into consideration quality, the look you want and installation. The flooring used in my bedroom renovation, for instance, is Torlys cork plank, vintage block chai. It was actually the inspiration for this space because I fell in love with the comfort, warmth and the many environmental benefits of the floor. More information is available online at [www.torlys.com](http://www.torlys.com).

How do I coordinate fabrics? Fabrics need to complement each other and not compete in terms of colour, pattern and scale in order to balance furnishings and style without being visually distracting. Try to choose all fabrics within a space at the same time.

How do I choose and display accessories? If you don't love it, live without it. Accessories should be a reflection of your personality or style. Group accessories in odd numbers, preferably in threes, while varying the height of objects. Pillows, artwork, lighting and treasured pieces add a finishing touch and can be easily updated. What is the right placement and size for artwork? Hang artwork 60 inches from the floor to the centre of the art. For hallways and stairs use 65 inches. Artwork over a bed or piece of furniture should be 2/3 of the overall width and not higher than 8



inches from the furniture.

Where do I hang drapery hardware? Drapery hardware should be mounted at least 2 inches above the window frame. Drapery panels should extend 12 to 18 inches on either side of the window to maximize the light and viewing area.

How many light sources do I need in a room? Ideally there should be three lights in a room. This can include overhead, functional/task, and mood lighting. In a dining room, the fixture should hang 30 inches above the table and be at least 1/2 of the table's width.

Jackie Morra is a certified interior decorator and owner of Home Decor Solutions, Toronto.



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# Read Instructions Before Cleaning Your Window Shades

By Nicole Martel

(NC)—With winter behind us, the sun may be telling you something about your window coverings. It may be telling you that they need cleaning. Before you grab your scrub brush and get to work, listen to this advice from Mary Dobson, spokesperson for Levolor Window Fashions in Canada.

“Caution is essential when you need to clean blinds and shades,” says Mary. “You may be doing more harm than good, because what works with one kind of blind may ruin another, and void the warranty, too. My basic advice is – if you are in any doubt about how to do the job, don’t!”

Perhaps the best thing you can do for window shades, of any kind, is to dust them regularly. Use a feather duster or a small soft vacuum cleaner brush; just stroke lightly over the shade. Plastic and metal surfaces can benefit from additional wiping with a soft sudsy cloth, being careful not to use abrasive cleaners. If you choose blinds from the Accordia designer colours collections, you won’t have to dust so often. They feature dust-guard, a permanent fabric finish that prevents dust from settling.

Wood and other natural materials should be treated with great care. Don’t use water, solvents or abrasive solutions of any kind. Vacuum only, or use a soft, dry cloth to remove dust.

Plastic roller shades can be cleaned effectively with a soft sponge and soapsuds. The best approach for fabric roller shades, and romans, is a light vacuuming at low power to remove dirt. A gentle spot cleaner may come in handy when caring for fabric blinds.



Photo Caption: Regular dusting is the only cleaning required for most window shades. Special care should be taken with wood and other natural materials.

Mary offers a useful tip for cellular Accordia shades. “Sometimes a little bug will make a home inside one of the cells. Leave it there, and it may eventually stain the fabric. Before that happens just blow it away – using a hair dryer on a cool setting.”

If you are in any doubt about how to clean any blind, you can visit a nearby Levolor dealer for advice or go online at [www.levolor.ca](http://www.levolor.ca).  
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## How To Create Your Own 'Mantuary'

(NC)—For those unfortunate souls still unacquainted with a man cave or 'mantuary' – it's a man's sanctuary. It's a place for men to unwind, watch television, play poker and have a drink with friends.

"In the old days, man caves typically existed in the darkest corners of a home, or perhaps in backyard sheds," says Ramsin Khachi, Khachi design group, Khachi Interiors and CITYLINE design expert. "Today, my clients are looking to replace coolers with bars, foldable chairs with recliners and outdated bathrooms with contemporary designs."

Khachi highlights some 'mantuary' essentials:

### The Local Watering Hole

Impressing your buddies with your own wet-bar is an excellent way to up your street-cred. It's also a great addition for both drinkers and teetotalers as a place to serve drinks and snacks without having to run to the kitchen for supplies. Brizo's new Venuto faucet with smarttouch technology is a seriously cool and sleek addition. The smarttouch technology allows you to turn the faucet on and off by tapping anywhere on the handle or spout; allowing you to wash the grub off without making a mess – and having to clean up after.

### Take a seat

Formal dining spaces and mom's don't-touch-me cabinets have absolutely no place in a man cave. A firm, yet comfortable recliner is essential for watching hockey and provides the necessary support for long hours of sitting on your behind. You'll also want a comfortable couch

for your buddies to sit on, but make sure it's lengthy enough for nights you're forced to sleep there. Keep in mind that furniture has evolved since the 80s. Today, you can easily find couches equipped with not only cup holders but beer coolers nestled in the armrest.

### Facilitating Mother Nature

Man caves are typically in a home's lower level. Installing or renovating a downstairs bathroom can both increase the value of your home as well as up your man cave's cool-factor. According to a recent study by Delta Faucet and Angus Reid, 71 per cent of Canadian males prefer a shower over a bath. Install Delta's new In2ition two-in-one showerhead to up the shower experience while keeping all body parts clean.

### The Details

Clearly you'll want a big screen television, explosive sound system and blue-ray player donning your man cave, but it's really the little details that separate your space from the scrapbooking room upstairs. Dart board, foosball tables and pool tables are man cave necessities – and you really needn't stretch the pocket book too far. Often you can find inexpensive pub-styled games online and in fairly good condition.

Let's get real – modern technology and creative design have changed the look of our homes and how we operate within them. More inspiration is available online at [brizo.com](http://brizo.com) and [deltafaucet.ca](http://deltafaucet.ca).

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## Families Warm Up To Cork Floors

(NC)—This year, instead of thinking about creating a warmer and healthier space for the kids, why not, well, just do it?

With everyone spending more time indoors, it's a great time to liven things up. Redesigning rooms with cork floors may be the answer. It's a sure way to combine warmth and comfort with eye-catching style and improved indoor air quality.

Eco-friendly pluses of cork flooring have environmentally conscious Canadians walking on air. Cork is 50% air. Nature has bestowed it with a dense air cushioning that insulates against cold and improves sound absorption in any room. Cork flooring brings a sense of peace to the noisiest traffic areas – perfect for kitchens, playrooms, family rooms, basements and even bathrooms.

For indoor air quality, cork is hypo-allergenic and insect resistant. Mildew and mold, mites and even termites are repelled by cork due to a naturally occurring substance in cork called Suberin, which is also a natural fire inhibitor.



Beneath the feel-good nature of cork flooring is a feel-good story about its origins as an entirely renewable resource. Cork bark is carefully harvested once every nine years in a time-honoured tradition using hand tools – without destroying a single tree.

With benefits like this, is it any wonder that homeowners across North America are falling in love with cork floors?



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Whether your home is contemporary, traditional or relaxed, cork will enhance your overall décor. It is pleasing to your discerning taste, your pocket-book, and your commitment to renewable resources.

You'll be pleased to know that a Canadian company is a leader in cork flooring. Torlys creates beautiful, earth-friendly floors that are easily installed without chemicals, glues or nails, and little dust. Torlys floors are remarkably easy to maintain, and badly damaged planks, even in the middle of a room, can be replaced in minutes with a unique and patented tool. You can find out more online at [torlys.com](http://torlys.com).

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# What To Look For When Purchasing A Garage Door

A garage door is an important component to any home. It represents much of a home's façade and is your home's largest piece of moving equipment. But you know little about garage doors. How are you going to choose a door and have it installed to your satisfaction? We contacted J-F Morin, Marketing Director at GARAGA Inc. ([www.garaga.com](http://www.garaga.com)) to learn more. Keep reading below to find out the 3 most important things you need to know.

## No. 1: What kind of door should I buy?

Garage doors are typically made of three different types of materials: metal (steel or aluminum), wood or vinyl.

- Metal (steel /aluminum) garage doors are among the most popular today (80% of the Canadian market).The cost of a steel door is lower than a door made of any other material. Aluminum is mostly chosen for its weight. They may be ordered in many colours. Both are insulated and require very little maintenance.
- Wood garage doors have been around for the longest period of time. Wood has a natural beauty and is versatile. It may be painted or stained. The quality of a wood door varies from wood composite to solid wood construction. They are available in a very wide price range. The more you pay, the better the quality.
- Other materials such as vinyl or fibreglass. Vinyl garage doors are completely maintenance free. They are scratch resistant. While the initial cost of a vinyl door is greater than doors made of other materials, the long-term cost is lower.

## No. 2: What company should I buy from?

Unfortunately, the garage door industry in Canada is not strictly monitored, J-F Morin says. There are many fly-by-night companies that are not insured and do not provide their employee's with workers' compensation. You want to look for a company that:

- is professional and courteous;
- supplies references from previous customers upon request;
- provides their technicians with uniforms and clean trucks;
- carries adequate insurance.

## No. 3: Where do I purchase a garage door?

There are three types of retailers to choose from when purchasing a garage door: mega home-supply stores, door & window dealers, and garage door specialists. J-F Morin strongly suggests dealing with a reputable garage door specialist. This company will send a sales representative to your home and/or may have a showroom that you and your family can visit so that you can see exactly what you are buying. These companies employ their own installers and technicians and will guarantee materials and labour. Their motto is "Quality work time after time!"

In the end, if you remember just one thing, according to Mr. Morin, it should be that a garage door's performance and long-term durability depend as much on the quality of the installation as on the quality of the product itself.

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## Heighten Your Bathroom's Sophistication And Style

(NC)—Building on its leadership in innovation, Saniflo Canada is pleased to introduce Sanistar. The Sanistar model is fully equipped to add sophistication and style to any renovation. Inspired by the newest European design in bathroom appliances, Sanistar is a unique wall-hung toilet that relies on the latest leading edge technology.

"Sanistar is the answer to any home renovation project looking to add style with sustainability," says Daniel Cayer, national sales manager at Saniflo Canada. "The system is designed to save space and water and can be mounted on a reinforced wall. It does not depend on gravity and is a practical aesthetic-enhancing solution for any space with a corresponding hand basin. The Sanistar model is exclusive to Saniflo and a key feature among the comprehensive options in our line of macerating and gray water pumping systems."

The new Sanistar has no external water tank as the flushing mechanism is built-in and is fully electric. Once the cycle has been completed, it will be refilled with clean water after the bowl has been emptied. The unit comes complete with a wall bracket system, which can be mounted inside the wall and adjusted to the height that is most comfortable for the user.

Why maceration? Macerating technology is a cost-effective, easy-to-install solution for both residential and commercial bathroom applications. The systems use a fast-rotating blade to liquefy waste and toilet paper in the flush water, which is then discharged under pressure through small-bore piping to a drainage line or soil stack.

Saniflo macerating toilet systems can be installed on top of any finished floor eliminating the need for excavation of the existing floor or building



Photo Caption: Zenergy Communications – [www.zenergycom.com](http://www.zenergycom.com)

a raised floor to install a drain line, as required by systems using a sewage ejector. The small-bore discharge piping can easily be installed and concealed inside existing walls. Saniflo's "up-flush" technology permits home or building owners to create a new bathroom wherever it is most convenient: in a basement, attic, garage, under the stairs or inside a newly remodeled space.

More information on these toilet systems is available online at [www.saniflo.ca](http://www.saniflo.ca) or toll-free at 1-800-363-5874.

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## Why Buy An Energy Efficient Home? Because It Makes Cents!

(NC)—An energy efficient home is less expensive to operate, more comfortable to live in and more environmentally friendly than a home built to the current building standards. Says who? Natural Resources Canada (NRCan), the federal department that manages three main energy efficiency program initiatives for new home buyers: the EnerGuide rating system, the R-2000 Standard and the ENERGY STAR® for New Homes.

Now you may be asking yourself, "Why should I care about energy efficiency and why should I incorporate it into my new home?" The answer is simple: because it will save you money and help the environment.

In the old days, buying expensive, custom-built homes used to be the only way to acquire an energy efficient home. Today, thanks to initiatives such as EnerGuide Rating System, R-2000 Standard, and ENERGY STAR for New Homes, consumers looking to achieve greater energy efficiency at home have a much wider array of energy efficient options to choose from.

If energy efficiency is something you want to incorporate into your new home, NRCan's energy efficiency initiatives will help you go green and cut down on energy costs.

• **The EnerGuide rating system** is NRCan's well-established rating system for the energy rating and labeling of products – mostly appliances – but also homes. An EnerGuide rating shows you (and future buyers)

exactly how energy efficient your home was at the time of construction.

• **The R-2000 Standard (R-2000)** is a technical performance standard for energy efficiency that also promotes improved indoor air tightness and environmental responsibility in home construction. R-2000 certified homes offer attention to construction, comfort, health and environmental benefits. They are also some of the most energy efficient new homes on the market.

• **The ENERGY STAR** for New Homes initiative promotes guidelines that builders use to construct energy efficient new homes. This initiative is available in various regions across Canada. ENERGY STAR is a well-recognized and respected brand, and an ENERGY STAR label on a new house indicates lower energy demand and better overall performance of the home.

If you are planning to build or buy a new home in the coming months, spend some time on the NRCan website at [www.newhomes.nrcan.gc.ca](http://www.newhomes.nrcan.gc.ca) or call 1800 O-Canada (1 800 622-6232) for more information on the various energy efficiency programs that are available in Canada.

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## Five Things To Consider Before Listing Your Home

(NC)—You're about to list your home. Perhaps you're looking to accommodate a growing family, or conversely, looking to down-size. Or, it may be that you're helping a close family member with the process of moving into an assisted—living environment. Whatever your situation, there are key considerations to ensure the process of selling meets or exceeds your expectations.

“Often times, home owners don't articulate their most pressing concerns, which can lead to a gap in expectations between the seller and their agent,” says Yvonne Ratigan, a director at Royal LePage Canada. “The most important thing you can do when selling your home is to be open and frank with your agent, and to have all of the decision—makers at the table from the start.” In addition to advising their agents to ask the right questions, Royal LePage recommends these five steps to ensure your home—selling experience is a good one:

1. Ask friends and family members to refer a real estate sales professional. Word of mouth and past experience is a good place to start when looking for an agent.
2. Interview your agent and ask for a presentation. With all the decision—makers at the table, determine these three things about your agent: Can I trust you? How are you different? What are you going to do to sell my home?
3. Articulate all and any concerns you may have about selling your home. Make sure your agent knows what's on your mind. Are you concerned about the timeliness of the sale? Are you firm on a certain price? Are there certain emotional attachments to the current home? If so, what are they?
4. Count back from the day you want to be out of your home. Remember, it takes time to sell a home. Use this timeline as a general guideline, bearing in mind that many factors affect the time it takes to sell: 90 days to allow for the listing agreement and to entertain offers; then, 60 days for the home inspections until the home sells firm and the buyer visits the home; then, 30 days to closing.
5. Pricing. The day you price your home correctly for the market is the day you sell it.

You can find more tips on selling your home in the online video library at [www.royallepage.ca](http://www.royallepage.ca).

[www.newscanada.com](http://www.newscanada.com)

## Stylish Outdoor Entertaining

(NC)—As Canadians get ready to make the most of warm weather, stylish décor and entertaining are moving beyond interiors of homes into backyards and patios. From a relaxing spa-like ambience to an ultra-chic space for entertaining, your patio can be the coolest spot to soak up the sun!

### Elegant seating and dining

Adding a splash of spring colour to patio furniture can make your backyard come alive. The Sedona Conversation Set from Canadian Tire features stylish orange accents and the Fraser Collection comes with red cushions. You can also opt for plush outdoor recliners or rocking chairs for that perfect relaxing setting. Mix and match a-la-carte seating and dining pieces in multiple configurations to wrap the perimeter of your outdoor space, be it a small intimate balcony or a large spacious backyard. The Camden La-Z-boy collection at Canadian Tire allows you to create over 25 different dining combinations!

Throw in some modern acrylic tableware and accessories to further brighten up your backyard. Finally, patio lights can be used to create beautiful accents, highlighting certain areas while camouflaging others.

### Gourmet barbecuing

A great way to impress guests and loved ones is creative, gourmet barbecuing with versatile barbecues available today that combine stylish looks and superior technology to deliver professional cooking results. For perfectly cooked meats without flare ups or charring, opt for Coleman barbecues with EvenHeat™ burners and, for restaurant quality results, sear in the flavour with infrared burners in Cuisinart barbecues. Go ahead and unleash the gourmet barbecuer in you!

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## Purple Reigns This Year In Home Decor

(NC)—From deep smoky wine to wildly pumped up fuchsia, purple promises to be a predominant colour in home décor in 2011. So say the colour experts at Benjamin Moore, who annually pronounce their predictions for the coming year in a booklet, *Envision Colour 2011*, that's free and available through the paint company's extensive network of North American retailers. It is loaded with inspiring decorating ideas, photo illustrations, plus the forecasted palette of 18 hues.

One purple to watch for in 2011 is vintage wine 2116-20," said Sharon Grech, Benjamin Moore colour expert. "It is an anchoring and rich hue with a deep brown base and a hint of smoky violet. Vintage wine is the perfect foil for the latest wood finishes, leathers, linens and other textiles."

But, for anyone who wants purple with a little more punch, Grech says royal flush 2076-20 is a sure bet for 2011. This berry-kissed Benjamin Moore colour can be grounded when combined with neutrals or fashionable grays, yet swings to the exotic when teamed with other brights.

Grech also noted there's a range of pale yet power-statement colours headed our way in 2011. A standout among this group is smoke 2122-40. "It is a subtle blue gray that is best described as an update of spa blue with an injection of sophisticated and seasoned gray."

According to Grech, a quest for balance is what's driving our choices in life, and, thus, is the overarching trend that is influencing the 2011 palette.

More information can be found online at [www.benjaminmoore.ca](http://www.benjaminmoore.ca).  
[www.newscanada.com](http://www.newscanada.com)

A large advertisement for Canadian Tire featuring a red maple leaf logo with the text "CANADIAN TIRE". Below the logo, there is a collage of images including a Cuisinart barbecue, a garden table and chairs, a wheelbarrow filled with bags of lawn care products (EcoSense Natural-Nut, Golfgreen Lawn Soil, and Turf Builder Pro), and various garden plants. The background shows a well-maintained garden with a white bench.

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# "Kitchen Talk"

By Jim Lawrence

## Small kitchens need really big help!

This particular kitchen in the before photo, is oh so typical in twenty year old homes. I sometimes reflect and think, what were we doing when we so diligently worked on closing off one room to another? I can think a lot about that because I was there doing the kitchens in those days.

When I was called in to review this kitchen they simply wanted a new kitchen, when I asked if they wanted any changes in the layout, they both looked at each other, then to me..." you can do changes? ..In this little space?"

Well you sure can! Changes happens in three's.

1st to make the main kitchen larger let's take care of the fridge, it was quickly swung to the far left of the room, just by reworking the closet we were able to get both the fridge and still have a small closet. Now we have a much more spacious stove layout. One down..two to go!

The 2nd item is the peninsula uppers and lowers. Simply remove both, and add an island, now so much more room for the cook to work on. The dining table area now feels so much more open

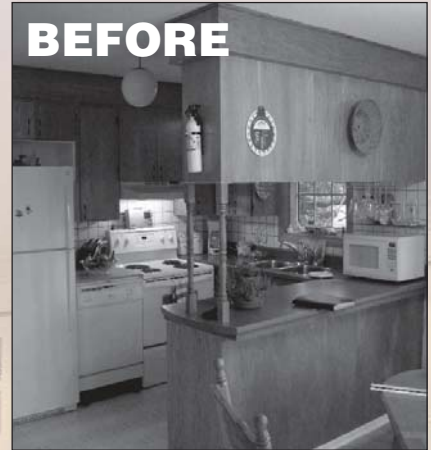
and accessible. You will note that the dishwasher is now where it should be, just as close to the sink as possible. Another very important thing happened when we removed the peninsula, all of the light from the dining patio doors now spills right into the kitchen.

The 3rd major concern in this and other typical small kitchens is the microwave, rule 101 for micro's, never have them sitting on the counter, not only does it not look professional on the counter, it also uses up very valuable counter space. In the after photo you can see that it is in the same general location, but above a toaster garage. In that unit is the toaster and coffee maker, which is still on the working counter, but just tidied up behind the roll up.

In summary as a professional kitchen designer the first thing I must say is that you do not need a big kitchen to have a great kitchen. There is three most important items in a kitchen reno, #1 get more room, #2 more counters and #3 lots of light. Mission accomplished !!

*This article was written by  
Jim Lawrence  
of [www.AvondaleKitchens.com](http://www.AvondaleKitchens.com)  
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### BEFORE



### DESIGN



### AFTER



## Increase The Value Of Your Home With An Affordable Upgrade

(NC)—The start of the spring season is a competitive time for home sellers, with a steady influx of homes for sale on the market. If you are considering selling your home this spring, don't forget about the ways you can increase its value to appeal to potential buyers, starting from the inside. By renovating an unfinished space, like the basement, you'll maximize the home's full potential by expanding the living space and increasing the energy efficiency of the home.

"Homeowners are primarily interested in maximizing the overall square footage of liveable space while maintaining energy efficiency in the home," says David Flood, insulation expert at Owens Corning. "No matter what your home's price range, adequate insulation and completing unfinished rooms, such as the basement, will add to its value and marketability."

When considering a home renovation project like finishing your basement, first measure the basement and determine the amount of insulation you'll need to meet the recommended standard. Then you can plan the next steps of your project to determine what the space will be used for. A well-insulated basement will not only create a comfortable living space, it will also help conserve energy to save on monthly utility bills.

To start, install INSULPINK® foam insulation panels and R-14 EcoTouch™ PINK™ FIBERGLAS® insulation batts for optimal comfort. The newest innovation from Owens Corning, EcoTouch™ PINK™ insulation batts are made with natural \*\*\* materials that are over 70\*\* per cent recycled content, the highest in the industry. By using PINK™ FIBERGLAS® insulation, you'll help save\* money on energy costs by creating a more energy efficient home

and use sustainable materials to do it.

Since usable, spacious and energy efficient homes are key features that home buyers are looking for, finishing a quick, simple upgrade like completing your basement can really give you an edge in the competitive housing market.



By adding square footage to the livable areas of your home, by improving or finishing an existing space, you'll see a return on your investment and further appeal to potential buyers this spring.

More information on insulating your basement can be found at [www.owenscorning.ca](http://www.owenscorning.ca).

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## Pre-Summer Home Fitness Checklist

(NC)—Spring fever is hitting across Canada and with that comes the urge to get everything in shape for summer, whether it's achieving bathing-suit fitness, getting the lawn and garden suited up for entertaining or checking the fitness of the lesser seen areas of the home for warm weather. Namely the inner workings like the air conditioner, changing the furnace filters and programming the thermostat for warmer temperatures.

Direct Energy suggests homeowners make a little checklist, much like the one a doctor prepares for an annual physical, to track the age and maintenance history of each appliance. For instance, do you know the age of your heating and cooling equipment? When did you last get the ducts cleaned? Can you remember when the last maintenance was performed on your air conditioner or furnace? When was the last time the furnace filters were changed?

Here are a few pointers to help fill out your own home fitness checklist:

**Furnace:** Bet we caught you off guard with this tip. What many homeowners don't know is that the furnace also serves the home in the summertime by circulating cooled air from the air conditioner. But there's nothing like being prepared in advance, so mark it down in your calendar to book your annual furnace maintenance before heating season rolls around. While you're at it, check what efficiency your furnace is working at, how old it is, and when the last maintenance was performed.

**Taps and drains:** It's pretty shocking to think that one dripping tap can waste up to 15 gallons of water a day. This boils down to approximately

\$15 per month on the water bill. Conserve your water, and money, by replacing the drippy faucet. Keep drains in tip-top shape by pouring a cup of baking soda followed by a cup of vinegar down the drains on a monthly basis.

**Air conditioner:** Scheduling an annual maintenance for the air conditioner will help ensure its fitness for the summer ahead. Check the SEER rating – a 13 SEER rating uses up to thirty per cent less energy than a 10 SEER unit. Check how old the unit is as well, and list when the last maintenance was performed for easy reference.

**Maintenance:** If emergency strikes, are the work horses of the home covered in case of an emergency? The air conditioner, furnace and plumbing make life easier day-in and day-out. But what happens if one of them stops working? Unexpected repairs can be costly. Look into protection plans that are available when it comes to unexpected heating, ventilation or plumbing repairs.

More information can be found online at [www.directenergy.com](http://www.directenergy.com) or toll-free at 1-888-334-8221. [www.newscanada.com](http://www.newscanada.com)

## Seniors Improve Their Lifestyles By Improving Their Homes

(NC)—Bill and Allison, Calgary, have enjoyed the last five years of their retirement spending time with family, entertaining in the family home and travelling. As Bill and Allison are reaching their early 70's, they recognized that it was time to take stock of their living needs for the future.

The couple have lived in their home for more than 45 years. During this time they have raised two children and welcomed grandchildren to the family. The couple did not like the idea of leaving a home full of memories, but knew that moving forward, changes to the house would be necessary to meet their changing needs. After sourcing various renovation quotes, the couple learned that they did not have enough money to do everything that was necessary. Then, a friend recommended a reverse mortgage with HomEquity Bank.

With a reverse mortgage, like the CHIP Home Income Plan provided by HomEquity Bank, Bill and Allison were able to use their home's equity to pay for the retrofit renovations – a sit-down shower, kitchen cupboards that didn't require Allison to climb her trusty stool, and a sprinkler system that would keep the lawn green automatically topped their list. Allison and Bill converted 30 per cent of their home equity into tax-free cash, allowing them to finance the required upgrades. With some money left over, the couple hired a local contractor to help with the seasonal outdoor work and a cleaning service to take care of the labour intensive tasks inside the home.

"HomEquity Bank's reverse mortgage allowed us to build our home around our needs, instead of leaving our memories," said Allison. "We were able to use the equity of our own home and make the additions we needed to stay there. HomEquity Bank has ensured we can have the retirement the way we planned, at home."

CHIP Home Income Plans are provided by HomEquity Bank to senior homeowners with no credit, income or credit qualifications. You can obtain more details online at [www.chip.ca](http://www.chip.ca), toll-free at 1-866-233-2989, or from your financial advisor or mortgage broker.

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## Builders Expect To Hear Requests For Green Features

(NC)—Due to demand, builders today are constantly learning about the new and advanced technologies for home construction. Owner-clients want to be assured of living in the healthiest, most durable, least wasteful house possible—and therefore, building a home from the ground up is the best opportunity to get it right.

“In addition to fixtures and materials, be sure to ask for the most advanced construction methods,” says Todd Blyth at Nudura, a leading name in building system technology. “For example, more and more builders, on request, are discarding the traditional wood-framing method—now seen as inefficient and wasteful—in favour of concrete walls.”

Why concrete?

This Canadian-advanced technology consists of pre-assembled, interlocking forms delivered to the construction site. The specialized panels consist of two, stay in place forms of expanded polystyrene (EPS) connected with a hinged, folding web. The forms are stacked, reinforced, and then filled with concrete, creating a solid monolithic wall.

“The benefits are extensive,” Blyth explains. “Architects are inspired by new design possibilities; builders cut their construction time in half; and the homeowner (or commercial building owner) can feel satisfied for cutting back on an enormous amount of wood.”

As importantly, the quality of life continues long after construction is com-

pleted, he continued. As time goes on within the “most technologically advanced walls”, your energy bills could drop by as much as 70 percent. “This type of concrete building envelope delivers twice the efficiency compared to stick frame walls—and with no wood rot and mould, it delivers none of the related toxicity. Concrete walls are up to three times more sound resistant; up to four times more fire resistant, nine times stronger, and far more resistant to thermal bridging where outside cold seeps in to cause uncomfortable cold spots, drafts, and mustiness.”

Floor and ceiling construction is now far advanced too. More information is available online at [www.nudura.com](http://www.nudura.com).

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## Sarah Richardson Stays Green

(NC)—Between designing rooms on HGTV and running after two toddlers, Sarah Richardson still makes having an environmentally friendly home a priority for her family.

Here are some tips from Sarah for keeping your home green:

**Go for the front:** If it's time to replace your old washer and dryer, consider investing in the front loading versions. They save energy while still getting things clean.

**Tow the line:** When the weather is nice, hang your clothes to dry for a fresh scent that can't be beat.

**Stay natural:** When Sarah is cleaning, she looks for plant-based formulas like Green Works cleaners “that can tackle toddler-sized messes without harsh chemical fumes or residue”. With at least 95 per cent naturally-derived ingredients, they are a great choice for keeping things clean.

Check out more great tips from Sarah on how to make your home a green space at [www.trygreenworks.ca](http://www.trygreenworks.ca).

[www.newscanada.com](http://www.newscanada.com)

## Make The Most Of Your Home Office

(NC)—For most of us, the home office is a must, but it doesn't have to be the cluttered storage room for all your household's odds and ends. Today's home offices can be versatile in look, function, form – even location. Frank Turco, senior manager of trend and design, The Home Depot Canada, recommends these tips to make your home office work for you.

**Two Rooms in One** – If your home doesn't have a dedicated office, incorporating a work station into the kitchen can be easily done. Plus, the easy access to the workstation ensures you can keep your eyes on the "staff" while they play close by.

**Organize for Efficiency** – Look to better organize your workstation. If the base of your computer is only accessed for trouble shooting, place it under your desk. Need to print on a daily basis? Keep your printer within reach. How about more space and storage? Consider storage solutions that are both functional and stylish. .

**Creatively Categorize** – Take the pegboard out of the garage and use it in your office to hang essentials – from scissors to staplers. Try painting the pegboard a bright colour to add a touch of décor to the space.

**Out of space** – If you're in need of a home office, but feel you simply don't have the space, floating shelves and storage cubes may be the solution for you. What's best is they can be tailored for your space and needs.

**Or out of mind** – Would you prefer your home office is out of sight and out of mind when not in use? Then an unused closet may make the perfect space. Simply add shelving to create storage and a desk and wallpaper to finish the look.

For more great ways to update your home office visit [www.homedepot.ca](http://www.homedepot.ca).



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## A New Feature For Your Landscape. The Pondless Waterfall

A New Feature for your Landscape: the Pondless Waterfall. There is something peaceful and natural about the sight and sound of falling water. Have you ever dreamed of having a waterfall but assumed you did not have the necessary space on your property, worried it would cost too much both in time and money to maintain a pond, or were concerned about the safety of small children around an open body of water? Now you can experience the serenity that comes with having a waterfall without the pond; it is simply the pondless waterfall.

It may be difficult to imagine a waterfall without a pond. Where does the water go? A hole is dug, then lined with rock and gravel, and filled with water. The water is then circulated from beneath the rocks and gravel by means of a pump which sits on the bottom. The pondless waterfall can be designed as a small or large system, circulating many gallons of water per hour.

The price of a pondless waterfall will be less than a pond, because there is less labor involved in construction, as well as less rock and materials. Operating costs are also less due to the fact that you are not dealing with an established eco-system, so it is not necessary to run the pump 24 hours a day 7 days a week.

The pondless waterfall system can be designed to fit any property and any budget. This could be the greatest investment you will ever make in both your outdoor living space and to your well being.

Written by: Aaron Gould; Gould's Gardens & Design

## Handy Helpers Stretch Home Improvement Dollars

(NC)—Homeowners today want big home improvement results... but without a big budget. So, how do you achieve such lofty goals without the financial investment? Enlist the help of a handy hubby or a bro that's a pro. But, since time may be limited for your "free labourers," find quick projects that can provide the biggest impact for both aesthetics and functionality.

### Kitchen Equipped

While a full remodel can be time-consuming and expensive, there are several quick updates that can achieve impressive results. Kitchen faucets, such as a high-arc pull-down faucet in a stylish finish, such as stainless or oil rubbed bronze, can offer both easy-to-use functionality and a striking visual impact at the sink.

And once you've added your new faucet, be sure that you coordinate the rest of the finishes throughout the kitchen. Add new knobs and pulls – or for a more economical solution, add a modern metallic finish to your existing cabinet hardware with Krylon stainless steel finish or oil rubbed bronze spray paint. This quick and inexpensive detail will make a big impact on the aesthetics of the room.

### Bathroom Basics

As you move your crew to the bath, focus on the vanity and walls. Since the look of furniture continues to be popular for bathroom vanities, simply recycle an old dresser with a new coat of spray paint or stain and add a beautiful bowl sink.

Next, painting the walls is easy enough for even the most novice DIYer; however, choosing the colour can sometimes be the most difficult part. Cool, light colours can help make a smaller room look larger or create a serene feeling, while darker colours can create a warm, cozy environment.

### Patio Pleasures

Nothing makes a backyard more enjoyable than a beautiful patio area to relax with your (hard-working) friends and family. Luckily, you don't need to purchase new patio furniture to make your outdoor space look new. Instead, apply a fresh coat of stain or spray paint to your existing wood or metal furniture for a stylish and updated look.

Krylon offers easy-to-use spray products, such as its exterior semi-transparent spray stain and Outdoor Spaces spray paint to make it quick and easy to makeover your patio. Both are available in the latest colours, and best of all, they dry quickly, and provide superior protection against the outdoor elements.

No matter what your skill level, by enlisting the help of some friends and family, in no time at all, you'll have a new and improved home that didn't cost you're an arm and a leg – just an I.O.U. to your handy helpers.

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# Create A Garage Haven

(NC)—Add space and value to your home by transforming your garage into an organized haven with these five simple tips.

## Revamp

A fresh layout in your garage can instantly create additional storage space. To ensure functionality you can utilize a garage blueprint estimator, like the one found at [www.gladiatorgw.com](http://www.gladiatorgw.com), to plan well-designed storage zones in your garage.

## Rotate and Conquer

You'd be surprised at how functional your garage can be once it's clear of random tools and equipment. Why not plan a thorough spring-cleaning day, and begin by rotating your winter supplies with your spring gardening tools and equipment. While you're at it, you can toss or give away what's no longer needed.

## Declutter

During the spring-cleaning season, screwdrivers and power tools tend to be pulled out for household projects. Instead of worrying about a small clutter-filled toolbox, you can invest in an organizing system that stores all of your tools in one place. Gladiator GarageWorks stackable tool chests will provide space in your garage, while also organizing and protecting small tools and expensive equipment.

## Secure Space

Instantly organize spring-cleaning essentials by dedicating a storage cabinet to cleaning products, lawn spray and gardening pots.

## Simple Style

Baskets are an easy way to store seasonal items in your basement or laundry room. This will also create more space in your garage and keep things neatly organized. Hide your family's winter gear – scarves, gloves and hats – into decorative baskets to add a hint of style in your home.

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## Home Décor Trends: What's Hot For 2011

(NC)—The key to success in introducing seasonal trends to your home's décor is start small and work with what your home already offers. Frank Turco, senior manager of trend and design, The Home Depot Canada, highlights this year's top trends and some simple ways to make them a part of your home's décor:

**Black is back** – Black and smoked finishes are back in kitchens, furniture, lighting fixtures and accessories. Whether replacing your old fridge with a sleek black one or simply opening up a space with glossy black framed mirrors, throw a little black into the mix.

**Private screening** – Many of today's homes offer an open and airy layout concept, making room dividers an option to create some privacy where needed. Some stylish alternatives to the traditional include mirrors and drapery. If lack of storage is a factor, consider a shelving unit that is open on both sides so that various décor items, baskets and books can be stylishly stored while functionally working to divide a room.

**Utilitarian** – Military trends that have been so popular on fashion runways have also entered the home for 2011. Pairing industrial-style accessories such as the Progress Lighting's Brookside Collection Brushed Nickel 1-light Mini Pendant with contemporary home décor can add a chic update.

**New laundry** – Laundry appliances have gone from functional to fashionable. With stainless steel finishes, advanced LED technology and silent

load capabilities, appliances are being taken out of the back room and placed in kitchens to show them off and open closets for more accessible usage.

**The Home office** – Today's home offices are versatile in look, function, form – even location. When decorating the home office, think beyond the typical filing cabinets and look to incorporate floating shelves, brightly painted peg boards and even decorative light fixtures. If you are tight on space consider an office closet. Simply add shelving to create storage, a small desk and wall paper for a little décor.

For more décor tips and project ideas visit [www.homedepot.ca/design-centre](http://www.homedepot.ca/design-centre).

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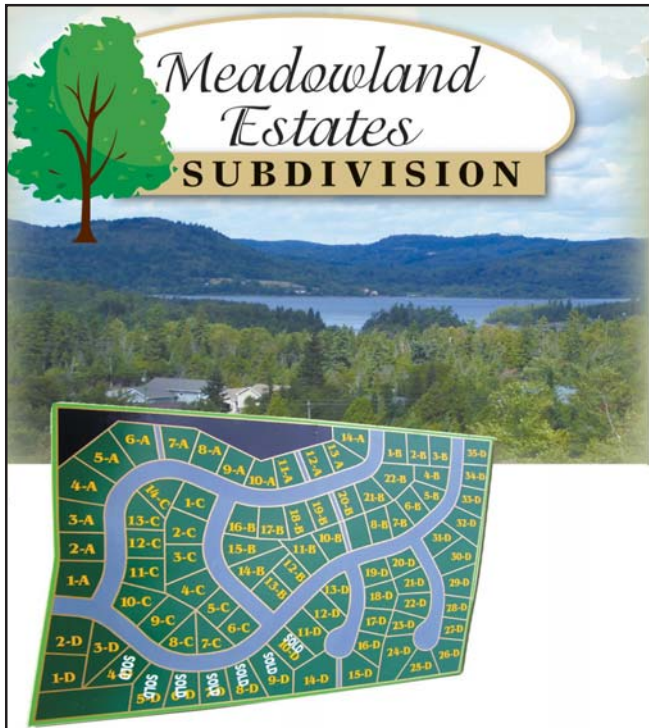
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## How To Choose The Best Cellphone For You - Features That Fit

(NC)—Staying connected is part of daily life for Canadians. Today everyone wants to take part in social networking, text messaging and sharing photos. As the number of cellphone options continues to grow, offering more options and features, choosing the device best suited to your needs and lifestyle can be a daunting task.

"Today there are a lot of options out there when you are choosing a cellphone for yourself," says Peter Farmer, Head of Marketing for North America, Sony Ericsson. "You need to consider your needs and the key features to fit those needs. Are you using the phone mainly for social networking? Or do you want to have access to more advanced applications? There is really something out there for everyone from a smartphone or quick messaging device to a more traditional cellphone."

For someone who will use their cellphone mainly for calls, a simple cellphone with basic functions will do the job. There are a myriad of traditional handsets that offer good call quality and a stable connection. A phone with fewer features tends to be less expensive than a smartphone, and will be easier to use for anyone who is not technologically inclined.

Text messaging is often the first choice for communication, especially among young people and a quick messaging device is a great option. A Quick messaging device may have a full QWERTY keyboard, either physical or touch screen. These devices usually offer amped up messaging features and have some higher level features like built-in camera or HD video recording but come at a lower cost than many of the smartphones available today. One great example available to Canadian consumers is the Sony Ericsson Vivaz™ Pro that has a QWERTY keyboard and HD video built-in.

If you have your heart set on a smartphone, there are a lot of different choices and one thing you need to consider is the platform it runs on. The operating system (OS) you choose will give your phone a variety of capabilities. Google's Android OS has become extremely popular in the last year. Android is a great choice because it lets users customize their smartphone with wide variety of applications and content downloaded

from the Google Marketplace.

Smartphones that run on the Android OS, like Sony Ericsson's Xperia™ X10, enable users to stay connected through Facebook, Twitter, and Picassa. But smartphones also provide access to your calendar, e-mail, text messages, documents, RSS feeds and provide mobile Internet access.

Design is another factor to consider when choosing the best cellphone for you. Designs vary almost as much as operating systems. The wide range varies from flip-open clamshell-style phones to basic candy bar-style phones to slider-style phones with full-QWERTY keyboards. Consider its ergonomics -- can you hold it comfortably against your ear? Can you hear callers and your callers hear you without constant adjustments?

Another important feature to factor into your smartphone decision making is the screen's contrast, backlight and resolution. Choose a smartphone with the best possible screen available that allows you to adjust such settings. That way you can make text and graphics easily viewable—even outside or in bright places. Gamers, people who watch a lot of videos or take a lot of photos should consider the screen resolution. The higher the resolution, the better the images will look.

If taking photos or shooting video on your phone is a priority you'll definitely want to pay attention to the camera specs of the phone you choose. Many cell phone cameras even have video-capture capabilities. Some high-end smartphones can even capture high-definition video. If video is your thing, make sure that the OS provides an easy way to upload your videos to Facebook or YouTube.

Cellphone or smartphone, touch screen or QWERTY, for consumers today there are so many choices out there and it is all about figuring out what is important for you and your needs.

[www.newscanada.com](http://www.newscanada.com)

# A Sustainable Bathroom Saves Water And Money

(NC)—With so many products claiming to be green these days, it's hard to know which ones are the real deal. A great indicator for certified sustainability in the bathroom is the WaterSense label, which is granted by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). By learning how (and which) products meet the criteria, you can easily incorporate the best – and most eco-friendly products into your bath.

There are a number of product categories that carry the WaterSense label, making it even easier to reduce the water usage in your home.

- **Toilets.** According to the EPA, you will likely flush the toilet nearly 140,000 times over the course of your lifetime. Switching to a WaterSense-labeled model will help you save up to 15,141 litres per year and an average of \$90 on your water bill.

Whether you're remodeling a bathroom, building a new home or simply replacing an old toilet that's past its prime, a high-performance, water-efficient option bearing the WaterSense label is definitely worth considering. As the culprit of nearly 30 percent of your home's indoor water consumption, older, inefficient toilets waste up to 42 litres every day.

- **Lavatory Faucets.** Faucets account for approximately 15 percent of indoor household water use. You can save water – even when the faucet is running – by installing a model that's certified to meet WaterSense criteria.

With countless options available in nearly every style and finish, it's easy to reduce water usage and be stylish at the sink. Plumbing manufacturers continue to transition their



products to meet WaterSense guidelines, and in 2009, Moen Canada received WaterSense certifications on all of its lavatory faucets. Designed to help environmentally conscious consumers optimize water flow without sacrificing performance, the faucets feature a 5.7 litres per minute (L/min) flow rate, resulting in water conservation of up to 32 percent.

- **Showerheads.** As the newest category to earn WaterSense labeling, traditional showerheads can use up to 114 litres of water per household, per day. Installing a WaterSense-labeled showerhead could make a big difference, saving more than 8,706 litres per year.



Moen, the 2010 U.S. EPA WaterSense manufacturer partner of the year, was one of the first manufacturers to receive this certification for showerheads, with 13 models currently certified to meet WaterSense criteria. The newly certified showerheads represent every category in Moen's showering portfolio – including wall-mount, rainshower and hand shower showerheads – and feature flow rates ranging from 6.6 L/min to 7.6 L/min, versus the industry standard of 9.5 L/min. The result is water conservation of up to 30 percent.

“Best of all, the showerheads still provide a great experience without sacrificing performance,” said Tim McDonough, vice president, wholesale marketing and brand development, Moen. “Moen isn't just using a restrictor to reduce flow – it has redesigned its showerheads to deliver the same level of showering consumers expect, but with less water.”

A product that meets WaterSense criteria features the WaterSense label on its packaging, making it easy to spot these sustainable products at your local retail and wholesale locations. By incorporating these products into your home, you can expect exceptional performance, a lower water bill and the great feeling that comes with saving resources for future generations.

More information on this topic is available online at [www.moen.ca](http://www.moen.ca).

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## How To Pay Less For Home Insurance By Gillian Birch

(NC)—Shopping for a home can be a fun experience, but with the numerous associated expenses it can be stressful as well. One item that homebuyers rarely consider is the cost to insure the potential new home.

“Things like having to replace some flooring or kitchen cabinets may sway a homebuyer's decision, but the cost of insuring the home is rarely considered,” states insurance expert Wayne Ross from Aviva Canada. “What many homebuyers don't realize is that by considering a couple of additional factors in their buying decision, they can easily save a few hundred dollars on their insurance costs every year.”

Ross suggests looking into a few key factors before making the big purchase:

- **Location** – If you live in a neighbourhood with a low crime rate you'll pay a lower premium.
- **Proximity to fire protection** – Homeowners who live close to a fire hydrant or fire station will pay lower premiums as a result of decreased fire risk.
- **Heating** – Do you use oil, gas or electric? If you heat with oil, or own a wood stove, you'll likely also burn more money on your insurance premium.
- **Wiring** – Do you have breakers or fuses? Old wiring? Low electricity flow coming into the house? All affect your insurance costs and eligibility for insurance. Your insurer might require upgrades.

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- **Roof** – If your roof has not been updated in the last 20 years, you might not qualify for insurance until it is re-shingled.
- Other factors like the existence of a monitored security and fire alarm system or a swimming pool will also factor into your insurance costs.

Before you make the final decision on the purchase of a new home, talk to your insurance broker or company to determine insurance costs. Additional information can be found at [www.avivacanada.com](http://www.avivacanada.com).  
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# The Times Are Changing The Way We Decorate Our Homes

by Mary Dobso

(NC)—Here we are, a few months into 2011, and already we can see a difference in the way Canadians look at their homes. A big change in attitudes is driving design choices. The shift is away from the disposable economy – “buy it, use it, get tired of it, buy something else” – to a sustainable economy. We think harder before making a purchase, watch the budget, and give ourselves bonus points for imagination and ingenuity.

Welcome to the era of Chiconomics. Meet the Frugal Fashionista and the Thoughtful Fixer-upper.

That's the general trend, and within it are different ways of expressing a personal feeling. I'll introduce you to four of them, and suggest ways that you could bring them into your own home.

First is Reclaimed Refinement – an invitation to explore the past, select items that please you, and integrate them into your lifestyle. When I say “the past” I don't necessarily mean antique stores – after all you are closely watching the budget. Think of yard sales, what's up in the attic, take a fresh look at that love seat your mom wants to get rid of. You are creating refined simplicity by re-interpreting traditional forms. Setting off the classic lines of old furniture are raw materials and textures: linen and burlap, large-pattern botanical prints in drapes and cushions, distressed woodwork and metal fittings – rods, and finials. But — there's a mini-trend here. Those deeply pitted and polished brasses are giving way to more muted finishes in gold, champagne and even plain black and white.

As for windows, I have two suggestions. First choice would be a wood (or faux wood) blind with 2-inch slats in a cream silk embossed finish. Or how about my favourite, the new Levolor Accordia shade, translucent, in warm gray tumbleweed. It'll save energy, too.

Comfortable Contemporary takes the hard-edged “contemporary” look and softens the outline, introduces curves, and marks the return of comfort to the modern home. It's a warm and livable play on the contemporary. Modular furniture is part of the look. So is a mix of materials, both natural and man-made. Natural light is an important element in this style.

One of my suggestions for windows and in this case a room divider, is PanelTrac, a thoroughly modern approach to window treatments – and door treatments, too. The look is clean, new, and slightly techno. Or, focusing on the “comfortable” aspect of this style, how about a Roman shade with cordless operation to keep things tidy. Your choice of fabric can bring welcome warmth and texture to the room.

Perhaps the lowest-cost style for 2011 is Collector Chic, because its main ingredients are things you already have. A collector chic interior tells a story – the story of the people who live there. It's a perfectly imperfect ensemble of treasures, combining furnishings, accessories, artwork and everything else that says something about yourselves, your lives and your aspirations. If your drapes or your carpets are rich in texture and bold in colour and pattern, so much the better. Anything goes – masculine and feminine forms, old and new, pricey and worthless – as long as the emotional connection is there.

On the windows I suggest a punch of colour and glamour with Perceptions shades, in which vertical slats are covered by a sheer layer. Visualize a really bold colour for the sheer layer – chili spice, perhaps. Or, back to my favourite, Accordia shades, with the top-down feature that can let daylight in from the top while covering the lower half of the window, natural light plus privacy.

Lastly we have Mid-Century Modern, a bold revival of mid-20th century design and idealism. It's the opposite of our present uncertainties. It's a throwback to a time that put man on the moon, and wood, leather, heavily textured fabrics and metal in the living room. Materials are natural, forms are masculine with figure-fitting curves.

And for the windows – rose-tinted glasses perhaps? Seriously, wood blinds in a rich tone and wide slats would be perfect. Or shades woven from natural materials, with a colour-co-ordinated liner to ensure privacy and achieve light control.

You can take a closer look at the many Levolor Window Fashions online at [www.Levolor.ca](http://www.Levolor.ca).

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## Give Your Appliances The Care And Maintenance They Deserve

(NC)—Kitchen appliances are like members of the family. They're carefully selected and when they're first installed, they make the kitchen look spectacular. However, if these much-loved appliances aren't properly cleaned and maintained, their pristine looks and performance may diminish over time. To keep your kitchen appliances looking and working their best, make sure to use the right appliance maintenance products.

### Stainless steel appliances

Stainless steel appliances give the kitchen a sleek and modern look, but they're finger print magnets. Fingerprints and other smudges are easily seen on stainless steel, so these appliances should be cleaned on a regular basis. However, using the wrong product on stainless steel won't get the job done and may even damage your appliance's exterior. Make sure to use a product made specifically for stainless steel appliances that will clean gently and leave a streak-free, polished shine, such as affresh Stainless Steel Cleaning Wipes.

### Glass cooktop

Glass cooktops look great but because they're used so often, they get dirty rather quickly. After just a few days of preparing meals a cooktop can be covered in everything from pasta sauce to water stains from pots that boil over. As cooktops are used quite often, it's important to use a gentle yet effective cleaner. When cleaning your glass cooktop, choose a cleaner that is designed specifically for its delicate glass surface.

### Microwave

Microwaves provide busy homeowners with convenience and quick cooking solutions. We use our microwaves frequently and they should be cleaned frequently. To keep your microwave spotless and sparkling like new, clean it often with a product that is designed to tackle kitchen grime, such as a general kitchen and appliance cleaner.



### Dishwasher

Most homeowners enjoy the convenience provided by a dishwasher but are unaware of the fact that it should be properly maintained to ensure that it continues to work well and clean effectively. Regularly check the spinning arms to make sure all holes are open and inspect the drain area for debris. Also, to help eliminate odour-causing residue, especially given the reduction in phosphates in detergents that lead to mineral build-up, use a dishwasher cleaner once a month.

More information on kitchen appliance maintenance can be found online at [www.affresh.ca](http://www.affresh.ca).  
[www.newscanada.com](http://www.newscanada.com)

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## An Inside Look At One Of The Home Décor Industry's Most Successful Innovations ~ Design Matters

(NC)—“Design is not just what it looks like and feels like. Design is how it works,” according to Steve Jobs. In the home décor arena this is especially true with window fashions. They’re not all created equal, some are such a supreme marriage of form and function that they have made design history and continue to do so.

Silhouette window shadings, with the Signature S-Vane, from Hunter Douglas is one such product. In the late 1980s, Hunter Douglas listened to its dealers who determined a need for a beautiful, sheer product that also controlled light. How the company was going to get there was anybody’s guess. The initial design was conceived during an airplane flight and sketched on a napkin.

After much hard work and more than a little genius, Silhouette window shadings were introduced to the market 25 years ago this year. In a flawless design that still has the industry guessing, the product combines sheer fabric facings with soft fabric vanes suspended between them. The sheers diffuse incoming light – taking the edge of harsh shadows – and provide a soft-focus view of the exterior, daytime privacy and superior UV protection. The vanes tilt for precise light control and complete privacy when closed. Soft and elegant, Silhouette shadings has no tapes or cords running through it to detract from its appearance.

Needless to say, this remarkable window fashion was an instant success, creating an entirely new category of “window shadings.” It has won and continues to win the world’s most important design awards as well as rave reviews from homeowners everywhere.



Caption: Great design is a marriage of form and function. Here Silhouette window shadings from Hunter Douglas combine beautiful fabric sheers with light and privacy

Never one to rest on its laurels, Hunter Douglas keeps on adding Photo design innovations to the Silhouette product line to meet the ever-growing needs and preferences of the marketplace.

“Silhouette window shadings was introduced in one fabric style, one vane size and 30 colours,” notes Sue Rainville, director of marketing for Hunter Douglas Canada. “Today we offer nine fabric styles, three vane sizes, 220 fabric/colour combinations and a variety of design options – including specialty shapes and patented lifting systems for enhanced child safety – all backed by our industry-exclusive Lifetime Guarantee.”

From Hunter Douglas Silhouette shadings to the iPad, form and function together lead to great design.

More information is available online at [www.hunterdouglas.ca](http://www.hunterdouglas.ca) or toll-free at 1-800-265-8000.

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# Luxury Updates On A Frugal Budget

(NC)—We all want the finer things in life, but while many of us have expensive tastes, we don't always have such lavish budgets. And, when it comes to updating the kitchen, many items can have large price tags that we won't be able to recoup. Luckily, in today's market, with a little creativity you can achieve a cost-conscious kitchen remodel that achieves maximum enjoyment on a minimal budget.

## Finished Look for Less

Does your kitchen have shiny brass light fixtures? If so, updating these can instantly make your home look more current and stylish. Home improvement retailers offer a wide variety of stylish and affordable choices in popular finishes, such as stainless steel or old world bronze. Or, for an even more economical choice, turn your current lighting fixtures from brass to beautiful by spray painting them with a new contemporary finish.

## Fashionable, Functional Focal Point

Most kitchens have a basic faucet – but as the focal point and most-used item in the kitchen, updating this mainstay can create a functional and fashionable change that everyone will take notice.

When selecting a new kitchen faucet, look for models such as the Moen Dorsey eco-performance faucet that feature a single-handle pullout design – with the added benefit of up to 32 percent water savings. The multi-function wand offers both a fast-fill stream for filling pots, as well as two eco-performance sprays that conserve water while allowing you to complete everyday tasks such as washing dishes or preparing foods – all with the same great performance.

## Sensational Shelves

Nothing can make a kitchen look worse than cluttered countertops. But when it comes to storing necessities or displaying decorative items – there often is no other spot. While adding new cabinetry can solve your storage issues, it can be costly. Instead, build exposed shelves to give your kitchen a more updated look and an open, airy feel.

Home improvement retailers offer a variety of pre-made wood shelving in many materials and finishes, or, if you are handy, you can build your own to save even more. Once they're complete, utilize them for a mix of decorative and functional kitchen items and be sure to keep everything neat and clean for a polished look.

## Breathtaking Backsplash

Adding ceramic tile in your kitchen can add colour, texture and a high-end appearance, but upgrading your entire floor or countertops can be very pricey. Instead, adding a tile backsplash can make a dramatic change – with minimal cost and effort. Whether you're an experienced DIYer or not, there are many online step-by-step guides or classes at home improvement retailers to learn how to complete this simple project. And, in no time at all you'll have a beautiful tile masterpiece that will accent – and protect – your walls.

With a few updates, your kitchen will look great and be more functional...all without breaking the bank. More information about Moen products can be found online at [www.moen.ca](http://www.moen.ca).

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## Your Sewer's Backed Up - Now What?

(NC)—Unexpected plumbing issues can be messy and frustrating to deal with. Many plumbing problems such as a dripping pipe or clogged toilet can be resolved within the walls of your home. However, when you're dealing with a problem such as a wet basement thanks to a backed up sewer line, you or your plumber may have to go beyond the outside walls to correct the problem. That's when you need to remember to put safety first.

If you need to clear a blockage in your sewer line beyond the walls of the building, it is very important that you or your plumber contact Ontario One Call before any work starts. Otherwise, you could be putting yourself, your family and neighbours at risk.

Here's why you need to call:

- It is possible that some natural gas lines could intersect with sewer service lines.
- Ontario One Call offers free natural gas sewer safety inspections on behalf of Enbridge Gas Distribution throughout its service area, even if you are not a natural gas customer.
- Using rotating or water jetting equipment near a natural gas line could cause damage to the natural gas line.

• Damage to a natural gas line can result in a gas leak, fire or explosion.

"Your safety is our priority and that's why we are taking proactive steps to address this industry issue," says Jamie Milner, vice president, Enbridge Gas Distribution. "We are working to raise awareness about sewer safety. We want everyone to be well informed so that they can take the appropriate steps to minimize risk to themselves and others."



Before any work starts in a sewer line beyond the outside walls of the building, contact Ontario One Call at 1-800-400-2255.

### Key Questions to Ask your Plumber

When working with a plumber to fix a blocked sewer, ask them if they need to perform work beyond the outside walls of your home or building?

- If no, you don't need to contact Ontario One Call.
- If yes, ask if they have called Ontario One Call and confirmed it is safe to proceed using rotating or flushing equipment?
- Or, will they instead be completing a video inspection of the sewer line to confirm there are no natural gas lines present?

Use these questions to confirm with your plumber that the work they're conducting is safe.

More information is available at [enbridgegas.com](http://enbridgegas.com).

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# Build Up A Plan For A Smart Renovation By Gillian Birch

(NC)—Canadians love to renovate. A recent survey by the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation found that 40 percent of households in ten Canadian markets renovated their home in 2008. The same survey found that about three quarters of households used a contractor to do all, or at least some, of their renovations.

Everyone has heard a construction/contractor horror story, either through a friend, family member or on a home improvement television program. Whether it is work not performed to code or customer specifications, projects taking longer than expected, or costs going way over budget, home renovations can be a stressful endeavour.

“Spending thousands of dollars on your home is a big decision, so selecting the right contractor is an important step,” said Wayne Ross, insurance expert at Aviva Canada. “And while stories of renovation headaches are frequent, there are thousands of reputable contractors out there. A little preparation beforehand will certainly ease the stress.” Ross offers these renovation tips to ensure homeowners finish their sum-

mer renovation projects with better success:

- Connect with previous customers: Ask your friends for referrals of contractors that they've used, especially on similar projects. Request additional referrals from possible candidates.

- Look for consistency and permanence: The ideal service provider has a physical business office and address and has been in business for a number of years under the same name.

- Do a legal check: Ensure contractors are licensed by your province and that they have insurance, meaning they are covered if they are injured during the project.

- Notify your insurer: Contact your insurance broker to discuss if any of the renovations will require an adjustment to your home policy.

By following these simple tips, you'll finish your summer renovation projects with success. More information is available from your insurance broker or online at [avivacanada.com](http://avivacanada.com).

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## Your Five-Year Home Renovation Plan

(NC)—Like any good business plan, looking ahead and planning for home renovations will help you to stay on track — ensuring your home sells in any market, even if that's 15 to 25 years from now. The most effective way to fund home renovations is to establish an annual budget that will go toward future improvements. In this way, you can accomplish regular upkeep and preserve your home's marketability.

“Think of it as a five—year home renovation plan, to be reviewed annually and updated in the fourth year,” says Phil Soper, president and chief executive at Royal LePage Real Estate Services. “Planning in this way will translate positively to your overall financial health,” Soper adds.

Here are the cornerstones for developing your plan:

- Decide on the major renovations you see approaching in five years time, such as kitchen, bathroom(s), heating and air conditioning, windows and roof.
- Prioritize and establish rough budgets for each.
- Establish an automatic payroll deduction plan that arranges for a set amount each week to be deposited into a savings account or tax—free savings account.
- Review your priorities each year and adjust both your savings contribution and the list of projects.
- In the fourth year, re—write your plan for another five years.

More information and tips on home improvements that extend the marketability of your home are available in the video library at [www.royallepage.ca](http://www.royallepage.ca).

[www.newscanada.com](http://www.newscanada.com)

## Hardwood Floors Are Still Beautiful After All These Years

(NC)—Have you ever walked into a century home and been drawn to the beauty of its original hardwood floors? There's an immediate connection we all feel, an attraction to its history and craftsmanship, to that human touch of character and authenticity.

Maybe, for a moment, you experienced a pang of floor—envy.

Envy no more – now you can enjoy the same beautiful look of character hardwood in your home. Experiencing the warmth and richness of artistically distressed or time—worn flooring is easier than ever, and it comes with the benefit of today's technology. Homeowners now can enjoy the look of distinctive, crafted hardwood, with the peace of mind that comes with the strength and durability of a brand new floor.



When selecting this kind of hardwood, you should also consider environmentally—friendly features such as FSC certification. This label is your assurance that the floor has been produced to the Forest Stewardship Council's highest standards for sustainability in product development and creation.

And what about indoor air quality? Some flooring companies do a better job than others in making sure that their floors go the extra mile in protecting the environment inside the home.

Torlys, a leading Canadian flooring company, has done all this and more with its new line of character hardwoods called Artisan Hardwood. With Artisan, what's beautiful to the eye is matched with an inner beauty of solid environmental benefits that include FSC certification, Uniclic joint technology for gap and warp resistance and an attached cork underlay protected by Microban anti—microbial treatment, a proven inhibitor of stain and odour—causing bacteria, mold and mildew. You can find out more about this fine Artisan collection online at [torlys.com](http://torlys.com).

If you're ready to add a touch of old—world charm and distinction to your home, it may be time to rethink hardwood and consider something old that's new again.

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## Instant Decorating Tips For Every Room In Your House From Hunter Douglas - Spring Spruce Ups

(NC)—As the winter dark recedes to spring sunshine, Sally Morse, director of creative services for leading window covering manufacturer Hunter Douglas, offers the following easy, affordable tips to give an instant uplift to every room in your house:

### Living Rooms

Refresh your living room with slipcovers in light, washable fabrics. Bring standard slipcovers to a monogram shop where you can add your initials, a family crest or motto to give them a custom look. Lighten up that dark fireplace with the addition of some pale wood strung with lights and replace pictures with groupings of mirrors to add reflected light.

Take down heavy draperies and bring the outdoors in with Hunter Douglas Silhouette windowshadings with the Signature S-Vane. Soft and sheer, this elegant window fashion beautifully filters the light with fabric vanes suspended between sheer facings. Your furnishings will also be protected because Silhouette shadings block up to 88 percent of the sun's harmful UV rays when the vanes are open and 99 percent when they're closed.

### Bedrooms

Invest in new bedding to make the room seem as if it belongs in a luxurious boutique hotel. Add some pillows in a variety of sizes anchored by a bolster. Top the bed with a lightweight blanket or pretty sheet and roll a comforter at the foot to have on hand for chilly evenings.

A new coat of paint is one of the quickest and most dramatic decorating uplifts. Bring home those tranquil colours from your last seaside vacation, especially the soft blue/greens at the point where the sky meets the sea. Consider Silhouette shadings in the light-dimming Bon Soir fabric for a good night's sleep. The window fashion also absorbs sound.

### Bathrooms

Turn your master bath into a spa with the addition of piles of white towels, scented candles and a fresh coat of paint. And don't forget the "fifth" wall...if you choose white for the walls try painting the ceiling sky blue.

### Kitchens

Don't be afraid of adding colour to your kitchen. When I installed a black glass counter backsplash, it set off the other colours and enhanced the space by creating an optical illusion of infinity. Something as simple as changing your kitchen towels can even add colour and "spice" to a kitchen.

### Dining Rooms

To dress up your dining room, get your silver, mercury glass and china out from the cupboard and put it on display. Add an area rug and change the shades on lamps and ceiling fixtures. Sheer shades on your lighting as well as at the window will create a soft, translucent light. Put all electric lighting on dimmers so that you can be the movie director of your meals!

With these tips, your home will have an instant uplift for the spring and beyond.

More information is available online at [www.hunterdouglas.ca](http://www.hunterdouglas.ca) or toll-free at 1-800-265-8000.

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## Amping Up Your Spa & Hot Tub

(NC)—Although they have always provided soothing comfort for bathers with sore muscles and joints, hot tubs and spas have now become outdoor entertainment centres as well. CD and DVD players, retractable liquid crystal TV sets and speakers, even Internet access and iPod docking stations are now featured on many spa models – making a soak in the backyard spa even more enjoyable as you watch your favourite movie or listen to the sounds of your favourite CD.

Do you enjoy watching television as you soak your cares and worries away? There are spas and hot tubs available with an LCD television screen built right into them. These large, waterproof screens (some are 1 m/42 in. wide) provide a treat for the eyes when they are elevated and simply retract into the spa cabinet when no longer needed.

Do you want to watch your favourite DVD or listen to your favourite CD while enjoying a relaxing soak? Hot tubs and spas are now equipped with DVD and CD players with pop-up speakers for high-fidelity sound that enhances the soaking experience. You can also enjoy your latest music downloads by placing your iPod in a built-in iPod docking station that will play music through the spa's built-in speakers.

Do you need to stay in touch with office while you soak? Hot tub models are even available with an Internet connection, complete with a waterproof mouse and keyboard.

LED lights are popular feature to have while entertaining. Built into most spa and hot tub models, LED lights require half the power of traditional halogen or incandescent lights and do a lot more than simply illuminate the spa underwater. These high-tech systems can be synchronized to put on a range of colourful light shows underwater – either a single colour or gradual colour transition for relaxation or a rapid display of

many colours for a party atmosphere – it's as easy as pushing a button. For more information on the entertainment options in a spa or hot tub, contact the Pool & Hot Tub Council of Canada at 1-800-879-7066 or visit their Web site at [www.poolcouncil.ca](http://www.poolcouncil.ca).

## Picking Out The Perfect Pool

(NC)—A swimming pool is the perfect way to entertain the kids and spend quality time with your family or just to relax and enjoy the outdoors. But before you head out the door to your local pool store, take the time to learn about the different types of pools available. Here is an overview of what you can choose for your backyard.

Vinyl-lined pools are the most popular type of pool in Canada. Constructed of steel walled panels supported by steel braces, this type of pool features a vinyl liner placed over the steel panels and the pool floor and is held in place by coping around the pool perimeter.

Poured-in-place concrete pools use concrete that is poured over a rebar grid (steel rods for reinforcement) between prepared forms, while wet mix shotcrete uses pre-mixed concrete that is sprayed onto a steel reinforced grid through a hose nozzle. The walls of the pool are then finished in plaster or other coating products and then painted and decorated with tile or stone accents. Concrete pools are more labour-intensive than vinyl-lined pools and can take several weeks to build – but they do offer unlimited design potential.

Another option is a fibreglass pool. This type of pool is prefabricated and is shipped to the site on a trailer and lowered into the ground by a crane. The fibreglass shell is then plumbed and backfilled, with installations taking about one week.

The most affordable of all pool types is the above-ground pool, which consists of a vinyl liner attached to an above-ground metal or resin frame in a round or oval shape. Above-ground pools average 1.2 m to 1.3 m in height and offer contemporary colours and accents on the outside walls and uprights that allow them to complement any home or landscaping design.

Onground pools – also called semi-inground pools are made of rigid steel or aluminum walls that are partially lowered into the ground. Ideal for backyards with uneven terrain, onground pools are also perfect for yards with limited space and are available in round and oval shapes.

Whatever type of pool you select, be sure to hire an expert to install it – a qualified Member of the Pool & Hot Tub Council of Canada. You can identify a reputable pool company in your area using the locator on the website: [www.poolcouncil.ca](http://www.poolcouncil.ca) or toll-free at 1-800-879-7066. [www.newscanada.com](http://www.newscanada.com)



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## Spring Safety Checklist

(NC)—As we welcome the spring temperatures, we should always keep safety top of mind. As the season changes from winter to spring, everyone is eager to get out and enjoy the warmer weather, outdoor spaces and tackle the “to-do” lists that have been growing over the winter months.

Here's a list of spring safety reminders from Enbridge Gas Distribution:

### Safety in the Yard

When planning projects that require digging, such as planting a tree or building a fence, remember that natural gas and other utility lines could be buried in your yard. It's the law to locate buried natural gas lines before you dig. Contact Ontario One Call at 1-800-400-2255 or [www.on1call.com](http://www.on1call.com) at least one week before you start. After you call, they'll come out to your property to locate underground lines, mark them and leave a locate sheet providing instructions on how to safely proceed.

Make sure you landscape carefully near gas meters and regulators. Never raise the level of a garden so that soil touches your meter or regulator. Doing so could result in corrosion and cause a gas leak.

### Safety by the Pool

Before pool season gets into full swing, it's the perfect time to have your pool heater serviced. Pool heaters, like other fuel-burning equipment, need to be maintained regularly to work safely and efficiently. Contact a licensed heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) contractor for service and questions.

### Safety before you Barbecue

With grilling season around the corner, it's a great time to review your manufacturer's instructions for the maintenance and use of your barbecue. For many of us, the barbecue has been out of use for the winter, so it's also a good time to give it a thorough inspection.

### Safety in a Flood

Spring showers and melting snow can increase the possibility of water main breaks and sewer backups. With your safety in mind, never enter any flooded areas. If you're experiencing a flood, don't attempt to restart your natural gas appliances until you've had them inspected. Natural gas appliances (including furnaces, boilers and water heaters) that have been submerged, partially submerged, come into contact with water, or had their gas controls or electrical cords come into contact with water are considered unsafe and must not be used until inspected by a licensed HVAC contractor.

**Remember** – always call your local gas utility if you smell natural gas or suspect damage to natural gas equipment due to flooding.

For more information on staying safe this spring, visit [enbridgegas.com](http://enbridgegas.com).

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## Feed And Weed For A Beautiful Lawn

(NC)—“It takes two,” says Glenn Martin at Scotts, a leading company in lawn and garden supplies. “It takes both the fertilizer and the weed control working in harmony to produce a healthy green lawn—and with the latest advancements, it is easier than you think.”

The first step, he says, for a sound weed defense program is regular feeding of the lawn. A well-fed lawn, every 8 weeks, will build thick turf with deep roots making it harder for weeds to invade and flourish. Step two involves controlling any weeds that do manage to take root, without damaging the lawn.

“One of the most exciting developments is a weed control product that kills weeds, not lawns and is permitted for use where conventional weed controls have been banned,” Martin continued. “Our new Scotts EcoSenseWeed B Gon is made with iron, an element found in our natural environment. When weeds are exposed to iron, it causes them to turn black, shrivel and die – and visible results are evident within just a few hours.”

This year when you choose a fertilizer be sure to read the labels and avoid products with fillers like sand, gravel and sawdust.

“Every fertilizer granule should be 100 per cent food so your grass will receive an even distribution of nutrients without the risk of burning,” Martin explained. “Our Turf Builder fertilizer with its patented all-in-one particle, delivers this”.

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# Landscape Inspiration, Creation and Preservation

With the focus of home improvement having been well established in homeowners' minds, it is now time for homeowners to take some of the same inspiration and excitement that has been seen in interior renovations and do the same with the exterior of the home. After all, the outside of one's home is as much a reflection of their personality as the inside.

Allow yourself to dream a little. Be inspired by various television shows, magazine articles and website photos. Think about what would make your property more inspiring and more pleasant to want to spend more time in the outdoors. Take a step toward making your dreams into reality by examining what new landscaping features would move you closer to that ultimate "home retreat" feel. Use the help of a landscape designer who can work with you to figure out what landscape features would be best and where to place them on your property. After all, the right landscape feature in the wrong place quickly loses its appeal! A landscape professional can also help sort out what new products are available and which ones would function well on your particular property.

Once the decision has been made to move from inspiration to creation, ensure you understand what the project involves before making the decision to "do-it-yourself" or to "hire a professional". Sometimes what appears to be a fairly simple landscape project may involve fairly extensive preparation or installation work that can be backbreaking and discouraging. Also, as with most construction type projects, the success of the project's outcome is directly linked to the planning and execution of the basework. Take time to do it right and you will realize the satisfaction you were hoping for in the landscape feature.

The final step in preserving your satisfaction with your new landscape or landscape feature is knowing what maintenance procedures will be necessary to preserve the look of the landscape enhancement. Commit to either doing those maintenance procedures yourself or hiring a professional to look after the work. Some landscape features need more seasonal attention than others. For instance, a new garden will require reg-

ular weeding, mulching and pruning whereas a new stone patio will require very little if any maintenance services for years. Talk to your local landscape professional, preferably one who has been in business for many years, for help in knowing what your dream landscape will need in future maintenance requirements. Once you are well informed, then you are ready to move from inspiration to creation of a landscape that will be yours to enjoy for many years to come.

Lorna Pond, CLP  
Urban Landscaping Ltd.

## Barbecue Buying 101

(NC)—Once summer arrives, we all want to enjoy the sunshine, warm weather and home grilled fare! Whether looking for your first grill or an upgrade, The Home Depot has something for everyone, regardless of grilling experience, budget or personal preference.

- **Natural gas** – Natural gas barbecues are ideal for the experienced grill master. They heat up quickly and have the highest BTUs (British thermal units) for cooking. They do require a natural gas line connection for setup, but once you have it, they offer an endless supply of fuel.
- **Propane gas** – Propane gas barbecues are a good choice for both the seasoned and novice griller. Similar to natural gas barbecues, they heat up quickly and provide high level of BTUs for cooking. For those looking to accessorize, added features such as side burners, temperature indicators, side and back burners and storage cabinets are available.
- **Charcoal** – Charcoal is the ideal choice for the grilling enthusiast who loves an authentic smoky flavour. Charcoal units can be slow to heat up, so if time is concern, consider purchasing a charcoal barbecue with a gas-ignition system.

• **Portable** – For condo and apartment dwellers, a portable barbecue may be the best option. The compact design can offer flexibility and convenience, without sacrificing quality.

For more information, and to find out what barbecue might be your perfect fit, check out the BBQ buying guide at [www.homedepot.ca/bbq](http://www.homedepot.ca/bbq) or talk to an associate at your local The Home Depot store.

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## Five Keys To Choosing The Right Retirement Residence

(NC)—Looking for a retirement residence that helps you live the life you want? Consider these top five factors when doing your research.

1. **Location** – Are you close to friends, family and the things that are important to you in the community?
2. **Services** – What does the residence offer in terms of dining, laundry, housekeeping and other services?
3. **Amenities** – Does the residence offer additional facilities such as a fitness room, games room, lounge, gardens, library, theatre, café, etc.?
4. **Programs** – Do the social and recreational activities interest you?
5. **Care** – Do the support services meet your health needs?

“Asking the right questions is the first step to finding the right residence for you,” says Sylvia Watts, national director at Revera, a company with 50 years of experience in seniors' accommodation, care and services. “By thinking about the things you might need or want, you'll be able to identify the right place for you.”

If you're unsure about what options are available in retirement living, the professionals at Revera's toll-free line, 1-877-929-9222, can help. This 24/7 free telephone service gives seniors, and their families, information to help them make the best decision about the type of retirement residence that's right for them.

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## Taking Inventory

All homeowners and tenants should have an up-to-date inventory of their possessions and a record of the items' values. This record is very useful to all parties involved (e.g., the homeowner or tenant, the insurer and the police) in the event of a burglary or fire. Without such a record on hand, it can be difficult for people to recall the details about items that are damaged or have gone missing.

When taking inventory, some people like to make a drawer-by-drawer, room-by-room record of their possessions using a photo or video camera. An audio recorder could be useful for making a spoken, detailed list of collections (e.g., books, tools, stamps, etc.). Written or typed descriptions are useful, too. However one decides to make an inventory, it should include items' makes, models, serial numbers and other identifying marks, as well as sales receipts for major items. Inventory records should be stored in a safety-deposit box or another secure location away from home.

IBC makes two home inventory aids available on its website, [www.ibt.ca](http://www.ibt.ca). One is a simple spreadsheet people can use to list their belongings room by room, and the other is an easy-to use software program called "Know Your Stuff," which gives users the options to upload photos and store their inventory data in a secure location.

This was taken from the IBC web site.....

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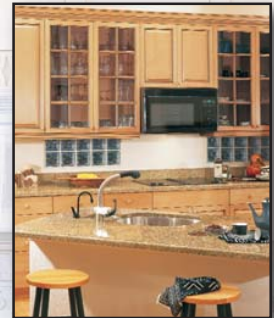


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