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Making Home Your Favourite Place On Earth

(NC)—It goes without saying that downturns in the economy and the housing market go hand-in-hand, along with a general decline in consumer spending. Historically, this has meant two things for homeowners looking to invest wisely and make smart financial choices – spend more time at home, and improve their living space while doing so.

Affordable, do-it-yourself upgrades are a solution many Canadians choose instead of listing property in a less than ideal market. For those looking to make investments in the future value of their homes, facelifts should go beyond just simple changes in home décor. In fact, real estate experts suggest focusing on the kitchen and bathroom where upgrades are most important. The trick is to refresh the home with changes that add value, without spending tens of thousands of dollars on a professional remodel.

Of course, the kitchen is where we spend most of our time. Many dwellings, especially those with open concept ground floors, naturally encourage people to congregate in the kitchen – particularly when entertaining. There are options you can install on your own to give an immediate high-end look that would pass the test of a professional designer. For example, consider a conversation-starting sink faucet from Kohler. The Karbon articulating kitchen faucet is so interesting that guests will consider it a piece of art.

Or, add functionality with a second sink area that doubles as a hostess's dream. Drinks and cold appetizers can be iced to perfection in Kohler's Cordial entertainment sink. When not entertaining guests for a special night, it can be used for food prep or a station to wash hands and rinse dishes.

The bathroom is one of the easiest rooms for affordable and valuable upgrades. It's incredibly cost-effective to refresh the bathroom with a new faucet, sink or even sleek yet impactful accessories that have a modern twist. You don't need to do it all at once, and you certainly don't have to take on new flooring or tiling to make an impact.

A set of coordinating towel racks, drawer pulls, door hooks and even a new mirror can subtly change the personality of a space in moments, while creating a look that lasts for years. The highly versatile Loure line from Kohler inspires a contemporary, almost hotel-like ambiance that immediately makes the room feel high-end, and sets the tone for the rest of the house.

More information about Kohler's kitchen and bath products is available online at www.kohler.ca.

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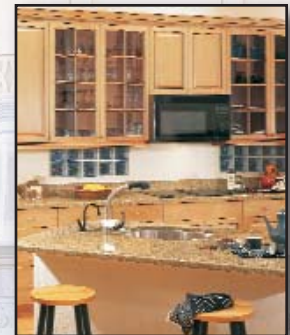
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If you are looking for an alternative to disposable deck and lawn furniture, consider outdoor furniture made of teak hardwood as a good long-term choice.

The Teak Tree, or Tectona, is a tropical cousin of the birch, and is known for its remarkable resistance to weather, and its ability to flex but not break. Used by shipbuilders since the Middle Ages, teak's dense fibres make it ideal for furniture making because the glue joints will last for a lifetime.

The best-quality furniture is made from teak trees grown on plantations, primarily located in Indonesia and the Philippines.

In a rare ecological win-win, cultivated trees grow straight and fast. Their straight grain makes them better suited to furniture-making than forest-grown trees. The result is a decline in clear-cutting in environmentally sensitive areas.

Teak furniture first became prominent during the Victorian era. Due to its high natural oil content, teak wood is water repellent. Early teak furniture makers recognized these weatherproof advantages and when British sailing ships were decommissioned the teak was salvaged and made into furniture.

Be prepared to take care of your teak. Left alone, teak wood will weather to a mellow silver-grey color, but many people are drawn to its lustre and rich color. To preserve this golden color, count on applying a quality wood sealer about every other year, much as you would apply sealer to your deck.

If you are in the market, you may find that teak furniture is more expensive than the products you find at home centers and department stores. But if you are tired of replacing your patio furniture every year or so, the purchase of teak furniture may actually save you money over the years.

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ADT Security Services Leads The Industry By: Julia Hall


Home security situations and needs differ with the physical size of the home, number of residents, ages and interests of those residents, and value of the contents of the house. Do you live alone or with several other people? Are you or other members of your family completely healthy, or are you disabled in some way? All these factors may influence your decision regarding what is best for you and your personal security situation. Regardless of the size of your house in , the number and ages of family members and the quantity of individuals you live with, everyone needs protection from break-ins, burglary, and medical and fire emergencies. Do you currently enjoy total protection from an intruder intent on taking your belongings and harming you in the process? While no one can be absolutely 100 percent protected, you can make your home environment at least 3 times more secure* by employing a Wireless Home Security System with monitoring by ADT.

ADT Security Services has top of the line wireless sensors that have the unique capability of detecting intruders before they step foot inside your property. Interior sensors are sensitive to body heat and movement and when activated make immediate contact with the closest command monitoring center and the appropriate authorities. ADT Security Services has five command centers located strategically across the United States so that your call and subsequent communications are received person-to-person rather than through automation. This assures prompt and immediate response during any emergency situation. Basic equipment includes a master control panel, a key chain remote, 2 door/window sensors, a motion detector, a smoke detector, a built-in siren, and yard and window signs to be prominently displayed. Signs of this nature often deter crime before it is committed. Arming the home alarm system is easy - just a touch of the key chain remote - and protection is continuous - 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Paramedics, fire, and police may be summoned by a touch of the control panel whether the system is armed or not. This assures assistance within minutes of activation. The scope of protection with these systems is comparable to having a private security specialist in your home at all times. The Wireless ADT monitored security system is installed by licensed professionals who can answer any questions you might have and offer recommendations and suggestions for any additional security needs. Instruction on the operation of your system is provided as well as ADT certification for insurance purposes. Many homeowner insurance policies offer up to a 20 percent savings in premiums when an ADT monitored security system is installed. An added bonus for homeowners is that property values usually increase in homes protected by ADT systems.

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assured that your family is safe in the privacy of your home with ADT . Everyone, everywhere is susceptible to crime. Your search for the best protection company has come to an end. ADT is the best in the business.

Fast, accurate response is probably the biggest benefit of your home alarm system during a burglary, fire, medical problem or other crisis. To deliver this kind of timely response, ADT Security Services leads the industry with 5 virtually fail safe monitoring centers across the United States. Most companies in the USA only operate 1 or 2 monitoring facilities. This is important to you because when those centers go down, they have no way to monitor your residence. That leaves you without any protection when you need it the most. Don't be left without any protection.



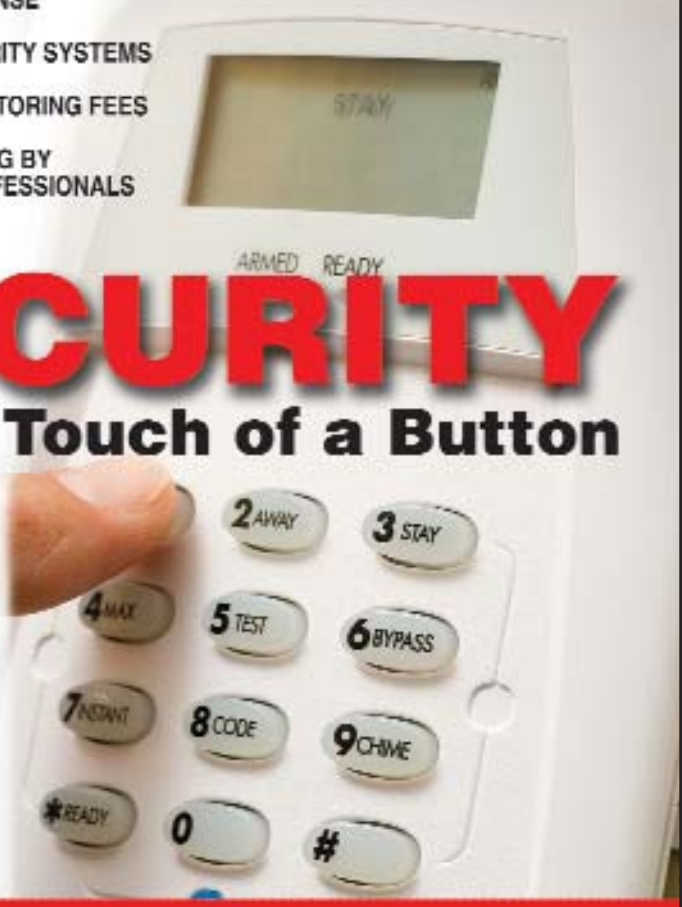
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Hot Tubs: Tips For Safe Soaking

(NC)—Hot tubs are a great way to relax, renew your spirits and escape from your cares and worries. However, there are certain precautions you should take to ensure that your hot tub experience is a safe one.

First, check the water temperature before entering the hot tub. It should be at a maximum of 40°C (104°F). You should also limit the amount of time you spend in the water to 10 – 15 minute intervals with cool down periods in between to avoid becoming overheated.

Never allow children to use a hot tub without adult supervision and maintain constant eye contact with children when they are around a spa or hot tub.

Never use a hot tub while under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs such as antihistamines, tranquilizers or anticoagulants that may cause drowsiness or increase/decrease blood temperature.

Consult with your doctor before using a hot tub if you have heart disease, high or low blood pressure, are pregnant, or have any serious illness.

Make sure the entry and exit areas around the hot tub are slip-resistant and have good deck drainage and remove any vegetation or other obstacles that can impede your view of the hot tub or spa.

Keep toys stored away that could encourage a child to enter the water. Do not allow horseplay or roughhousing around a spa or hot tub that can lead to slips, falls or injury.

Never use a spa or hot tub with a drain cover or grate that is loose or broken and make sure the hot tub is protected by a rigid safety cover that locks shut to prevent unauthorized use.

Installing a permanent fence in your backyard is essential in preventing children, pets and unauthorized users from entering your property and using your hot tub. Sliding glass doors and other entrances to the hot tub area should also have self-closing, self-latching mechanisms.

For more information on spa and hot tub safety, contact the Pool & Hot Tub Council of Canada at 1-800-879-7066 or visit their Web site at www.poolcouncil.ca. - News Canada

Find The Perfect Pool To Suit Your Needs

(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 fiberglass 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 fiberglass shell is then plumbed and backfilled, with installation 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 1.2m – 1.3m (4 – 4.5 ft.) 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 come in round and oval shapes.

More information on this topic is available online at www.poolcouncil.ca or toll-free at 1-800-879-7066.

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What You Should Know Before Purchasing A Garage Door

(NC)—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) to learn more. Keep reading below to find out the three 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 fiberglass. 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 employees 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 and 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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FIREPLACE OPTIONS FOR THE NEW HOME BUILDER OR RENOVATOR

A fireplace can be a wonderful addition to a family room, a den, a bedroom or even a kitchen. It will add beauty and elegance to the living space and will provide a lovely atmosphere and ambiance to the room when in use. The heating options are wood, pellet, propane, natural gas or electric. But that is only the start. You then can choose from different door finishes (gold, nickel, metallic black, etc), and different surround trims. You can even opt for a bay window. And finally you can choose from a variety of mantels (cast, wood or stone) to add that final touch of elegance. And do not forget that electric fireplaces have the advantage of being portable. All that is needed is a 120 volt outlet.

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

A popular trend, for homeowners designing large family rooms, living rooms or dens, is to install a gas fireplace with flames that can reach as high as 18 to 20 inches (normal height is 4 to 6 inches). This of course is necessary to ensure that the flame is in proportion to the size of the living space. With numerous options available

such as different mantels, firebox liners, log designs and flame patterns, new homeowner's have complete control over the look of their fireplace.

For the homeowner that is looking for an entirely different look there are now propane and natural gas fireplace wall units and corner units. And for a contemporary look you now have flames that rise over smooth river rock or tumbled glass.

Submitted by John Jones, a Sales Representative at Alternatives.



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Keeping up with the Jones' Credit Counselling Services of Atlantic Canada, Inc.

Who exactly are these "Jones" people who seem to have everything we want? And why do we care so much? Keeping up with the Jones' is a preoccupation that happens in every neighbourhood, town, city and family. The trick is not to get caught up in it. If you do, you may find yourself paying to live someone else's life, not your own.

We've all been there. Someone we know has something new and shiny, and we want one too – maybe something even better. But while it might appear as though the "Jones" have everything, you'd be surprised to learn how many of them are paying for it.

Chances are, they're living completely beyond their means to have all this nice "stuff". Their spending habits are often completely out of control, with maxed-out credit cards and overwhelming lines of credit. But one small hiccup in their lives could send them plummeting over the financial brink.

It's natural to want nice things. The problem comes when we define ourselves, or what people think of us, by possessions. Take a good, hard look at your income and expenses – write them down. Then have a conversation with your partner about your short and long term goals, your needs and wants. Do you need to pay down your credit card debt? Do you want a new car, a family trip, a new television? Once you separate what you truly need from what you merely want, you can figure out how to set reasonable goals and reach them.

Credit Counselling Services of Atlantic Canada, Inc. has certified counsellors to help you figure out how to spend your money wisely, create a balanced budget, and set goals to have the things you've determined are really important to you.

You can break the habit of spending more than you can afford. We can help.

Construction Quick Tip Newest Building System Preserves Our Forests

(MS) -- It is no longer necessary to build the frames of our home with wood. Concrete is now a leading building material all across North America for many reasons, not the least of which is energy efficiency. The latest building advancement by Nudura Corporation for example (nudura.com) is reported to provide double the insulation by constructing walls with pre-assembled concrete forms. This innovation (consisting of reinforced concrete sandwiched between two layers of polystyrene) cuts construction time significantly and is recognized for flexibility in design, for creating less waste, and it virtually eliminates the toxic emissions produced by buildings structured with wood. Hailed as an award-winning contribution to 'green' construction technology, the Nudura building system is now used for the construction of better homes, schools, hospitals, condominiums, hotels, and offices throughout North America. Homeowners save money due to durability and energy efficiency - and the resulting structure is reported to be up to nine times stronger, with far more fire protection, far more sound insulation, and with a potential to reduce energy costs of up to 70 percent.

Earth Tones Foster Comfort And Warmth In The Kitchen

(NC)—Even in the most contemporary home, there's an argument to be made to go a little warmer when designing the kitchen. As the most popular gathering place in the home for family and friends, the kitchen is considered by many to represent the heart of the home.

It's also the one room in the home that is generally available to all family members at any time, day or night. While the family room might occasionally be monopolized for gaming or television, it's generally accepted that the kitchen is not to be monopolized by any one person or group. We wander in and out at all times of the day, say a few words to one another and maybe fix a meal or cup of tea for someone in the family.

Here are some simple ways to ensure the kitchen stays warm and inviting that work for even a contemporary décor.

- Switch from stainless steel appliances or countertops which foster a commercial look or use them minimally. Coloured appliances, whether one of the new bronze finishes or even old-fashioned white, always looks homier. Used sparingly however, stainless steel will not detract from a warm atmosphere. Small appliances or even stainless steel backsplashes, work well. The key is to avoid it for large surfaces where it dominates the room.

- Use natural materials in warm colours wherever you can. Wood or warm tile floors and granite sinks and faucets add instant warmth. "One of our most popular colours in our line of natural granite sinks is called Silgranit Cognac," says Alexandra Marshall, director of marketing for premium-sink manufacturer Blanco. "We introduced Cognac, a warm rich coppery colour, over a year ago," says Ms. Marshall, "and it's been a pleasant surprise success. I think that not only are consumers attracted to the rich metallic colour that goes well with many of the new granite and quartz countertops today but they love how it enriches the room and adds a touch of luxury in a very cost-effective way." Blanco Silgranit sinks are also available in other warm terra colours including café, biscotti and stone biscuit, in addition to a line of cooler colours.

- Instead of a chrome faucet consider either a softer metal like stainless steel or a coloured faucet. Blanco coloured faucets are made to match their Silgranit sinks and are available in 7 rich colours. But they also can be paired with a stainless steel sink and matched to countertop, appliances or backsplash for a touch of warmth.

- Cabinetry pulls in matte versus shiny finishes also warm up the room, even if the hardware is a metal. Rather than a shiny metal select from bronze, wood or matte metal finishes.

- Keeping walls painted in a light colour and windows uncovered so that lots of warm natural light pours into the room, will help keep everyone feeling warm and comforted in the kitchen.

- Finally, comfortable and casual seating is conducive to conversation and a great way to encourage late night chats with otherwise uncommunicative teenagers. Use wood or warm colours for seating and tables and cushioned seats. Casual bar seating is ideal instead of more formal table seating which should be reserved for the formal dining area.

With just a few changes to add warmth and comfort to your kitchen, you may find more happy memories created at the kitchen counter than in front of the electronics in the family room. Another good reason to keep things warm in the kitchen.

- News Canada

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Kitchen Reno...From Heaven Or Hell? 5 Step Plan To A Smooth Kitchen Renovation.

For a kitchen renovation you have probably all heard of the stories about cost overruns, delays & general nightmares. In reality most go very well especially if you do a bit of preplanning. Following are five steps to make the process go smoothly:

#1--You need a plan

Just like a trip needs a road map, GPS or travel itinerary, a kitchen reno needs a good, well thought out plan. The new kitchen layout can be done by yourself, your contractor, a box store cabinet supplier, your decorator or a custom cabinet supplier.

If you have done your own layout, have a kitchen pro look at it also since chances are they may come up with ideas you may not have considered. Choosing the style and color of the cabinets will be the next major decision. Are you looking for a wood or painted finish or one of the specialty finishes? Counter tops are a major selection to consider. The most popular are post formed laminate with above mount sinks. Granite, Quartz and solid surface usually have few seams and under mounted sinks.

There is also the laminate "Seamless sinks & counters" that is available from some of the custom manufactures that will give you the Granite or Corian look and under mounted sinks for closer to laminate prices. For more info on this type of counter check it out at www.AvondaleKitchens.com

#2--Select your Kitchen cabinet supplier.

By the time you have rechecked your cabinet layouts you will have a good idea which firm to go with on your cabinet purchase. One of the main items you need to consider is who will install the cabinets. It is usually best to have the installing handled by the cabinet supplier, that way with a turnkey cabinet package there is usually less delays and quicker response if problems do arrive.

#3--Select your Contractor

The main rule here is get the right size contractor for the right size job. Be wary of a contractor fitting this in on their spare time. Since there are contractors out there that make a living doing your size job, your job then becomes a very important project to them, thus good service and follow up.

Good contractors are normally busy and booked. Remember, good contractors are good schedulers and can typically book you in within 4 to 5



weeks.

#4--Get it in writing

In the kitchen reno you should have your cabinet quotes, contractor reno package, flooring budget & appliance needs in writing. A little work at the front can save a lot of grief at the end.

#5--Proceed with the project

Here's the breakdown....50% of the reno projects go OK, 30% go fantastic and 20 % seem to be a disaster.. Where do you want to be? The trick to coming out on top?..Pick the right people to do your project! The right team will help you manage the project. In the top 30 % of projects the homeowner usually becomes good friends with the cabinet suppliers, contractor and a few of the subs. Great deal..new kitchen and a bunch of new friends when you are done.

This article was written by Jim Lawrence of Avondale Kitchens. Their firm designs, manufactures and installs three kitchens per week.

For your project contact them directly at www.AvondaleKitchens.com 800-561-4112 or book them through your favorite decorator or contractor.

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How To Refinance To Fund A Renovation

(NC)—Low interest rates may encourage more homeowners to consider refinancing their home to fund repair work or renovations. But before signing those mortgage refinancing documents, make sure you really understand what's involved.

"Refinancing has become a popular option among homeowners for accessing capital, it is important to understand and review all the paperwork involved, especially in these economic times" says Ray Leclair, an experienced real estate lawyer and vice-president of TitlePLUS. "Many people routinely sign documents as borrowers, effectively waiving the right to legal advice or giving up more than they understood. A real estate lawyer can provide advice during refinancing about things such as financial obligations and the legal consequences if these can't be met."

Leclair explains that working with a lawyer protects homeowners' interests, in terms of:

- the specifics of the loan transaction;
- the security given to the bank in exchange for borrowing the money;
- the lender's Standard Charge Terms (including what the lender can do if payments are not made on time); and
- a confirmation of which property and obligations are being secured with the loan.

"Refinancing a mortgage can be a good option for homeowners, but it is imperative to understand what it all means," Leclair says. "Canadians can protect their interests by educating themselves about the process, and working with a trusted advisor, such as their real estate lawyer."

A useful resource is the TitlePLUS Real Simple Real Estate Guide, a website that provides information on what lawyers do and how to avoid fraud, as well as mortgage calculators, a locate-a-lawyer feature and other tools. It is available free at www.titleplus.ca. - News Canada

It's Easy Being Green

(NC)—Want to lead a greener lifestyle? It's easier than you think. With 3M Canada's new Recycled Post-it Notes, you can leave yourself guilt-free 'green' reminders at home or the office.

Place Recycled Post-it Notes in these and other locations to remind yourself and others to reduce, reuse and recycle:

- Beside light switches and computer monitors that can be turned off when you leave the room
- Over your home's garbage bin to remind you to take a few more steps to the recycling bin
- On your computer printer to discourage printing
- On bathroom mirrors next to faucets that can be turned off while shaving or tooth brushing
- On the refrigerator to remind you to close it as quickly as possible
- On your washing machine to as a reminder to choose cold water.
- On the thermostat to remind you to lower the heat at night or when you're away
- On the dryer to encourage air drying
- Near the front door as a reminder to walk or ride your bike to work or school.

All Post it Notes are recyclable. What's more, new Recycled Post-it Notes are made from 100% post-consumer waste and are packaged in an eco-friendly cardboard tower with no additional plastic.

More about eco-friendly solutions for your home or office can be found online at www.post-it.ca.

- News Canada

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Top Decorating Trends

(NC)—For the many homeowners who want to update their décor, Sue Rainville, director of marketing for leading window fashions manufacturer Hunter Douglas, spots the trends and offers easy tips to bring them home:

1. Comfortable and Cozy— Transform your home into a sanctuary with the addition of a few down-filled pillows and some soft rugs. Window fashions are key to achieving privacy. Silhouette window shadings from Hunter Douglas offer a combination of sheer fabric to maintain a view of the outside and rotating fabric vanes for variable light control and privacy. If noise is a problem, fabric window coverings offer significant sound absorption to add to the serenity of your home.

2. The Modern Mix— Clean, contemporary furnishings remain popular but are now mixed with traditional and organic elements. A contemporary glass coffee table looks great placed in front of a soft, curvy sofa. Natural, organic elements add warmth to contemporary décor. Hand-woven from grasses, woods, reeds and bamboo, Provenance woven wood shades from Hunter Douglas bring natural texture to your windows.

3. Personal Chic— Your home should be all about you. Don't be afraid to mix an inherited sideboard with art collected in travels and new acquisitions. You may be surprised to see how well they all get along, just like mixing guests from different areas of your life to make for a lively party. It is not so much the individual furnishings but the artful merging of styles and colours that add personality to a room.

4. A More Colourful World— Colour forecasters agree that purple is king. Other colour trends for 2009 that forecasters predict include 'blue

as the new green' with ocean and sky blues being especially desirable. Also, look for pungent, natural colours from the garden, such as radish, tomato and eggplant. Yellow, which equals energy, will be the main accent of the year along with strokes of orange and turquoise. Window fashions like the Silhouette Matisse Collection of Coloured Sheers and Vanes update a room with fresh, fashion-forward hues at the window.

5. Light and Airy— As homes become more colourful, more light is needed in a room and nothing compares to natural light. Window fashions like Silhouette shadings and Luminette Privacy Sheers, a product similar to Silhouette shadings, but on the vertical, beautifully filter natural light as it illuminate enters the home to achieve a relaxed and serene atmosphere. More information is available online at www.hunterdouglas.ca or toll-free at 1-800-265-8000.

- News Canada



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– Benjamin Moore is ushering in a whole new era in paint history with the introduction of Aura.

Three years in development, Aura is a 100% acrylic interior super premium paint featuring Benjamin Moore's patent-pending ColorLock™ technology partnered with a waterborne colourant system. Together, they yield a paint product that delivers unprecedented performance and meets the toughest VOC rules in North America. Simply put, Benjamin Moore has created the world's most advanced interior finish — the first major innovation in coatings since the introduction of latex paint in the 1950s.

ColorLock is the key to Aura's remarkable characteristics. This cutting-edge technology literally locks in the colour, enabling Aura to cover most surfaces in a single coat. Self-priming, never more than two coats are required, no matter the colour, no matter the room. In standard paint, colour pigment is only loosely held by the binding agent, resulting in a loose film and the potential for colour to rub off. With ColorLock technology, the waterborne colourant actually embeds itself in the binding agent, locking the colour pigments to the paint film, eliminating colour rub off. Aura is designed to withstand life — offering unrivaled durability, washability and stain, water, and colour-fade resistance. "Not all paint is created equal," commented Carl Minchew, director of colour technology for Benjamin Moore. "Aura is simply the finest paint Benjamin Moore has ever made. Since 1883, this company has driven industry innovation to create the best products for our customers. Aura is the next generation of paint, formulated to provide the highest quality finish for those who demand only the best in their interior spaces."

Additionally, the impact ColorLock technology is having on the application properties of Aura is equally astounding. The flow and leveling are superior. It is spatter-free and creates the smoothest possible finish. Aura also has incredible, seamless touch-up traits: when applied as a "touch-up" or for "cutting in" corners, edges or ceilings, it completely integrates into the existing Aura paint film, creating an even, smooth layer of colour — with no brush or roller marks.

"With Aura, Benjamin Moore has eliminated the problem of colourant inhibiting the performance of paint," Minchew added. "For the first time, the two are designed to work together flawlessly, reinforcing performance and delivering exceptional results."

An Environmental Milestone...

Benjamin Moore takes its role as a steward of the environment very seriously.

The company works diligently in developing and manufacturing its products to minimize adverse impact on our world. Aura is an extremely eco-friendly paint, a triumphant continuation of the company's longstanding commitment to our planet. The fact that it also is an ultra performance product makes it truly rare. Aura's very low volatile organic compound (VOC) formulation— under 50 grams per liter — meets the strictest VOC regulatory requirements in North America (which is in Southern California) and exceeds most, and it does so without compromising on quality. And by creating an entirely new waterborne colourant system, Benjamin Moore ensures that no additional VOCs are introduced into the product when colourant is added.

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How To Keep Your Family Safe From Accidental Fire

(NC)—According to the Canadian Safety Council, every year about 400 Canadians lose their lives in an accidental household fire. In fact, it's during the fall and winter seasons that the number of deaths caused by accidental household fires are at their highest.

Patrice De Luca, vice president of marketing and business development for Reliance Protectron Security Services, says one of the major reasons for this significant increase is windblown sparks from wood burning fireplaces and stoves. "You need to take every possible precaution to minimize the risks of fire when you have a natural wood burning fireplace," he added. "Fire is one of the greatest threats to your family and home. People do not realize the emotional toll a fire can take, even if there is no loss of life."

Here are safety tips to consider from Protectron's free "Saving Lives Program":

- Monitored detectors for smoke and carbon monoxide should be installed at strategic locations – your kitchen, stairwell, bedroom hallways and other high-traffic household areas. They can save lives by having operators standing by 24-7 and dispatching emergency services if required (for example if fire occurs while sleeping).
 - Windblown sparks can ignite an untreated roof, so when buying, building or renovating your home, make sure the roof is fire resistant.
 - Dry leaves and evergreen needles in rain gutters can catch fire, so clear your gutters regularly – especially in fire season.
 - Trim back any tree limbs that are within 10 feet of your chimney and dead limbs overhanging your home, to prevent them from catching on fire.
 - To prevent sparks and embers from entering and igniting your home, make sure there are screens with openings of 1/2 inch or smaller over all attic and foundation vents.
 - To prevent sparks from escaping and igniting vegetation near your house, cap your chimney with a 1/2" spark arrested mesh.
 - Store firewood and other combustibles away from your home, and keep the lid on your trash can.
 - To make sure firefighters can find your house in case of emergency, post your address prominently.
 - Maintain your landscape to eliminate dead vegetation that could catch fire, and use plants that are fire resistant.
 - Have an operable fire extinguisher readily available
 - Practice an escape plan at least once a year. Make sure the whole family is involved.
 - Protectron's "Saving Lives Program" is offered free to families considering home security solutions. More information on the program or on fire safety and home security, is available online at www.protectron.com.
- News Canada

Bring The Indoors Outside

(NC)—Given that our personal real estate is our most valuable asset it makes sense to maximize every square foot of your property. It's not surprising then to find that people are moving outdoors to create more space at home to relax and enjoy time with family and friends. Today the options for furnishing an outdoor living space are limitless.

An outdoor room is easy to create. The components of such a space usually include a barbecue, seating and dining area, and may incorporate a fireplace, firepit or chiminea. Some outdoor rooms take it further with an outdoor kitchen complete with a refrigerator and dishwasher even. But don't stop there. You can also add a pizza oven, cocktail bar, fountain, trellis, patio heater, hot tub or swimming pool.

Simple or elaborate, an outdoor room is an extension of your home. Keep that in mind when you design your outdoor space. Make it fit your personality and needs. Start by creating a wish list. Flip through magazines and clip pictures that create the look you seek. And remember, an outdoor room can evolve over years if you end up with a large wish list but have a limited budget. The first year, define the grilling, dining and lounging areas. Later you can accessorize.

Draw up a plan with a focal point. An outdoor room has many of the same elements as those inside your house. For a foundation, will you have a deck or patio stones? For walls, will there be a fence, retaining wall or hedge? Landscaping becomes the décor for your outdoor space. It can be used to create texture and mood, and to bring cohesion to your room. Next, you'll want to furnish your space—a wide variety of options exist here—enough to suit any outdoor living vision. Finally, don't overlook the lighting. It can be the finishing touch that brings your outdoor space together adding drama and romance.

Above all, have fun designing and developing your outdoor room. The goal is to create a space that meets all your needs for comfort and relaxation.

More information about creating the ultimate backyard is available at www.leisurescapes.com. - News Canada





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Preparing A Healthy Garden

(NC)—With the warm weather approaching, now is the perfect time to get your garden ready for the spring and summer season. The lawn and garden team at Canadian Tire have the following tips to help ensure your garden gets a natural and healthy start this season.

Flowers and Perennials:Spring

- Now is the best time to apply fertilizer that will feed all-season long. Available at Canadian Tire is a controlled release fertilizer, CIL once & done or smartcote feed & forget which both only require one application in the Spring
- Loosen garden soil and add composted manure
- Prune roses and cut back ornamental grasses and perennials
- Identify areas for new plantings. Be sure to use a starter fertilizer
- Monitor for insect and disease infestations. When pest problems occur, take 'first-step' action using natural, environmentally-friendly control products.

Summer

- Stake taller plants for support. This will ensure that tall plants don't bend and flop over
- Dead-heading flowers (the process of removing dead or spent flowers) will encourage repeat blooms and the overall appearance
- Use landscape fabric and a 4 inch layer of mulch to prevent weeds
- Feed regularly with a high phosphorus fertilizer to encourage blooms
- Water early in the morning or at dusk, not in the heat of the day. Use a ground-lying soaker hose in area of dense growth. Consider Yardworks 50' soaker hose, which is ideal for shrubs, vegetable gardens and flower

beds because of its deep, even, soaking-action.

Trees and Shrubs:Spring

- Remove winter wraps when the risk of frost has passed
- Spray dormant oil to control over-wintering diseases and insects on trees and ornamentals
- Feed established trees and shrubs with a high-nitrogen fertilizer to encourage healthy, woody growth
- If you have a forsythia in your garden, ensure that it is pruned back after blooming
- Prune summer-blooming ornamentals after the risk of frost has passed
- Plant bare-root trees. Be sure to use starter fertilizer and triple mix

Summer

- Water newly-planted trees well around their trunks
 - Prune early flowering shrubs
 - Prune evergreens and hedges
 - Watch for insect pests, diseases and weeds
- News Canada





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Improve Your Outdoor Décor

(NC)—Chances are your deck or patio décor includes a variety of surfaces such as wood, wicker, metal and plastic, all which may have become weathered from summer sun and winter storage. Armed with your creativity and a few cans of spray paint, you can give all these surfaces a fresh, stylish, up-to-date appearance. Spray painting furniture and accessories is probably the fastest and most affordable way to give your backyard oasis a great new look.

Krylon Fusion for Plastic is an easy-to-use, one step, super-bonding spray paint. It can be used on wood, metal, wicker, hard vinyl and a wide range of plastic surfaces including ABS, PVC, polypropylene, polyethylene, fiber-

glass and rubber.

It is available in a wide range of colors and now comes with the new EZ Touch 360° Dial Spray Tip, which enables more comfortable spray painting with increased coverage per pass, reduced overspray, less chance of runs or drips and greater accuracy. Using a dial that rotates a full 360°, spray painters can adjust the direction of the fan-spray pattern with the touch of a finger.

The colour experts at Krylon (www.krylon.com), North America's leading supplier of spray paint, have some tips for making outdoor makeovers easier than ever:

- Use colour to unify your space. By carefully selecting a palette of a few colours, you can unify even disparate furniture pieces into a pleasing whole. White is an ever-popular classic that can be paired with almost any accent colour to achieve striking good looks.
 - Especially in areas filled with bright sunlight, don't be afraid of bold or saturated colours. Use bright, bold colours to infuse a space with energy and whimsy, or consider textured or metallic hues for more subtle sophistication.
 - For the brightest, boldest colours, prime the surface or apply a white basecoat. Next, apply the colour coat over the white surface.
 - Group furniture together to create intimate conversation areas. Use interesting containers to hold plants. Consider lighting for both evening safety and ambiance.
 - Always follow the directions on your can of spray paint. Application instructions and dry times, as well as how long you should shake the can and how far away you should hold it from the surface, vary from paint to paint.
- News Canada

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Help With Buying Your First Home

(NC)—Looking for a down payment for your mortgage? You may already have it stashed away in your retirement savings! The Government of Canada's Home Buyers' Plan may allow you to withdraw up to \$20,000 from your Registered Retirement Savings Plan (RRSP) to buy or build a qualifying home. Do you qualify? If neither you nor your spouse or common-law partner owned a home that you lived in as your principal place of residence at any time in the four calendar years before the year of your RRSP withdrawal, and ending 31 days before your withdrawal, then you may be able to participate in the Home Buyers' Plan. You may also qualify if you or a relative is disabled and you are buying a more accessible home for yourself or your relative.

Are you buying a home with your spouse, common-law partner, or someone else? You can each withdraw up to \$20,000 from your RRSP, provided that each person is able to participate in the Home Buyers' Plan. The amount you withdraw will have to be repaid to your RRSP. You must begin to make repayments in the second year following the year you made your withdrawal and you have up to 15 years to repay the total amount.

For more information, visit www.cra.gc.ca and search the site for "Home Buyers' Plan." - News Canada

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Options For Mounting A Flat-panel TV

By J.R. Morris

(NC)—Flat-panel TVs offer great picture quality and look really impressive when mounted on the wall. If you're considering mounting your TV, there are some things you should know before making a purchase.

The first thing to consider is what type of mount you want. There are a number of options available, including mounts that tilt and swivel and some motorized models that operate via remote control. There are also stationary mounts that do the job but don't provide any movement. The most versatile options offer full range of motion so you can move the TV in any direction to create your preferred viewing angle.

Ceiling mounts are a good option if you would rather suspend the TV from a ceiling location rather than the wall, and under-cabinet mounts work great for small TVs in the kitchen.

The next thing to consider is what to do with all the TV cables once it's installed. Look for a mount that offers good cable management features, such as the Vision Mount LF228 full-motion mount from Sanus Systems that provides through-the-arm cable management so cables are completely hidden inside for a wireless appearance.

Once you've decided on the type of mount you want, you'll need to purchase one compatible with your TV. Wall mounts aren't one-size-fits-all. Your local retailer can help you find a solution or you can try online resources, such as the Sanus Mount Finder (www.sanus.com).

You'll need to know your TV brand and model number, so have that information with you when shopping in a store or online.

- News Canada

Shed Light On Energy Efficient Décor Ideas For Your Home

(NC)—Lighting is an important décor element in your home and depending on the kind of bulbs and fixtures you choose, you can make a room warm and cozy or bright and luminous – or anything in between. There are many ways you can use lighting in a room to ensure you get the exact look you are going for. Here are some “bright” ideas you can use when looking for your lighting and design solutions:

- Know all of your lighting needs. For example, functional or focused light, such as from a table lamp, provides light for optimal reading while ambient light, like pot lights will wash the room in general light. You can also use decorative or accent lighting, like a wall sconce or track lighting to highlight the specific décor elements of a room.

- Make sure you're using energy efficient lighting solutions. One of the easiest ways to make your home energy efficient is to change your incandescent light bulbs. Typically, people opt for the compact fluorescent lamp (CFL) bulb as it provides light that you are accustomed to with the added benefits of a longer lifespan and they use significantly less energy than incandescent bulbs. Alternatively, you can now use other technologies to be energy efficient such as Halogena Energy Savers from Philips that use 30% less energy than incandescent and are fully dimmable.

- Use lighting in different ways. You can “layer” the lighting in a room to incorporate multiple styles and sources of light. This will make the room seem more dynamic and visually impressive as you enhance your décor and attract attention to the right areas.

- Incorporate new lighting technologies. For example, Philips has light emitting diode (LED) replacement bulbs are currently hitting the market. Available in a GU10, MR16, and general household style, they offer 80 per cent energy savings versus standard incandescent bulbs and last for 20 years. LEDs are a high-tech way to make a statement with lighting.

Light up your life and your home with light bulbs that are functional, decorative and high-tech to create the impression you want room by room.

- News Canada

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(NC)—According to the Canadian Gas Association (CGA), the average home will face an approximate 10 per cent rise in the cost of heating this winter. If you're feeling helpless because of today's rising energy costs, battle your energy bills by being proactive in your own home. There's no better time than the present to explore some inexpensive renovations to help improve the energy efficiency of your home and decrease your carbon footprint.

"People often think of renovations as a gigantic undertaking, but sometimes the little projects are those that can make a big difference, especially to the energy efficiency of your home," says David Flood, Insulation Expert, Owens Corning. "Home renovations aren't always glamorous or visible. For example, the benefits of an attic insulation upgrade aren't physically seen in the attic, and instead seen on your monthly heating bill."

Here are a few inexpensive, energy-saving changes that you can implement today to help conserve energy in your home:

- Tired of your thermostat working overtime? Your home may be one of the 7,000,000 Canadian homes with an inadequately insulated attic. Create a thermal barrier in your attic by installing PINK FIBERGLAS batt insulation to help prevent hot air from escaping through your roof, keeping your thermostat under control. Upgrade your attic insulation up to 15 inches – a value of R-50 – and you may qualify for a government retrofit rebate of up to \$600. Visit the Natural Resources Canada website to learn more at www.oee.nrcan.gc.ca.
- Concerned about wasted energy on your home expenses while you're sleeping or not even there? The next step may be to purchase a programmable thermostat to regulate temperatures at different times of the day.
- Want to take an extra long shower and not feel guilty about it? Install low-flow faucets and shower heads to conserve your home's water consumption at a fairly inexpensive cost.

To learn more about saving energy by upgrading the attic insulation in your home, visit www.pinksavesenergy.ca.

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A Window to Environmentally Responsible Improvements

(MS) -- With the return of warmer weather, homeowners often plan home improvement projects and many look for ways to do them with minimal impact on the environment.

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, heating and cooling account for 44 percent of the average home's total energy use. Replacing old and leaky windows with energy efficient models can bring a significant return on investment when you consider today's high energy prices. Plus, saving energy is good for your wallet and the environment.

Craig Evanich, president of Renewal by Andersen, suggests homeowners look for the ENERGY STAR label to ensure that a window is energy efficient. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, replacing inefficient single pane windows with ENERGY STAR qualified windows could save up to 15 percent on your energy bills.

Evanich adds that Renewal by Andersen windows come standard with High-Performance Low-E4 glass which is designed to perform at even higher standards and is over 14 percent more energy efficient than stringent ENERGY STAR requirements.

Homeowners are increasingly seeking products that not only help reduce their energy consumption, but do so in an environmentally responsible manner. This means taking into consideration the full product life-cycle, from materials to manufacturing and use, to recycling and disposal. Here are some points to consider:

* Choose windows that are made from recycled or renewable materials. For example, Renewal by Andersen windows, America's only Green Seal certified replacement window, are made from a highly sustainable composite material that blends the best attributes of thermoplastics and wood fibers -- much of it reclaimed directly from the company's manufacturing plant operations.



* High-quality windows made from sustainable materials are built to provide long-term performance and minimize the long-term impact to the environment. Evanich says windows made from composite materials can be a good option for homeowners who like the look and strength of wood windows but want the low-maintenance features of vinyl. Because of the unique blend of materials, composite windows do not need ongoing staining or painting to maintain their natural beauty, saving homeowners time and money.

* Shop by performance not price. Shop around for quality windows that enhance the beauty of your home based on long-term value, not price. Saving a few dollars now could mean another replacement project just a few years down the road.

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Creating A Custom-Looking Kitchen Is As Simple As Making A Pie

(NC)—Every household is different, with varying lifestyles and needs for space. But almost always, the kitchen is the most action-packed room in the house – especially given the ongoing popularity of the open-concept design. A room that naturally encourages people to gather around, the kitchen is the stage for everything from homework sessions to week-end entertaining. Whatever the activity, creating a kitchen with a custom-made feel is easier than you may think thanks to the wide variety of premium appliance offerings available today.

Avid entertainers know the challenge of enjoying the party while keeping the food coming. Rather than stashing a couple of extra toaster ovens in the pantry, take care of cocktail hors d'oeuvres preparation with a double oven. Simply microwaving a side dish while the roast takes over the oven is a compromise of the past. Two separate oven cavities, one above the other, cook at different temperatures and take up no more space than your standard oven. If you find yourself preparing multiple dishes and struggling to serve them all while they're still hot, a double oven is an option worth considering – and particularly handy if you can't get the kids (or spouse!) to agree on the same meal. The GE Monogram 30" built-in double wall oven, for example, gives the immediate impression of a custom-designed space fit for an upscale home.

Are little hands wreaking havoc on stainless steel surfaces moments

after you've polished them to a shine? Fully-integrated appliances with custom panels can be matched with your kitchen cabinetry, eliminating the need for constant wiping of fingerprints and giving the space a seamlessly unified and flowing look. In particular, a paneled fridge that perfectly matches the rest of the kitchen paneling and décor, gives an instant customized, high-end look.

Households with young families are undoubtedly among the busiest. Built-in side by side refrigerators provide more than enough storage space for a week's worth of school snacks, dinner leftovers and all the healthy foods you'd like to have on-hand to keep the bunch happy and full of energy. Adding custom door panels makes for a clean and seamless addition to the already bustling heart of your home.

If a wannabe iron chef lives in your kitchen, odds are the old stove you've got now is being blamed for every dish gone wrong. Just like a carefully-crafted recipe, a chef's dream kitchen is all about the details. With two separate flames under each burner, professional-looking range tops built into the counter provide the ultimate in detailed temperature control. Whether simmering a delicate sauce or using the grill to sear salmon, the cook in your kitchen will delight in the range top that seems custom made to perfect their favourite recipes.

You can learn about appliances built for the custom-look online at www.Monogram.com.

- News Canada



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Who's Going To Spruce Up Your Walkway?

(NC)—The day you realize your walkway or patio is starting to look like an obstacle course is the time to think about replacing it. Replacing a walkway, driveway or patio is known as hardscaping, and finding a hardscaping contractor who can design and install a walkway, patio or driveway that suits your house, your sensibilities and your pocketbook often requires diligent research and some price comparison to get the best value for your money. Not surprisingly, the best value is not always the cheapest.

A growing number of homeowners have discovered that one of the most versatile and customizable pavement options is interlocking concrete pavers. That said, the next step to a new walkway is finding the right person to install it. In order to ensure a quality installation, you should ask questions of the contractor, like:

- How long have they been installing pavers?
- Are they certified by the ICPI? Do they have a certificate or card?
- What percentage of their total business consists of installing concrete pavers?
- Will they provide you with three references; not only recent ones, but from past jobs?
- Can you contact their references and inspect the jobs? • Do they have a portfolio of photos and letters to qualify themselves?
- Can the contractor provide proof that workers' compensation insurance covers all employees on the job?
- Do they install the job per ICPI guidelines? Can they supply a copy?
- Do they provide a written, itemized proposal outlining the scope of work and terms of payment? It should include starting and completion dates, demolition and excavation, paving and base materials, and taxes.
- Do they guarantee their work for at least one year? Will they return in a year to inspect it?

You can learn more about concrete pavers and find a certified installer to install them by visiting the Web site www.icpi.org.

- News Canada

Spring Is Here - Tips To Get You Grilling!

(NC)—Nothing is better than a barbequed meal on a warm spring evening. However, after a long cold winter, it is necessary to get your barbeque ready for action! Here are some tips courtesy of The Home Depot that will get you serving up tasty burgers to the whole neighbourhood in no time.

Get your grill as good as new

Similar to an oven, barbeques need to be cleaned on a regular basis. Unfortunately, most barbeques do not come equipped with a self cleaning setting. What can you do?

- Start by removing the grills and scraping away excess build up with a grill brush, scraper or grill stone.
- Once most of the grime is removed, spray the grills with cooking oil and apply a mixture of warm water, soap and vinegar. This will effectively remove any remaining dirt.
- To treat the other cast iron parts of the barbeque, coat them in natural food oils. This will protect against rust build up.

This entire process should not take more than one hour and will leave your grill sparkling.

Happy grilling!

- News Canada



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Givenchy's new "Soleil" is sporty chic, aiming to make the label both more fun and accessible, while maintaining the rigorous excellence of the Givenchy brand name also with Givenchy's new collection of colorful sporty chic. Coloured acetate frames and refined metallic frames with splash of colour with Givenchy monogrammed temples.

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How To Get The Most Out Of Your Home Renovations

(NC)—Home inspection can sometimes reveal flaws in a house. Getting quotes from contractors to repair these flaws can sometimes be frustrating. Prices can vary significantly, as can the suggested repair materials, means and methods. "It is always important to understand exactly what is included in the price so that the quotes can be properly compared", says Rob Skinner, business leader for AmeriSpec of Canada.

When preparing for a quote, make sure to do the following:

- Be sure to ask around for references to avoid having a bad experience: contact the local Better Business Bureau and local trade organizations. They will have a record of any complaints filed against a contractor.
- Ensure the contractor is qualified and experienced: in some provinces, contractors are required to be licensed to carry out certain types of work; check with local or provincial trade authorities for their requirements and ask to see a copy of the contractor's license.
- Get everything in writing: including the means and methods to complete the work, type of equipment or repair, and/or materials being used and life expectancy of the repair or equipment.
- Ensure the contractor is registered with the provincial Worker's Compensation Board or similar organization: if an injury or damage occurs during the completion of work activities on a homeowners' property, the homeowner could be held liable and often, homeowner's insurance does not cover this type of accident.
- Inquire about a guarantee or warranty associated with new equipment,

workmanship and some types of materials: however, be sure that the installation of will be completed in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. It will void if it is not installed correctly or if they are not qualified or trained to complete the installation.

When having your home inspected, be sure to ask your inspector for a list of typical repairs/replacements common to most homes. Keep in mind

these estimates are for approximate budgeting/information purposes. You can obtain more information on job costing or a free copy of our Home Improvement and Cost Repair Guide online at www.amerispec.ca.



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Three Quick and Easy Steps for a Beautiful Exterior

(MS) -- Dirt and stains can make the exterior of your home look dirty, unattractive and rob it of its curb appeal. Fortunately, the days of countless hours of cleaning, scrubbing or power washing are gone! There's now a scrub free way to a beautiful exterior. Here's how:

Step 1: Control the moisture around your home. Keep shrubs, plants and mulch away from exterior walls. Trim any branches or tree limbs that touch the outside of your home. Clear gutters and drains of any leaves or debris. Redirect sprinklers and rotate hanging planters to prevent water from regularly collecting on exterior surfaces. Also, make sure rain water is not collecting near your home's foundation. Repair leaks and extend downspouts away from the foundation.

Step 2: Clean dirt and stains off of your home's exterior with a house cleaner that contains an EPA-registered mildewcide, like JOMAX(R) House Cleaner and Mildew Killer. JOMAX House Cleaner kills mold and mildew and loosens dirt and stains without scrubbing or power washing. Its specially formulated detergent system will not damage wood, etch aluminum siding or discolor surfaces like household bleach can. And JOMAX House Cleaner will not harm surrounding plants, grass and shrubs.

To remove black streaks, dirt and mildew stains from asphalt shingled roofs, use JOMAX(R) Roof Cleaner and Mildew Stain Remover. It quickly cleans and kills mold and mildew on tile, slate, metal, and other non-porous roof materials.

Step 3: Make outdoor furniture look like new again. Patio tables, chairs and other outdoor furniture collect dirt and stains, giving your outdoor living spaces an unappealing appearance. Get rid of tough stains on vinyl, plastic and wood with a product like JOMAX Mold & Mildew Stain Remover. Just spray on, wait 5 minutes and wipe off to reveal "like new," dirt and stain-free surfaces. Here's one last tip from the pros: Maintain the look of your cleaned surfaces by preventing mold and mildew from growing throughout the warm months. Try JOMAX Mold and Mildew Shield on outdoor vinyl and plastics such as siding, trim, fences and furniture.

For more information on exterior cleaning, and for other helpful home improvement tips, visit www.zinsser.com.



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Colour Me Spring

(NC)—There's no doubt that adding a new colour to an out-of-date room is an easy and inexpensive way to revive your home. So what's big for spring? Frank Turco, the colour, trend and design manager at The Home Depot Canada, has identified three key trend themes for spring 2009. Go ahead: get inspired! Select the theme you like best, work with colours in that theme, and let your creative side take over. It's really that easy!

Architecture

Ornate crown molding, etched apothecary pendant lights, salvaged artifacts and textured fabrics...all of these elements from past eras have a place in the modern home. Give historic architectural details a second life as focal points in today's stylish interiors. Set out to salvage something beautiful and juxtapose it against a bold, rich tone. Think dramatic accents of colour on classic design pieces, like ceiling medallions, for example. Colours that fit into this theme include: rich reds, various shades of grey and deep marine blues.

Grey Matters

Tone and texture come to life in various shades of grey – from colour palettes to finishes, this hue is the new black for au courant interiors and exteriors. Natural elements like marble, pewter, graphite, and weathered wood are all going grey for this look. Stainless steel dominates the kitchen beyond appliances to counter tops, cabinets, seating, hardware and lighting. Grey is centre stage in paint palettes, floor coverings, metallic wallpapers and prints.

Cabana

Bring hot, dramatic hues to your home in time for summer. Tiles and cabinets in playful shades of blue, green, yellow and red are a surprising addition to kitchens and baths. Pop art inspired paint palettes and wallpaper design come alive, while bold colours like red, green, and orange bring rooms to life. And don't limit yourself – take this look outside. Lounges with shades, privacy screens and gazebos fit nicely in this theme. Summertime never looked better! - News Canada

Ten Things To Do Today To Help The Environment

(NC)—Sometimes, it's the little things that make a big difference to help save the environment. Even the tiniest changes in your daily routine can be effective. Small actions can help change the world, so, to do your part, begin today by carrying out the following activities and checking off the ten items on this checklist:

1. Turn off all lights, computers and power bars in rooms not being used
2. Set your thermostat to a lower temperature before you leave the house
3. Wash your clothes in cold water and hang dry, when possible
4. Change one light bulb to an energy-saving light bulb
5. Turn on the energy-saving option on your work computer and printer
6. Call an energy advisor for a quote on a home energy audit and ask how an attic insulation upgrade can help save energy in your home
7. Measure your attic to prepare for an attic insulation upgrade
8. Visit your local home building supplies store and pick up enough insulation to insulate your attic with at least 15 inches of PINK FIBERGLAS® insulation
9. Visit www.pinksavesenergy.ca for steps on how to top-up on your attic insulation
10. Visit the Natural Resources Canada website at www.oeo.nrcan.gc.ca to learn about the rebates available when you upgrade your attic insulation

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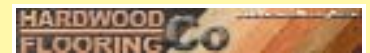
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Saving Water Helps The Environment And Your Budget

(NC)—Canada is home to seven per cent of the world's total supply of renewable fresh water. That may seem like a lot – but we're also one of the world's biggest water consumers. It's important for all of us to do what we can to preserve this valuable natural resource.

Reducing the water you use in the bathroom is a great and easy place to start. Since a bathroom uses a considerable percentage of the total indoor home water use, a few small changes can make a big difference – and you can save some money too.

Delta Faucet offers the following tips to homeowners looking to save water:

- Take a quick shower instead of a bath – you'll use up to 50 per cent less hot water.
- Install water efficient showerheads. Low-flow showerheads from Delta feature H2Okinetic Technology, providing a powerful and massaging shower experience that uses up to 36 per cent less water.
- Turn off the tap while brushing your teeth, shaving or washing your face.
- Fix leaks right away. One leaky faucet can waste a surprising amount of water.
- Encourage family members to reuse bath towels at least two times. Look for decorative, functional hooks – such as those offered by Delta – that will keep them hung neatly and allow them to dry quickly.
- Upgrade your bathroom sink faucets to an efficient model that uses less water like Delta's Dryden lavatory faucet. Water efficient faucets can save up to 30 per cent more water than a standard lavatory faucet and you can refresh the look of your bathroom with a sleek, sophisticated design.
- Install a modern, low-flow or dual flush toilet that can reduce water consumption dramatically.

For more information on saving water at home, visit deltafaucet.com.

- News Canada

Safety Glasses

If your job involves hazards from dust, flying objects or particles that may strike you from in front, you should be using some form of safety glasses. If you normally use a face shield in operations such as grinding, you also need to wear safety glasses under your face shield. The good news about safety glasses is that you can now get them in attractive styles that are at home in both the workroom and the boardroom.

A "one-size-fits-all" clear lens brand with adjustable temples (looks more stylish than the old brand and should provide better ventilation).

An "over-the-lens" brand which is designed to go over prescription lenses (stylish and not too heavy) with adjustable temples.

Glasses cases, glasses cords for hanging them around your neck, lens wipes, and cleaning solutions are available

What Makes Them "Safety" Glasses?

Resistance to impact is the main difference between safety glasses and regular glasses, which often look just like them. Standards for safety glasses requires them to withstand the impact of a quarter inch steel ball traveling 150 feet per second. You can't depend on your prescription glasses for this kind of protection.

It is important to remember that standard safety glasses protect against impact from the front only.

Care and Use

Your safety glasses are designed to protect you from accidental injury. They will not withstand repeated impact or abuse, however. Inspect them regularly for scratches, cracks or other wear and replace them if they are scratched, bent or uncomfortable. Scratches not only interfere with your ability to see what you're doing - a hazard in itself; they can also weaken the structure of the lens and its resistance to impact. Taking care of your glasses and, above all, using them, will help you "look" your best on the job.

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How To Maintain A Great Looking Landscape

There are several key components to looking after your property which should be scheduled each year as part of your outdoor "to do" list. By looking after a few key maintenance jobs on a routine basis, your property will look well cared for, and still leave you time for some summer R&R.

Spring Dethatching & Bed Cleanup: To give the tiny new blades of grass the best possible environment to grow in, a dethatching or raking should be done once the ground dries up from the winter snowmelt. This raking will rid the lawn of much of the old, dead thatch which can be a breeding ground for disease and insect activity. The shrub beds and gardens should be cleaned up in the Spring too, for both aesthetic and health reasons. Decomposing leaves from last year's perennials should be cleaned up and any woody stems from those perennials should be cut as low as possible so there is ample room for new growth.

Aeration: Spring is a great time for aeration. This procedure pulls small cores of soil out of the ground to loosen the soil, thus allowing more air-flow for the smaller roots of the grass to develop. Ideally, a lawn would be aerated each spring so that the lawn gets off to a good start in the high growth period of the season. By the time the dethatching and aeration is done, you should be on schedule to begin your mowing for the season. Try to mow routinely once per week so that the lawn does not get too long before it is cut. It is best to cut only 1/3 of the blade off at any given time.

Shrub Pruning: Pruning of most shrubs can be done at any time of the season, but mid season seems to provide the best results for the least amount of effort. By waiting to prune until the plant has finished its big growth spurt in the Spring, it will then keep its shape for the majority of the remaining season. By looking after pruning shrubs and hedges each

year, the predicament of how to prune an overgrown shrub or hedge is avoided.

Weeding and Mulching: Adding mulch to your garden areas serves several functions. Not only will the gardens have a finished, manicured look, but the mulch serves as a great moisture retention vehicle for the plant roots. As well, mulch can serve as a weed deterrent. Fewer small weeds are able to take hold and develop, so the overall weeding issue is diminished. Keep on top of whatever weeds do develop by scheduling a weeding session once a week; or, if you have many gardens, perhaps you rotate around the property on a routine basis, looking after one or two beds each week so none get completely out of control!

Fertilization: Even though the grass is green in the Spring, there are certain nutrients and microorganisms in the soil which become depleted over time and, without replenishment, quickly lead to a health decline in the lawn. Weed activity will begin to overtake weaker lawn areas and more aggressive lawn care or lawn renovation procedures will need to be introduced. Instead, routinely apply an organic or organic-based fertilizer so that as many micronutrients and natural organisms can be present to develop a healthy soil environment. Fertilizer should be applied approximately every 4 to 6 weeks, and don't forget to keep the soil's pH in balance with a lime application at some point in the season.

Fall CleanUp and Shrub Protection: Before getting caught up in Christmas preparations, do one final round of maintenance work in the yard. In the late Fall, rake up as many leaves as possible from the lawn to avoid encouraging disease and fungus activity on the lawn. Also, erect shrub protection (stakes and burlap) just before the ground freezes around those shrubs that are somewhat borderline in hardiness or are in a harsh windy location.

By following these guidelines, you will be able to maintain a property to be proud of for many years.

-Lorna Pond, CLP Urban Landscaping Ltd.



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Garage Doors Do Impress Home Improvement

(NC)—What is the most dramatic, eye-catching home improvement project you can launch into this year? It's an exterior upgrade that adds style and curb appeal to one-third or more of the front of homes: the garage door.

Chances are, if your home is 10 years old or older, you've been living with a good, old-fashioned, raised-panel steel door – just like every other home on your street. And they probably all look pretty much the same. Here are some observations from Nancy Labbé from the marketing department at Garaga, Garage Doors (www.garaga.com).

A Stylish Statement

You're probably thinking, "How much difference can a garage door really make? It goes up, it goes down; what does style have to do with it?" Garaga's website features "before & after" garage door photos that show the effect that a replacement has on a home. All major Canadian garage door manufacturers are producing dramatic new styles, and you can review them and decide what's best for your home.

Hot Trend: Carriage Doors

The industry's hottest trend is the carriage house door. The look that was popular on carriage houses and stables a century ago is today's new chic in garage doors. The styles, windows, accessories and colours vary so widely, there's little chance the garage door on your home will look like another one down the block. Also, did you know that for 70% of Canadian homes, the garage is front to the street?

The Latest Features

What else is new in garage doors? How about energy savings? Many of today's garage doors feature insulation that helps reduce heat loss in

Canadian winters and helps your home stay cooler in the summer, notes Nancy. And as energy bills continue to rise, a new door begins to pay for itself soon after installation.

If you're thinking about a new garage door, think about a new opener, too. Today's garage door openers are quieter and provide more convenience and safety features than ever before. Yes, garage door openers have gone high tech.

Keypad Kids

Homeowners with keypad entries consider it a necessity, not an option. Yesterday's "latchkey kids" have become today's "keypad kids", Nancy says. But even the keypad has taken a step up the technology ladder. How about fingerprint-activated entry? It is here and available today. Only those who have scanned their fingerprint into the system can open the door with the pad.

Another modern tech update is laser-aided parking accessories that tell you exactly when to stop in the garage. Battery back-up systems mean that your door will open every time, even when the power goes out. Finally, there's even an in-house monitor that tells you when your garage door is open, a handy tool for those of us who forget to close the garage door at night.

A Garage Door: Not a DIY Job

Garage door installation is something best left to the pros. A garage door is the largest and heaviest moving piece of equipment in your home. Garage door springs are under a remarkable amount of tension, and these can cause serious injury to even the handiest weekend warriors. Garaga has a professional garage door installation network, named "Garaga Experts", spanning across Canada.

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.

- News Canada

Build With Concrete, Not Wood

(NC)—Walls made of concrete in residential and commercial buildings will deliver long-lasting benefits for the homeowner or resident, all of which are far superior to traditional building methods. Take a look at this in-field comparison on homes of a similar size, courtesy of Canadian company Nudura and its internationally certified 'green' wall system:

Energy Efficiency: Wood structures are prone to thermal bridging where the outside cold penetrates too easily, causing drafts and cold spots. Solid core, concrete walls keep home temperatures consistent requiring less energy for heat, cool, and climate control. Energy savings with concrete walls are reported to be from up to 50 to 70 percent.

The Environment: Trees are vital for the control of greenhouse gases, and are equally important for the total oxygen supply. The more trees covering the planet the better, so instead of using wood for construction, concrete will save this important natural resource.

Strength: Concrete walls are shown to be up to nine times stronger, withstanding wind up to 250 m.p.h. and a debris impact up to 115 m.p.h. Wood walls are subject to moisture, dry rot, and deterioration. With a solid, concrete core, your walls last for a lifetime.

Safety: In addition to long-term durability, and wind resistance, concrete walls report 4-hour fire protection. A traditional stick-frame home is rated to withstand fire for only 45-minutes.

Living Quality: Wood walls are also prone to moisture retention, promoting mould growth with airborne respiratory irritants. The concrete, Nudura wall system (nudura.com) is quick to assemble for builders, brings beauty to the design, emits no fumes, retains no water, and unlike wood, this solid concrete core is soundproof, keeping unwanted noise outside.

- News Canada



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Canadian Homeowners Get Paid To Go Green

(NC)—Canadian homeowners will be big winners now that the Federal Government has officially launched its ecoENERGY Retrofit initiative, offering financial incentives to Canadians who improve their home's energy efficiency.

Natural Resources of Canada (NRCan) has licensed AmeriSpec Inspection Services, Canada's leading home inspection company, to perform residential energy evaluations that identify how homes use

energy and where it is being wasted. AmeriSpec evaluators will show homeowners how to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, reduce heating and cooling costs and improve comfort in their homes, while ensuring adequate ventilation for a healthy indoor environment.

To take advantage of the program, homeowners first must complete an assessment by a licensed energy evaluator who will determine the home's current energy rating. The service includes: a detailed energy

evaluation of the home, a blower door test to find air leaks, a printed report that shows where energy dollars are being spent, recommendations on what homeowners can do to improve their home's energy efficiency and an energy efficiency rating label that shows how efficient their home is compared to other homes in their region.

Using the report's recommendations, homeowners have 18 months to complete upgrades. Grants of up to \$5,000 are available based on individual retrofit initiatives. The average grant is expected to be close to \$1,100. Homeowners can expect to receive their cheque within 90 days of the follow-up evaluation. Many provinces have recently announced that they will cover a portion of the evaluation cost and/or offer additional grant monies.

"Many provinces, such as Saskatchewan and Ontario, have recently announced that they will cover a portion of the evaluation cost and/or offer additional grant monies" said Rob Skinner, business leader for AmeriSpec of Canada.

According to NRCan, once homeowners complete their required energy evaluation and make some or all of the recommended improvements; they can expect federal grants such as:

- Furnace upgrades – up to \$600
- Install a heat recovery ventilator – up to \$300
- Upgrade your central air conditioner to an Energy Star unit - \$200
- Retrofit doors and/or windows to Energy Star - \$30 for each unit

17 percent of all energy used in Canada goes towards running our homes. As many as 140,000 homeowners are expected to benefit from this national and provincial initiative.

"By completing all of the retrofits recommended by an AmeriSpec evaluator, homeowners should be in a position to decrease their average annual greenhouse gas emissions by about 4.6 tonnes per year, per house and they should also be able to also reduce their energy bills by 38 percent – a huge win for everyone!", Mr. Smyth added.

You can book an appointment or obtain additional information by calling toll-free 1-866-284-6010, or online at www.amerispec.ca/ecoenergy.
- News Canada



Paying You to Save

THE BOUDREFAUS RECEIVED MORE THAN \$5,500 TOWARDS THEIR UPGRADE

Blair Boudreau and his family moved to New Brunswick and purchased a home that was more than 140 years old. They were used to living in a much newer home so they knew they had to learn how to make this home more energy efficient. They contacted Efficiency NB and arranged to have an assessment conducted by an energy advisor. After following the recommendations in the advisor's report, they took advantage of a \$2,000 grant from Efficiency NB's Existing Homes Program and \$3,500 in incentives from the federal ecoENERGY program.

With added insulation in their walls, attic and basement and the addition of energy-efficient windows, they are consuming less energy and they've also reduced their monthly heating bills.

TAKE THE FIRST STEP TO SCHEDULING YOUR ENERGY ASSESSMENT AND LEARN ABOUT ENERGY EFFICIENCY IMPROVEMENTS TO A HOME LIKE YOURS BY VISITING:

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**Building a New House?
Let us Help you with the Government Rebate Program**

Government Rebate Programs

You will find a basic summary detailing the three available government programs and rebates that pertain specifically to upgrading the heating system of your home.

Fundy Energy is your resource center for helping you make sense of the available government rebate programs. We have application forms on hand and are able to take you through them step by step.

When all three government programs are used together, we estimate that you are eligible for a rebate of approximately 65% of the total cost (taxes included) on the upgrade of your home heating system.

The Rebate Programs:

ecoENERGY Retrofit - Natural Resources Canada is offering a grant to between \$300 and \$600 to improve your home heating equipment with ENERGY STAR equipment.

Home Renovation Tax Credit - This program provides an added incentive for Canadians to complete renovations on their home or land. One of the many renovations covered include a new furnace or water heater. This program yields a tax credit of 15% of renovation costs which can be claimed on your 2009 tax return. It is available on home heating expenditures exceeding \$1,000 but not exceeding \$10,000.

Efficiency New Brunswick – Grant or Loan

By improving the energy efficiency of your home, you can receive either one of two options:

A) Rebate of 20% of the improvement costs (including HST) up to a maximum grant of \$2,000.

An additional \$500 is available to those who upgrade their home heating system with a higher efficiency ENERGY STAR central heating system. Systems that may be covered include oil furnaces, boilers and heat pumps.

B) An interest-free loan from Efficiency NB to cover the costs up to a maximum of \$10,000.

Fundy Energy is here to help you through the application process.



EXAMPLE OF SAVINGS: If you were to upgrade and install a new Energy Star certified fur-

for an approximate cost \$2,600, you would save the following:

Home Reno tax Credit	Save \$390	(15% of \$2,600)
Efficiency NB	Save \$1,020	(20% of \$2,600, plus \$500 rebate)
ecoEnergy Retrofit	Save \$300	(minimum rebate of \$300)
Total Saved:	\$1,710	

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Ergonomic Tools Help Reduce Injury Healthy Gardening:

(NC)—Ergonomic features to look for in your gardening tools include:

- Long handled tools with "S" shaped handles allow you to generate more leverage by applying a smaller amount of force and effort at a greater distance. This reduces the likelihood of back muscle strain and the need to twist.
- Wide, padded handles increase surface contact and allow for a better grasp.
- Pliable, cushioned, non-slip handles are more comfortable for prolonged use.

- Lightweight yet sturdy design allows effort to be put into gardening and not lifting and using the tools.
- Spring action mechanisms and gears provide a more efficient, smooth action.
- Rotating handles reduce friction, as the handles move with your hand.

Editors, this article is for use in Alberta only
- News Canada

Make This Your Greenest Spring Ever

(NC)—Making environmentally responsible choices is easier than you think. Besides saving the planet, making eco-friendly choices often saves time and money. Find out how to go green while saving some "green", with easy tips from The Home Depot.

1. Compost the waste. Don't throw away food scraps. Compost them. Composting diverts waste from local landfills and creates mulch that can be used to nourish your garden.

- Skill level: Easy

It can take less than an hour to install a composter (ready to assemble models click into place without the need for tools). The Home Depot carries many composters, like the Garden Gourmet Composter, which can be assembled in a snap.

2. Plant native flowers. Native plants are more suited to local growing

conditions, requiring less water and food to flourish. Hardy native plants also need less care, leaving more time to enjoy the garden rather than tending to it.

- Skill level: Moderately easy

Initial planting takes a little bit of time and work, but once native plants start growing, they practically care for themselves.

3. Use water wisely. Be careful not to over water the garden. Installing a low pressure drip-irrigation system or low flow sprinkler head can more effectively control the amount of water used on a lawn. The water saved not only benefits the environment, but will result in savings on water bills. Also be sure to make yourself aware of any municipal regulations regarding lawn and garden watering practices.

- Skill level: Easy

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Drip-irrigation systems are easy to set up and the perfect solution for any garden, no matter how big or small.

4. Switch it up and turn it off. Switching outdoor lights to solar powered or low wattage alternatives immediately saves on energy and money. Installing a motion detector can also lead to a lower energy bill at the end of the month.

- Skill level: Easy

Upgrading exterior lighting is as easy as changing a light bulb and can be done in minutes (literally!).

- News Canada

Seven Days – Seven Projects Turn Your Kitchen Into A Buyer's Dream

(NC)—Selling a home takes preparation. In fact, experts agree that property appearance and condition play a big role in the home sale process. However, homeowners are often hesitant to renovate since they may not recoup the value in the sale price. With strategic updates in key rooms, such as kitchens, you can increase the value of your home to sell more easily and at a higher price.

With just a weeks' time you can easily turn your kitchen into your selling feature with these seven projects.

Clean Up

Homebuyers want to envision a home as theirs – not yours. Start by removing everything from the top and sides of your refrigerator and clear off countertops. By eliminating clutter and personal effects, your kitchen will look neat, clean – and even larger.

Fix Up Your Faucet

The faucet is the workhorse of the kitchen – and a focal point – so add a fashionable and functional new faucet. For an affordable price, you can find beautiful models, such as Moen's Solidad pulldown kitchen faucet, that will add functionality and updated styling to the whole room.

Pull it Together

Once you've updated the faucet, pull the rest of the finishes in the room together by updating the hardware. Drawer pulls and knobs in a beauti-

ful stainless finish are a simple project and dramatically update the look of cabinets.

Become Ultra-Organized

Potential buyers will open everything to assess the storage potential. Organize to make your kitchen look like a storage dream – not nightmare. Many cabinet manufacturers offer custom shelves to help organize, or you can find simple organization systems at local retailers.

Curtain Call

Windows are a selling point in any room. Be sure that windows and blinds are free of dust, fingerprints or pet nose prints for a bright and cheerful display. Adding a neutral, but classic curtain can be a nice touch to frame these focal points of the room.

Follow the Light

Does your kitchen have outdated brass lighting fixtures? If so, update your hanging chandelier with a model in a finish that coordinates with the rest of the room. Varieties of classic-designed light fixtures are available at local home improvement stores and will instantly light up your kitchen décor -- literally.

Cosmetic Cover-ups

You may not notice the small paint chips in the trim or stain on the carpet, but homebuyers will. A fresh coat of paint on walls and trim will add more value than its cost and let buyers know that your home is well kept and clean.

Within a week you can easily increase the value of your home in the eyes of potential buyers – as well as provide an enjoyable space for yourself until you sell.

- News Canada



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In The Construction Sector, A Good Price Isn't Always A Good Deal!

(NC)—Whether you're building a home or a cottage, or doing major renovations or a smaller project, naturally you want good value for your money.

When upgrading a kitchen or installing a new roof, many homeowners think it's good business to pay cash to get a lower price. Homeowners who make these types of deals assume that the contractor is cheating on his taxes a bit, but they figure there's no risk to them. After all, they won't be the ones explaining themselves to the tax office if there's an audit!

Not so fast! Of course the Canada Revenue Agency discourages Canadians from supporting any form of the underground economy, including in the construction sector. But you should know that there are other risks associated with cash payments. In fact, homeowners put themselves at considerable risk when they hire a worker "under the table" without a written contract.

Homebuilding or renovating can be complex and a low price may mean that important details have been overlooked. Before you hire a construction contractor, ask yourself the following questions:

- How can I be sure I get the results I want if I don't have a detailed contract showing the contractor's commitment, work schedule, price, and terms of payment?
- How can I be sure that the work will comply with current building codes without the required permits and inspections?
- What will happen if a family member, neighbour, or worker is injured, and the contractor has no public liability insurance and doesn't contribute to Workers' Compensation?

Protect yourself. Insist on having written contracts and receipts.

For further information, visit the Get it in Writing! Web site at <http://www.hiringcontractor.com/En/default.asp>.

- News Canada

Revitalize Your Home This Spring

(NC)—Your home has been in hibernation over the winter, but with spring around the corner it may be time to revitalize your home – starting with the attic. A great method to begin spring cleaning is to work from the top down, purging unnecessary items you may have stored away. Although there may be items such as family heirlooms or priceless antiques that you just can't discard, old clothes and nick knacks can definitely be donated to a local second-hand store. With the new room in your attic you may be amazed at what you can do with the space.

"No matter what you decide to do with your attic, remember the fundamentals to building any new room – install adequate insulation," says David Flood, Insulation Expert, Owens Corning. "Before you transform your attic into a room you can enjoy, install at least 15 inches of PINK FIBERGLAS Batt Insulation to help regulate indoor temperatures and keep your family comfortable and warm. In addition, it can help save you as much as 28 per cent on your heating and cooling energy bills.*" Insulating your attic can be easy – all it takes are a few simple steps to complete an attic insulation upgrade:

1. First, figure out how much insulation you already have in place by using a ruler to measure the thickness of your existing attic insulation.
2. Now, calculate how many packages of insulation you'll need to top-up on your attic insulation. Determine the area to be insulated in square feet by multiplying the length times the width of your attic in feet.
3. Measure the distance between joists (the long wooden dividers on the attic floor) to determine the required insulation width for the job.
4. Then, divide the total square footage by the square foot per package, rounding up to the next whole number to determine the total number of packages you'll need.
5. Visit your local building materials store and ask for PINK FIBERGLAS Insulation – it's easy to install and can be used in different areas such as attic floors, walls and ceilings.
6. After bringing your insulation home, open the bundles only one at a time. Start insulating at the outer edges of the attic and work your way into the centre, placing batts perpendicular to the joists.
7. Don't forget about the importance of proper ventilation. Install ready-to-use raft-R-mate attic rafter vents between roof rafters. This provides unrestricted air flow through the soffits into the attic, reducing the risk of condensation.

For detailed instructions on how to install attic insulation to help make your home more energy-efficient, visit www.pinksavesenergy.ca.

*Savings vary depending on original amount of insulation in your home, climate, house size, air leaks, and personal energy use and living habits. The colour PINK is a registered trademark of Owens Corning

- News Canada

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Keep Your Hardwood Floor Looking Brand New

(NC)—It's hard to think about floors in a new way. When it comes to buying a new hardwood floor, for example, it can be difficult to ask all the right questions at the time of purchase. We tend to select floors for their quality, style and their fit with a desired interior design. Rarely do we consider the events that may occur after installation.

In every home, simple accidents do happen, and some of them will be severe enough to cause unsightly floor damage. We know this could happen, but prefer not to think about it. Even if the damage is localized, we believe that board replacement will be difficult and expensive and the floor will never look the same. For anyone with hardwood floors in their home, it's a situation we've all dreaded.

At one time that was true, but not today.

Progress in "joint technology" has created new hard surface floors in hardwood, cork and laminate. The Uniclic joint in particular - found in floors made by TORLYS Smart Floors - makes it easy to repair floors by replacing planks.

"Because the Uniclic joint process is reversible, we can explore possibilities for renewal that other companies can't," said Karen Deel, brand manager for TORLYS Smart Floors.

"We've invented a tool called "The Bulldog" that allows for unclicking a joint anywhere on the floor, remove the damaged plank and insert a new plank in minutes, without hassle or mess."

Not only does easy plank replacement assure peace of mind for homeowners, it means that environmentally-friendly renewal can be done instead of environmentally-costly floor replacement.

For more information visit torlys.com.

Tip - Any new floor looks great when first installed. But what about three months later, when it gets gouged by a dropped toaster? Be sure to ask your retailer about the ease of plank replacement, and what assurance is offered that the floor will look great after any repairs. - News Canada

How To Decorate Small Spaces

(NC)—Bigger isn't always better. These days, homeowners no longer covet more space than they need. While many people are choosing to live in smaller spaces, they still wish to have a graceful and decorative home. Decorating experts at Hunter Douglas, Canada's leading manufacturer of custom window fashions, offer the following tips for scaling style and elegance to fit more intimate spaces:

- **Clear out Clutter:** A rigorous editing of possessions collected over time will result in a more spacious home. For a classic and airy setting, Silhouette window shadings from Hunter Douglas offer the light-control and privacy aspect of a blind combined with the softened light and view-through of a sheer and protection from UV rays.

- **Consider Colour:** Pale tones expand a room while dark tones shrink a space. Choose lighter, harmonious colours that can be used to connect the rooms.

- **Add Texture:** Texture can be used in place of a pattern to add interest. Select a textured window fashion, such as hand-woven Hunter Douglas Provenance woven wood shades that bring natural texture to your windows from carefully selected grasses, woods, reeds and bamboo.

- **Make Rooms Multi-task:** In between meals, the dining table can be used for arts and crafts projects, homework, meal preparation overflow, a library or home office. Use built-ins and flexible furniture to create a room that is as appealing as it is efficient.

- **Divide and Conquer:** Create a home office or separate bedroom without costly construction. Skyline Gliding Window Panels feature a versatile track system that allows it to be used as a room divider as well as a window treatment.

Using these tips, you can learn how to live large with less.

More information is available online at www.hunterdouglas.ca or toll-free at 1-800-265-8000. - News Canada

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The In Style In-law Suite Create An Ideal Space For A Multi-Generational Home

(NC)—As your (or your spouse's) parents get older, visits become more frequent and the idea of sharing a home with them becomes a welcome idea. Having a well-designed in-law suite can make sharing a household much more enjoyable for all parties involved.

Keep the following tips in mind when creating an in-law suite that is both appropriate and adjustable to meet your family's needs.

Privacy Please

A home that provides private spaces for each generation, as well as common gathering spaces is the best way to make the new living

A Shoppers Guide To The Perfect Window Fashion

(NC)—Windows are one of the main focal points in a room; the window fashions that accessorize them can be even more eye-catching. But finding just the right treatment involves many practical and aesthetic considerations. Sue Rainville, Hunter Douglas director of marketing, offers the following advice for choosing window fashions for your home:

- **Privacy:** If you can see out through closed window treatments during the day, others can see in at night. Look for window fashions such as Silhouette window shadings from Hunter Douglas that offer a combination of sheer fabric to maintain a view of the outside and rotating fabric vanes for variable light control and privacy both during the day and into the night.

- **Noise:** Sound can be a problem if your windows face a crowded street. Fabric window fashions offer significant sound absorption to create a more serene setting inside of the home.

- **Mobility:** For window or glass doors that operate sideways, a vertical covering works well. If the window is used for ventilation, it is best to have a treatment that stacks off the window so that incoming breezes will not rattle or damage it.

- **Proportions:** Window treatments should be considered within the overall scale of the interior to maintain proper proportions. If the window is small in relation to the rest of the room, extend the covering beyond the edges of the window to make it appear larger.

- **Colours:** To visually expand a window or room, choose soft, light colours such as lemon yellow, sea-foam green or sky blue. Coordinate the window fashions with the wall colour, as low contrasts will keep the eye moving around the room.

More information is available online at www.hunterdouglas.ca or toll-free at 1-800-265-8000.

- News Canada

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arrangements work. Location is key – but try to keep the in-law suite on the first floor for easy accessibility.

Custom-Built Baths

One of the most difficult to maneuver and most dangerous rooms for older individuals is the bathroom. The toilet seat is often too low to accommodate their limited mobility and puts unnecessary stress on the legs, knees and back. An elevated toilet seat increases comfort and safety levels. Home Care by Moen offers a locking elevated toilet seat that subtly complements the décor of any bathroom, and locks securely on round and elongated toilet rims. Or, if the bath is too far from the bedroom in your in-law suite, Home Care also offers a new premium bedside commode for added safety and comfort – right next to the bed – just in case.

Standing for long periods or slipping in the shower are also concerns in the bathroom for older adults. If you don't want to break the bank installing a built-in seat in the shower, try Home Care's new premium shower chair. It offers superior safety and the added conveniences of a basket organizer and handheld shower holder – all with attractive styling. To prevent slipping, the new premium Securelock tub grip lends a stable helping hand for stepping into and out of the tub.

Versatility is Key

Just because you're planning for this extra space to be a restful haven for your parents, doesn't mean it will always serve that purpose. Be careful to not design a space so specialized that it will impair the future resale value of your home. But for now, as you're planning for your in-law suite, be sure to keep these tips and products in mind to keep mom and dad safe and comfortable.

- News Canada

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Rediscover The Joys Of Home With Your "Staycation"

(NC)—With the warm weather months just around the corner, it's time to start thinking of all things fresh and in bloom. While the economy may make you hold off on vacations, there's no reason you can't indulge in a "staycation," or a vacation spent at home, and see your surroundings in a new light.

Sue Rainville, director of marketing for Hunter Douglas, Canada's leading manufacturer of custom window fashions, offers the following tips on how to plan the ultimate staycation:

- **Make Plans:** Treat your vacation at home similarly to a regular vacation by making plans. Enjoy your surroundings by taking long walks and engaging in other activities that allow you to enjoy all of the beautiful things you have close to home, whether it's a local park, mountain trail or city block.

- **Transform Your Home into an Oasis:** Get lasting pleasure from the money you were saving for travel by indulging in some decorating projects to refresh your surroundings.

- **Create an At-Home Spa:** Turn your master bath into a spa with the addition of piles of white towels, scented candles, a fresh coat of paint or a photo-mural of a tranquil scene. To have privacy plus a real sky view in your bath select a window fashion with a top-down/bottom-up design option such as Duette Architella honeycomb shades. This product features a patented honeycomb-within-a-honeycomb design that provides superior energy efficiency to keep the room warm and inviting and add to the spa-like mood you've created.

- **Get Some Sleep** – Turn off your alarm clock and indulge in sleeping late. As psychologists advise that we sleep better in a dark room, add some room-darkening window treatments. New Pirouette window shades are available in two opacities – semi-opaque and room-darkening – in a delightful array of textured fabrics and colours.

- **Make the Most of What's Nearby** – Visit local museums and landmarks, and plan outings on your own or with friends to nearby movies, theater or concerts. Consult guidebooks and make an itinerary, just as you would if vacationing in a foreign town.

More information is available online at www.hunterdouglas.ca or toll-free at 1-800-265-8000.

- News Canada



What Is A Home Inspection?

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

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

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

A home inspection report is not a warranty.

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

A home inspection does not detect every conceivable flaw.

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

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

- News Canada



Helpful Hints To Make Your Hardwood Floor Last A Lifetime

(NC)—You finally have the beautiful hardwood flooring you've been longing for. So now what? Here are some quick maintenance tips to ensure your floor stands the test of time.

Be mindful of when to install your floor.

Acclimatization of your new hardwood floor depends on the climate and moisture conditions in which it is being installed. Be sure to check the manufacturer's recommendations.

Always use a hardwood flooring cleaner that is recommended by the manufacturer.

NEVER wash your hardwood floors with water. Wood and water don't mix.

Mind the furniture.

There is no such thing as a scratch-proof floor. Make sure you apply felt pads under all furniture and chair legs.

Invest in a de-humidifier/humidifier.

Hardwood flooring is a living material, so it will expand and contract with changes in seasons. Wood floors will expand during the humid summer months, so the use of a dehumidifier is recommended. A humidifier should be used during the dry winter, as flooring is likely to contract.

Do your homework.

Be sure to take the time and research the manufacturer so you know that the investment you're making is the right one. Backed by over 85 years of experience, Satin Finish Hardwood Flooring offers an extensive line of engineered and solid hardwood flooring.

More information is

available at www.satinfinish.com.

- News Canada



New Cooking Technologies Make Life Easier For The Home Chef

(NC)—The role of cooking in our daily lives has changed dramatically over the last decade: while people's lives are busier than ever before and convenience is king, there's also been a rise in the home chef and culinary-savvy entertainers who are eager to impress dinner guests. The solution that caters to both trends? Technology, of course. Innovations in cooking technologies are being introduced to simplify work for the chef, and make the perfectly-planned meal turn out, well, perfectly. Appliance manufacturers continue to raise the bar with new introductions that make the kitchen less stressful and more functional. Not to mention, every cook who prides their kitchen on the latest and greatest gadgets and goodies won't want to be without the "hottest" technology available.

But what exactly is this new cooking technology, and how does it work? Here are a few terms every modern home chef should be familiar with:

Induction Cooking

Who would have ever thought you could boil a pot of water without a hot-to-touch element on the stove? Induction cooking does just that. Safer and more energy-efficient than traditional cook-tops, induction technology uses magnetic energy to deliver the responsiveness and precision of gas cooking. When a conducting pot is placed on an induction coil, only the pot will become hot – nothing else. Cooking will seem fast, easy, and you don't have to worry about small hands near the stove. Another bonus of induction: it's as easy-to-clean as an electric smooth top stove.

Trivection Cooking

Thermal, reverse air convection and microwave cooking technologies combine to make trivection cooking up to five times more efficient than a conventional oven. This lets the home chef "customize" cooking with one appliance. Sound like something from the future? Maybe, but believe it or not, it's already in homes across the country (see below for availability).

Advantium Cooking

This fast-cooking electronic oven uses halogen (yes, light!) and microwave technology to cook up to eight times faster than a traditional oven, while still delivering the savoury tastes of a slow-cooked home meal. There's also no pre-heating required. Cook a whole chicken in 20 minutes and a baked potato to go along with it in just 4! You can bake, broil, brown, roast, grill and even microwave with one simple oven. Even the least-savvy cook in the kitchen becomes a speedy star chef.

When it comes to the kitchen, it's easier than ever to blend time-savings with culinary masterpieces. The modern chef is no longer stuck with slaving away all day in an apron and a hot kitchen. Sometimes there are more important things to do – like opening the wine, and welcoming the guests.

Appliances with the above cooking technologies can be found at www.monogram.com or www.GEAppliances.ca to find a retailer near you.

- News Canada

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Home Decor Tips: The Bathroom Faucet Speaks Volumes About You

by Sybil Henderson

(NC)—The bathroom is not the smallest room anymore, not in any sense of the word. In new homes and serious renovations, space is lavished on this once neglected area, creating a uniquely extravagant place dedicated to one's physical and sensual well-being.

What's the most popular style for such a bathroom? My guess would be spa. The palest colours, the softest fabrics, the smoothest materials, the



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Curb Appeal Makes A Good First Impression

(NC)—The front of a house is the first thing people notice. As the gateway to the rest of your home, it's important to take the time to make sure it is in tip-top shape. Consider the following tips from The Home Depot to make sure that the first impression is a lasting one.

- Get rid of the clutter – it can be as easy as putting away unnecessary tools, taking in your mail or getting rid of old lawn signs. Consider purchasing an outdoor shed for added storage – The Home Depot carries multiple styles to suit any home.
- Make it sparkle on the outside too – Don't forget to clean the windows and gutters. Use a pressure washer to get rid of dirty siding or dingy decks.
- GreenScape – a green healthy lawn always makes a great first impression, so make sure to maintain your landscape. Mow the lawn weekly. Trim the trees bi-weekly. Make a habit of regularly removing weeds between your concrete bricks and sidewalk stones.
- Paint it up – a fresh coat of paint can give a home's exterior an instant update. Painting the garage, front door and window sills can make an aged home look brand new again. Try Behr's Premium Plus Ultra Exterior Satin Enamel Paint. It provides a protective shell against damage from sunlight moisture, stains and dirt.
- Decorate your entrance – depending on your budget there are numerous ways to upgrade your front entrance. Installing a new door like the Providence Centre Arch Steel Entry Door found at The Home Depot provides a new look to the exterior of your home – it's slim detailed centre window will make any home stand out. If a new door isn't in your budget, consider replacing fixtures – introduce a new door knob, mail box and coordinating house numbers. - News Canada

most versatile facets. Two of everything. Two vanities, two mirrors, two storage areas – because everybody has a personal definition for this perfect spa-like experience.

I mentioned faucets. Somehow the style of a faucet can speak volumes about the person who chose it and uses it. To create a faucet capable of anchoring the look of character in a bathroom, American Standard commissioned Artefakt, an award-winning German design studio, to develop the Moments Collection, which soon after its unveiling won Artefakt yet another award at the prestigious International Design Forum in Hanover. Moments basin faucets are now available in Canada. The style is minimalist, with the edge taken off. It is in harmony with current and near-future architectural trends.

"We used simple shapes," says Achim Pohl of the Artefakt design team. "The surfaces are soft, flowing forms, giving Moments its own personalized spirit, able to reach across cultural boundaries and be always recognized as a modern image."

On the practical side, the Moments basin faucet is available in widespread and monoblock configurations. Drip-Free technology and the patented Speed Connect drain system, the simplest of all installation procedures, ensure trouble-free performance. In common with all other American Standard bathroom faucets it has an aerator that restricts maximum flow to 1.84 gallons per minute (8.3L/min), an important water conservation feature. More information on these products is available online at www.americanstandard.ca, - News Canada



Small Projects...Big Impact Upgrade Your Home Within Your Means

(NC)—Today's sagging economy may make you hesitant to tackle large home improvement projects. But what about smaller, yet significant, upgrades? "Don't fixate on each improvement's immediate payback," advises Josh Garskof, Money Magazine contributing writer. "When you get around to selling after the market improves, you'll probably recoup most (though not all) of the costs."

If you're willing to tackle those smaller home projects now, start with two rooms that typically offer a great return on investment -- the kitchen and bath.

Kitchen Face Lift - In the kitchen, start with the largest, and typically the most costly project -- cabinets. If your existing cabinets are solid wood, you may be able to give them a new look with a simple paint job or resurfacing.

Granite countertops make a stunning upgrade, but if a complete countertop overhaul is not in your budget, select a feature area in your kitchen. Focusing on an area, such as a kitchen island, to install granite tile can achieve an upscale look at a more affordable price.

Decorative details, such as faucets and fixtures, go a long way. Consider upgrading to a new kitchen faucet that improves both aesthetics and functionality. The Level kitchen faucet from Moen features sleek and contemporary lines that coordinate beautifully with today's modern interiors. Plus, Level's pull-down wand simplifies everyday tasks, such as filling large pots, pitchers and vases in and around the sink.

Bathroom Refresh - In the bath, you have plenty of room for improvement -- from painting to plumbing. An elegant and affordable showpiece



will make a huge impact in this small space. For an inexpensive and eco-friendly project, try repurposing an old dresser or buffet into a bathroom vanity. Top that vanity off with a stunning centerpiece, like Moen's Rothbury bathroom faucet. Rothbury features a flow-optimized, water-saving aerator, which uses 30 percent less water, without sacrificing performance. To carry the look of your new vanity throughout the bath, install matching tub and shower fixtures, as well as coordinating accessories, like towel bars, robe hooks, a

pivoting paper holder and a tank lever, all available within Moen's Rothbury collection.

When it comes to today's home improvement, you can add the most value to your home (and keep some money in your pocket) by tackling small, but noticeable projects. Take these on, and you will notice a difference in no time.

- News Canada



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