

FRESH LOOKS FOR

Fall



5 ways to boost your home's curb appeal

(BPT)—It's no secret that the U.S. housing market is booming right now. According to realtor.com, "Strong demand and insufficient supply pushed home prices up at a record-breaking 16.6% pace. The combination of historically low mortgage rates, businesses reopening and the lifting of pandemic restrictions fueled a buying frenzy with multiple bids," creating a seller's market, while making the path to home ownership difficult for some buyers.

Whether you're purchasing a fixer-upper as an attainable option to home ownership or selling your home and want to create a positive first impression, licensed landscape contractor, author and TV personality Sara Bendrick suggests five ways to boost your home's curb appeal.

1) Create a welcoming front walk

The entrance of your home should be your first point of focus. A great way to work with what you already have is to add color to your

concrete walkway and steps. Concrete can wear over time and become somewhat of an eyesore and dull in nature. Staining is an easy and perfect way to soften up the look of concrete in any landscape and many colors of stain are available to complement your outdoor spaces. Always remember to pressure wash your concrete before staining it to remove dirt. This is important as you need a clean surface so that the stain can absorb easily and evenly. A clean surface will also help the stain soak entirely through.

2) Trim hedges and shrubs for definition

Bushes, hedges and shrubs possess a natural beauty that can boost the curb appeal of your home, while providing an attractive complement to lawns, trees, gardens and hardscapes. Well-trimmed plants also prevent your outdoor spaces from looking overgrown and open up walkways and sightlines. Consider pruning low-hanging branches that obscure the view of your

home from the road and reduce the aesthetic impact of your landscaping features.

3) Don't forget to mulch

After trimming your hedges and shrubs for definition and planting flowers, add two to four inches of mulch to your beds. Mulch keeps weeds down and helps dissipate heat from the sun to protect the soil from drying out, and it also provides a refined look to your landscape. As an alternative to mulch, you can purchase wood chips made of bark.

4) Make a statement in your yard with flowers and blooms

Pick flowers with colors that complement the house colors, which will bring softness to the front yard. Be sure to choose plants that are climate appropriate and thrive in your area; local nurseries are great resources for this. Consider using an auger instead of a shovel to help get through the planting process quickly. Also, be sure to spread your new plants out so that they have enough room to grow and thrive.



The entrance of your home should be your first point of focus.

5) Add a finishing touch
To draw the eye toward the entryway of your home, hang a wreath on the front door, place a potted plant near the steps and add a water feature such as a self-circulating fountain.

Water features such as ponds and fountains can add an architectural element to soften your landscape design and may also attract natural wildlife to your yard.

Whether you're a seller trying to create an un-

forgettable memory for a prospective buyer, or a new homeowner trying to make your home more inviting, these landscaping improvements are easy ways to boost your home's curb appeal.

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Hate bugs? Here's how to remove the ick-factor from your home

(StatePoint) Hate bugs? You're not alone. Nearly seven in 10 Americans can't sleep if they know there's an insect in the room, according to a recent survey conducted by OnePoll for Zevo. The same poll also found that two in three Americans would give up a month's pay to not deal with bugs!

Science says your visceral reaction is actually quite rational. According to researchers at the University of California, Davis, those

creepy-crawly feelings you may experience upon seeing a bug is simply nature's way of helping you avoid pathogens and parasites.

The good news? Insect experts say that there are steps you can take to protect your home turf from disgusting bugs and other pests.

"While you should not lose your healthy distaste for bugs, you can take steps to keep them out of your home," says Daniel Perry, entomologist at Procter & Gamble.

Here are a few ways to help keep America's top three hated bugs: cockroaches, spiders and ants, along with a host of other common insects, out of your home.

1. Guard doors and windows: Keep doors and windows sealed when they're not in use. If you love a fresh breeze, be sure that your screen doors and windows are in tip top shape and contain no holes. Don't have a screen door? Consider quickly installing a mesh

door screen over your front door or patio door that seals up the middle with a magnet. This is a good choice for renters and others unable to make more intensive home updates.

2. Seal holes: Use an afternoon to caulk small cracks in your home's foundation and siding. This is a quick, easy and affordable way to seal these common entry points for bugs.

3. Remove their food source: Bugs need a food source to survive, so keep

your home clean. In the kitchen, seal your trash bin and remove its contents regularly, wipe down surfaces -- especially after spills, and sweep up those crumbs. A cockroach can survive months on a single crumb of food! Be sure to regularly vacuum furniture, rugs and carpets in any room where you eat.

4. Blast bugs: Bugs will find their way into your home no matter how hard you try to keep them out. Because a small bug prob-

lem can spread quickly, it's important to be ready to meet them head-on. Zevo sprays, including the brand's Multi-Insect Killer Spray, are powered by essential oils. Zevo's BioSelective Technology was developed by experts to be targeted to bugs' unique biology, plus Zevo is safe for use around people and pets when used as directed.

If you're tired of being grossed out in your own home, it's time to take charge.



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Is your HVAC system ready for cool weather?

(StatePoint) As you enjoy mild autumn weather, take time to ensure your home is equipped to handle the chilly months ahead. Following these steps will mean a more comfortable, energy-efficient winter:

- Clean your air filters monthly. Dirty filters make HVAC equipment work harder and cause more wear and tear on your system. They also increase your energy bill and reduce indoor air quality.

- Compare the Annual Fuel Utilization Efficiency of your heating system with newer models. If it's below 13, you may want to consider a new, more efficient system. Remember, the higher the rating, the less wasted energy for a reduced carbon footprint. Be sure to choose equipment bearing the ENERGY STAR logo. High-efficiency systems reduce your impact on the environment and can also save you money. You may also be eligible for a Federal



Tax Credit if you select a qualifying model.

- Use a humidifier during colder months. It not only adds moisture to your home, it can actually make it feel warmer. In turn, you'll be more apt to lower your thermostat, saving money and consuming less energy.

- Check and maintain your insulation. Improperly insulated walls, floors, attics, basements and crawl-spaces drain away heat and can also lead to moisture

imbalance. Adding weather stripping and caulk around windows and doors can also go a long way to improving your home's insulation.

- Turn down your thermostat. Keeping your thermostat five degrees cooler can lower your heating bills without affecting your home's comfort. Install a programmable thermostat to regulate temperatures.

- Clean the furnace area. Don't keep chemicals or cleaning products near your heater, and don't store anything next to it that could impede ventilation. Keep vents and returns free of obstructions. Don't lay carpet over vents, place furniture

over or in front of them, or obstruct the flow of air.

- Have a technician give your HVAC system a pre-season tune-up so that everything is running efficiently before temperatures plummet. Even the most efficient system can suffer if it's not properly maintained. Just be sure your HVAC equipment is installed and serviced by a North American Technician Excellence (NATE)-certified HVAC technician, as they have demonstrated their knowledge of today's increasingly sophisticated heating and cooling systems by passing a nationally recognized test developed and supported by all segments of the industry. Working with a NATE-certified technician translates to a longer life for your HVAC equipment, increased energy efficiency and fewer callbacks and warranty returns. To find a NATE-certified contractor in your area and for more HVAC tips and insights, visit <https://www.natex.org>.

With a few simple considerations in fall, you can reduce your home energy bill and improve your home's comfort all winter.



Kitchen renovations can add instant appeal.

Signs it's time to overhaul kitchen

Remodeling a kitchen adds value to a home. Remodeling Magazine's "Cost vs. Value Report" indicates mid-range kitchen remodels cost about \$66,000, and homeowners can expect to recover about 60 to 80 percent of that cost at resale.

Homeowners may wonder if remodeling their kitchens is worth the investment. But homeowners should not just consider cost, but also the current conditions of their kitchens when deciding if a renovation project is the right move to make. These signs indicate it may be time to renovate a kitchen.

- Breakers are triggered: If the lights go dark from a tripped circuit breaker every time you try to microwave and run the toaster oven at the same time, your wiring is likely not up to the task of handling the workload and could be out of date. A kitchen remodel will assess wiring load needs and an electric overhaul may be necessary.

- Lack of storage: One of the biggest hassles homeowners encounter in their kitchens is a lack of storage space. If making a meal involves a Jenga-like stacking and rearranging of kitchen tools, or if an avalanche occurs whenever you search for an item, you might need more storage. A carefully planned redesign can achieve this, even in a smaller kitchen.

- Outdated appliances: Even if your appliances are not avocado green or mustard yellow relics of the 1970s, they might still need to be replaced. Typically, ap-

pliances are only expected to last around 10 to 15 years. If appliances have become unsafe or energy hogs, it could be time for a remodel.

- Family is expanding (or shrinking): Kitchens often are the heart of a home. They need to meet the needs of the family that resides in that home. A remodel can add space as needed. On the flip side, when a couple becomes empty nesters, kitchens can be redesigned and downsized to reflect their new needs and desires, such as the addition of a wine chiller or espresso station.

- Poor lighting: Task lighting is essential in a kitchen, but older homes may not be equipped with lighting where it's most needed. A carefully designed remodel can improve lighting with under-cabinet lights, pendants, overhead lighting, and even natural light to make the space attractive and more functional.

- Frequent run-ins: The notion that you can have too many cooks in the kitchen refers to having too many people trying to pitch in or offer their opinions. However, it also can apply to when too many people are gathering in a small space. Redesigning a kitchen can improve the efficiency of a space and make the room feel larger.

- Aesthetic appeal: Many kitchen remodels have been inspired by unsightly kitchens. Cosmetic changes can lead to big improvements.

Kitchen renovations can add instant appeal and help address issues that tend to plague outdated rooms.

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Carpet helps you create a healthy, stylish, comfortable home

(BPT) – Being at home more often has inspired many people to make changes in their favorite spaces that focus on health and comfort. You might be surprised to learn that carpeting a room supports both these goals, plus offers near endless style possibilities.

Carpet is a popular flooring option, accounting for 48% of the total U.S. flooring market, according to the Carpet and Rug Institute. Adding carpet or refreshing the carpet you already have in your home has many benefits, from helping you breathe easier to keeping loved ones safe. Here are the top reasons people are opting for carpet:

Health and indoor air quality

Carpet can help support a healthy home, even for people with asthma and allergies. The updated asthma management guidelines from the National Institutes of Health’s National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute do not include recommendations to remove carpet as a way to treat asthma and allergies.

“Scientific research shows that carpet does not negatively impact allergies or asthma. In fact, carpet can improve your home’s air quality by trapping allergens, keeping them out of the breathing zone and making them easy to vacuum,” said Dr. Michael Halwig, allergy specialist on the clinical faculty of Emory University School of Medicine in Atlanta, Ga. “All too often patients have been advised to remove carpeting in the home to deal with environmental allergies. This is often expensive and impractical for many families. Current

knowledge shows that the use of vacuum cleaners with HEPA filters and other environmental control measures are much more effective in reducing allergens in the home.”

Many people are installing additional carpet in their homes to help improve air quality. Fortunately, the vast majority of carpet sold in the U.S. is certified through CRI’s Green Label Plus program, a third-party certification that demonstrates products are among the lowest emission emitting carpet, adhesive and cushion products on the market.

Safety and noise reduction

With people spending more time at home, indoor noise pollution is becoming a big problem. Carpet and carpet pads help absorb excessive sounds to soften noises within a room while serving as a sound barrier between floors. This is especially important in rooms

with large TVs, sound systems or speaker phones, as well as in hallways and on stairs to soften foot traffic. Whether you’re working, studying or relaxing, carpet reduces noise so you can focus.

Carpet is also a safe choice, particularly in multigenerational homes. In addition to added comfort in cushioning footsteps, carpet can help reduce slips and falls that may occur more easily on hard surface flooring. Carpet is safe for the whole family, but especially for toddlers and older individuals who are more prone to falls. If a fall does happen, carpet can help minimize injury.

Fashion and functionality

Carpet can serve as a neutral foundation, in popular tones of gray, cream or beige, or it can be a focal point featuring vibrant colors and bold patterns. With thousands of carpet styles, colors, textures and designs, you

can select an option that suits your personal taste and complements your home’s aesthetic.

Beyond beauty, carpet provides a great place to sit and is comfortable underfoot. Because carpet provides thermal insulation, it helps maintain a room’s optimum temperature; for example, in cooler months it retains warm air for longer. It feels good and looks good, helping create an inviting feeling in any room.

“With two toddlers, a dog and two cats, carpet was a must-have throughout our home. Carpet provides comfort, warmth, and style - and we also love that it improves indoor air quality,” said Chelsee Hood, mother and blogger. “Many families are choosing to install carpet for these reasons and more, making it a great feature in the modern home.”

To learn more about the research and benefits of carpet, visit www.beautyofcarpet.com.



Adding carpet or refreshing the carpet you already have in your home has many benefits.



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Pre-winter perennial pruning pointers

Foliage and football might be two things people instantly associate with fall, but there's more to this beloved season than brightly colored leaves and action on the gridiron.

Gardeners know that spring is an ideal time to plan and plant their favorite flowers and most flavorful fruits and vegetables. However, seasoned gardeners know that gardening is a year-round commitment. Pruning is one of the keys to keeping perennials coming back for years to come, and fall is an ideal time to take on this important task.

Pruning perennials in the fall is not a one-size-fits-all endeavor. According to the Old Farmer's Almanac, some perennials can be cut down after the first killing frost, while others can be left to benefit wildlife, including birds and insects. Understanding pruning and when to do it this fall can help gardeners lay a strong foundation for their gardens that will benefit them next spring.

Why should some perennials be pruned?

The College of Agricultural Sciences at Pennsylvania State University notes that perennials that have become diseased or infested with insects are pruned to prevent those problems from resurfacing in the spring. In addition, according to the Old Farmer's Almanac, many herbaceous perennials have old foliage and dying stems after several hard frosts. If dead foliage or dying stems aren't pruned, disease, slugs and other pests can overwinter in the plants. Cutting these plants down to

the ground after several hard frosts allows the base of the plant to remain dormant over the winter but makes the plant less hospitable to disease and insects.

Which perennials should I prune?

The first step to pruning perennials is to recognize which need to be pruned and which can be left intact for the winter. The Old Farmer's Almanac notes that bee balm and phlox are prone to powdery mildew and should be cut back once they're gone. Hostas harbor slug eggs, so they, too, should be pruned after a hard frost. Hosta leaves that have fallen on the ground should be removed as well. There's no need to cut back certain perennials if they're healthy. For example, hardy geraniums do not require pruning in the fall, and Penn State Extension notes that hardy perennials like garden mums are more likely to survive a cold winter if they're left intact. That's because the tops of such plants will collect leaves and snow for insulation and moisture over the course of winter. Gardeners who are unsure about fall pruning can speak with their local gardening center for additional advice.

When to prune perennials

Gardeners need not rush to prune perennials in the fall. Diseased or infested plants can be pruned at the first sight of disease or infestation, but gardeners can wait until several hard frosts have occurred before they prune healthy perennials. In gardening parlance, a hard frost refers to when temperatures drop below 28 F. Several hard frosts kill the uppermost growth of most perennials, making this an ideal time to prune them.

Must-have features in your bathroom remodel

Veteran homeowners recognize the value of remodeling their kitchens and bathrooms. Kitchens and baths tend to appear dated more quickly than other spaces, such as living rooms and bedrooms, which can always be revamped with some fresh paint and new furnishings.

The home improvement pricing resource HomeGuide indicates an average bathroom remodel costs anywhere from \$5,500 to \$15,000 depending on the size and scope of the renovation. However, a bath redo can increase a home's resale value and can return as much as 68 percent of homeowners' investments. As homeowners plan their bathroom renovations, it's a good time to consider improvements that will improve function and add design appeal for years to come.

• **Floating vanity:** Add an airy feeling to the room by creating space between the vanity and the floor. A floating vanity can be a counter with a vessel sink or even have cabinets, as long as the vanity doesn't extend to the floor.



• **Freestanding traditional sink or tub:** There's something elegant about a freestanding tub or pedestal sink. Such features can lend a classic vibe to a space. However, freestanding fixtures also come in modern or eclectic forms, so there are options for any design style.

• **Frameless showers:** Switch to a walk-in shower option, which improves aesthetics and makes it easier to "age in place" in a home. Pair that frameless shower with clear glass shower doors so sightline in the space remains unencumbered.

• **Natural textures:** Create a calm and serene sanctuary in the bathroom with light, natural hues and materials. Nature-inspired colors on tiles, walls and vanities can add to the spa vibe.

• **Dual sinks and vanities:** With a double vanity, two people can share the space and easily use the bathroom without getting in each other's way. One vanity with two sinks works, but homeowners can create even more personal space by dividing vanities and mirrors.

• **Small textured tile on shower floors:** Small textures are appealing and add safety. The added texture and grouting will keep feet from slipping on wet floors. Also, opt for mold-resistant grout to make cleanup even easier.

• **Special shower heads:** Invest in shower heads that can run the gamut from creating steam showers to rainfall effects. Some showers will have multiple shower jets to offer an invigorating experience.

• **Improve drainage:** Increase the diameter of the drain pipe in the bathroom from the standard to a two-inch drain pipe. This will reduce the risk of clogs and overflow leaks.

• **Install a window:** Natural light and air flow can reduce the risk for mold and mildew growth.

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How to help houseplants survive a long winter

As fall gradually gives way to winter, gardeners expend ample energy preparing their flowers and plants for the months ahead. Plants may be pruned to increase the likelihood that they will return in full bloom come the spring, while lawns may be aerated so cool-season grasses can get the nutrients, water and oxygen they need when the temperatures dip. But what about houseplants? Do indoor houseplants need the same type of pre-winter TLC that outdoor plants need before winter arrives?

As the seasons change, so, too, do the conditions outside. And those conditions affect indoor houseplants much like they do lawns, gardens and trees. So, it's vital that people with houseplants do not overlook the need to keep houseplants going strong as fall gives way to winter.

Location

Hours of daylight shorten in winter, which means some houseplants won't get as much sun as they were accustomed to over the last several months. That means plants may need to be relocated closer to windows where they can make the most of each day's sunlight. However, it's important that there's ample distance between the plant and the window, especially when winter temperatures get especially cold. If the plants are too close to a window on cold days, they could freeze. Keep them close enough to the windows to get ample sunlight but far enough away so they don't get too cold. In addition, keep plants away from drafty windows as well as heating vents, as extreme temperatures are not conducive to healthy houseplants.



Watering

Watering needs also may change when the temperatures drop. All houseplants need less water in winter. In fact, overwatering in winter can be especially harmful to indoor plants. Plant owners can try decreasing the frequency of their watering by half each winter and see how the plants respond.

Cleaning

Cleaning plants is another way to help them survive a long winter. Dust settles in many homes in winter, when windows tend to remain closed for months on end and fresh air isn't circulating around the house as much as it is in spring and summer. Dust inhibits a plant's ability to photosynthesize, thus compromising its ability to make it through a winter unscathed. Better Homes & Gardens recommends using a soft-bristle paintbrush, a toothbrush or pipe cleaner to remove dust from African violets and other fuzzy-leafed plants. Gently washing plants with a paper towel or cloth that's been moistened with water can remove the dust. Oils and polishes should not be used to make leaves shine, as these substances can block pores on the plant.

Houseplants may need some extra attention in winter as hours of daylight dwindle and indoor conditions make it hard for plants to survive.

How to pick paint for home interiors

Many components combine to define a home's interior. Some homeowners may be partial to certain styles, such as ultra-modern or farmhouse, while others may opt for a more traditional look that cannot necessarily be categorized as one style or another. Though many homeowners may spend considerable time and devote a lot of energy to making their home embody a certain style, those who aren't willing to commit to a particular look can lean on one component to make a stylish statement all their own: paint.

Color can be a part of every homeowner's design arsenal. Bold colors can be used to create a stunning accent wall, while homes with open concepts often utilize color to define rooms. Homeowners who want to revitalize their home interiors can do so with paint, and this approach doesn't require homeowners to commit to a whole new design style.

Though paint may seem simple to novices, homeowners who have painted home interiors in the past recognize how complicated the process of picking paint can be. Paint retailers have a seemingly endless



swatch of paint colors to choose from, and before long homeowners' heads may be spinning as they try to narrow down their options. The following tips can help homeowners pick the perfect paint for their home interiors.

- Take stock, and photographs, of your current furnishings. Many interior designers rely on a simple technique when recommending color schemes to their clients. Choose a standout color from existing furnishings, such as the dominant color from a patterned decorative pillow or piece of furniture, and then look for the same shade to paint the walls. A photograph of the item can be handy when visiting the paint store.

- Lighten colors as you go up. The home renovation and design experts

at HGTV recommend picking darker color values for the floor, medium color values for the walls and light values for the ceiling. This approach mimics the look of the great outdoors, where the ground tends to be darker than the trees, and the trees are darker than the blue sky.

- Utilize paint to create the vibe you want. The home renovation experts at This Old House note that colors evoke an emotional response. Cool colors like blue and green give off a relaxing vibe, which makes them ideal for bedrooms and bathrooms. Red is an intense color that can up the energy ante in any room, which can make it an option for homeowners who want to spark debate around their dinner tables.

- Give personal preference its place at the table. Though interior designers may have years of experience picking paint colors for a home and researchers may have determined how certain colors can be utilized to create a desired ambiance in a given room, ultimately homeowners are the ones who will be living in the home. So, it's important that homeowners pick colors they like for their home interiors.

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What to know when updating your home's siding

(StatePoint) With climate change spurring an uptick in extreme weather events in recent years, homeowners today know that to keep their property -- and the people in it -- best protected, the siding they select matters.

"Not only will the right materials better insulate against extreme temperatures, but durable materials will also help guard against wicked weather and storms," says Jon Lapp, siding project manager for a leading siding manufacturer. "And of course, siding has a major impact on the look of your home exterior."

The good news is that you don't need to sacrifice curb appeal in the pursuit of high-quality siding. Here's what to know when making this important upgrade:

- **Materials:** Your choice of materials can impact how you feel about your house for years to come. To that end, consider the most popular home siding material, which, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's Survey of Construction, is vinyl siding. First introduced in the 1960s, its popularity is no accident. Thanks to its low cost, ease of installation, minimal maintenance and long-term beauty and durability, it's a favorite choice among installers and homeowners. Just be sure that the siding you select is formulated with weather- and heat-resistant materials, as well as UV blockers to protect against color fade.

- **Insulation:** Did you know that most wall insulation is placed only between the studs? Since wall studs represent up to 25% of the wall surface of an average home, that's like having one entire wall with no insulation at all. Insulated siding blankets your home, providing continuous insulation between the studs and exterior wall of your home. Look for insulated siding options that are tested and proven to increase the R-value (a measure of a material's resistance to heat flow) of an exterior wall.

- **Color:** Color and beauty are huge factors in your home improvement decision. To get it right, start by using the color selection tools on your manufacturer's website. It's important to know that the monitor settings on your device can impact the way the color displays, so contact the dealer to see real color samples made from its actual products before making a final decision. Choose from classic whites, earth tones, bright and colorful shades, or bold, darker hues. Just be sure your beautiful new siding contains anti-weathering ingredients that prevent weather and sun exposure from causing it to fade.

"Approach this home improvement project carefully. With the power to boost your home's beauty and energy efficiency, new siding can offer a great return on investment and protect your home for years to come," says Lapp.

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