



**FRESH
LOOKS FOR**

Fall

**The Mendota Reporter
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Simple ways to improve a kitchen pantry

People have been spending more time at home in 2020 than in years past, and certain projects around the house have become a priority. One home improvement idea that serves the double benefit of creating organization and making cooking at home more efficient is to reimagine the kitchen pantry.

A pantry is a room or closet where food, beverages and linens or dishes are stored. Pantries can be highly useful spaces that provide ancillary storage in kitchens. Many modern homes are equipped with pantries, but older homes may require some modification to create more useful pantries. Whether starting from scratch or modifying an existing pantry, these tips can help projects go more smoothly.

- Maximize vertical storage. Utilizing vertical areas can help increase storage capacity. Build in

extra nooks by investing in undershelf storage baskets. These baskets can instantly create designated areas for different types of ingredients. Homeowners also can look for ways to use the inside of cabinet doors or add extra shelves on walls or in eaves.

- Consider your needs. Figure out which items you would like to store in the pantry and then shop for corresponding storage systems. For example, storage solutions may feature wine bottle racks, baskets for potatoes and other produce, shelving for small appliances, and even pull out racks for baking pans or cutting boards.

- Use clear storage. Put ingredients in clear, airtight containers of similar dimensions so that you can easily find items you need. Transfer bulky items, like cereals and baking supplies, to storage containers for uniformity.

- Store bulk items else-

where. Bulk shopping can be cost-efficient, but bulk items can quickly eat up real estate in the pantry. Designate another area for non-perishable bulk products, like paper goods or canned items, such as in a garage or utility room.

- Pull out drawers are convenient. Pull-out drawers can reduce the need to seek and reach for items. These drawers conveniently roll out so items in the back can be accessed without disturbing foods in the front. Drawers can be custom built for any pantry space.

- Make it accessible. Think about who will be taking items from the pantry. Put children's snacks on the bottom pantry shelf where they can reach them, and then organize other shelves for adults in the home.

A pantry remodel can add valuable storage space and make one of the busiest rooms in the house operate more efficiently.



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Signs your gutters are in need of repair

Fall is a great time to tackle projects around the house. The weather each fall allows homeowners to make improvements to their homes' exteriors without worrying about extreme heat or cold, while interior projects like painting are made easier because homeowners can open the windows to allow for proper ventilation.

Fall also marks a great time to prepare for upcoming projects that can make winter work that much easier. For example, fall is a great time to take stock of your gutters so you can address any issues before leaves begin to fall or the first snowstorm touches down. Compromised gutters can contribute to water issues in basements and adversely affect a home's foundation if not addressed immediately, so it behooves homeowners to learn the signs that gutters are in need of repair or replacement.

• Gutter hanging off the home: Gutters were once installed predominantly with spikes. However, many industry professionals now install gutters with hanger brackets. Why the change? Spikes loosen over time, leading to the gutters hanging off the home. That can contribute to serious issues if left untreated. Gutters hanging off the home need not necessarily be replaced, but rather secured to the home, ideally with hanger brackets instead of spikes. Brackets hook into the front of the gutter and are then screwed into the fascia of a home. A professional who specializes in gutter repair can perform this task

relatively quickly, and it's an inexpensive yet highly effective solution.

• Gutter separation: Gutters that are no longer fastened together can leak and contribute to issues that affect the home's foundation, siding and appearance. Clogs and the accumulation of debris can cause gutters to separate because they are not designed to hold too much weight. Replacement of separated gutters may or may not be necessary depending on how big the problem is and the condition of the existing gutters. If replacement is not necessary, separated gutters may be remedied by securing the joints, another relatively simple and inexpensive fix.

• Peeling exterior paint: Paint that appears to be peeling off of your home

may indicate that water is seeping over the edge of the gutter closest to your home. When that happens, water is coming down the side of the house, causing the paint to peel. In such instances, replacing the gutters is often necessary.

• Basement flooding: Not all signs of deteriorating gutters are outside a home. Many a homeowner has been flummoxed by flooding in their basements, and such flooding can be caused by aging, ineffective gutters. That's because deteriorating gutters sometimes allow water to leak near the foundation of a home, contributing to basement flooding.

Fall is an ideal time to inspect gutters and have any issues fixed before leaves begin to fall or harsh winter weather arrives.



Compromised gutters can contribute to water issues in basements and adversely affect a home's foundation.



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Safe and effective ways to clean up leaves

Removing leaves from the yard is a task that homeowners must perform each fall. Thousands upon thousands of leaves can drop from a single tree. Multiply that by the number of trees on a property, and it's no surprise the task of leaf cleanup can seem so daunting. Furthermore, not all leaves are shed at the same time, so several cleanup sessions may be necessary before the last leaf is banished from the yard.

Just like removing snow, leaf cleanup can be a taxing job if done by hand. For people unaccustomed to exercise, cleaning up leaves

can turn into quite a workout. According to the Discovery Health Calorie Counter, raking leaves for one hour can burn nearly 292 calories. Shoulders and arms will feel the burn. Raking leaves is considered moderate physical activity, similar to brisk walking. Those who find themselves straining or out of breath should take a break, and these tips also

make the job safer and easier.

• Wear layers when cleaning up leaves. It may be cool at first, but it's easy to work up a sweat after raking for a while. Layers can be

peeled off so as not to get overheated or risk hypothermia from sweating in chilly temps.

• Pay attention to your posture while raking. James Weinstein, chairman of the Department of Orthopedics at Dartmouth Medical School, recommends forming a wide base with the feet and holding the rake slightly toward the end of the handle with one hand three-quarters of the way down the handle from the other. Do not twist the spine; move your entire body. Avoid overuse of muscles on one side of the body by switching sides periodically.

• Do not try to rake or blow leaves on windy days. Wind will only make the task that much more difficult, which could lead

to overworking oneself.

• Avoid overfilling bags. For those who plan to mulch and bag leaves, remember that compressed leaves can get heavy pretty quickly. Do not over-fill bags, as they can be hard to move or take to a recycling center.

Using a leaf blower to push leaves into piles will reduce the strenuousness of the task, but leaf blowers can be heavy and noisy and gas-powered blowers can produce a considerable amount of exhaust.

Raking leaves can be quite a chore. It is important that homeowners take steps to prevent injury while cleaning up leaves in their yards.



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4 simple ways to keep indoor air fresh at all times

(BPT) - Americans today are more focused on cleaning and sanitization – not to mention the air they breathe – than ever. Indoor air quality has already been a growing concern in the United States for some time. According to a study published in the journal Science of the Total Environment, indoor air quality can be worse than the air outdoors. You may not realize that simply by doing normal things like cooking, cleaning, personal hygiene or enjoying a hobby, invisible pollution is being added to the air.

With social distancing measures, people are spending more time at home, so being proactive about indoor air quality is even more essential. Consider these steps to help maintain fresher air and a cleaner environment:

- Develop an indoor green thumb

With more people looking to be productive at home, houseplants are a great clean air solution that has multiple benefits. According to houseplant specialists The Sill, houseplants help boost your mood and productivity, which is essential for anyone spending long hours working at home. The Pothos plant is highly rated for removing indoor air toxins as well as the Snake plant, which absorbs toxins through its leaves and produces oxygen. With houseplants, not only will your work space look lush but also the air will stay fresh.

- Use a room and portable air purifiers

From the kitchen to the car to the office or dorm room, the portable LG Puri-Care Mini Air Purifier helps clean air wherever you go. Compact and light enough

to carry in one hand, the advanced filter removes 99% ultra-fine dust and reduces allergens and irritants. One charge provides quiet filtration for up to eight hours. A four-color LED smart display shows air quality in real-time and Bluetooth control makes monitoring conditions and performance simple. If you're looking for a permanent air purifier in your home, LG's PuriCare 360 is certified asthma and allergy friendly by the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America and removes more than 90% of airborne allergens.

- Lower moisture levels

Mold and mildew are common culprits that reduce air quality and can trigger asthma and allergies. In your home, it's important to control moisture to prevent mold and mildew growth. When using the bathroom to bathe or shower, always use a fan or crack the window. In moist spaces like basements, be mindful about opening windows, running fans and keeping rooms dry. Be aware of your whole home's humidity levels and use a dehumidifier when necessary to remove moisture from the air.

- Change HVAC filters regularly

Your home's heating, ventilation and air conditioning system helps maintain a comfortable indoor environment all year long. It includes a filter that captures dust, allergens and other microscopic particles to help keep the air clean and the system running efficiently. Set a reminder to check the filter monthly. At minimum, it should be changed every three months. During heavy use – such as winter and summer – change it more often. Bonus: A clean filter



Portable mini air purifiers help clean the air wherever you go in your home.

helps the system run better and saves money.

Indoor air pollution is a growing concern, and these

four simple steps will help you maintain fresh indoor

air so you and your family can breathe easy.

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How to recognize when you can stop mowing

Each weekend in spring, summer and fall, millions of homeowners fire up their mowers and cut the grass in their yards. A few hours spent mowing the lawn can be a great time to get some sun and some exercise in the great outdoors.

As fall gradually transitions to winter, homeowners may wonder when to stop mowing their lawns. Each lawn is different, and when to stop mowing may depend on a host of factors, including local climate and the type of turf. In addition to climate and turf, homeowners can keep an eye on these conditions to determine when the time is right to put their mowers away for the winter.

- **Frost:** Warm-season grasses typically go dormant after a couple of significant frosts. Homeowners can jot down each frost during fall. Frosts are most noticeable in the early morning hours, so be sure to check lawn conditions each morning as the weather begins to grow cold. Frost may be noticeable without even going outside, but homeowners may need to go outside to check on chilly mornings or on days when the previous night was especially cold. If you must go outside, stay off the grass to protect it. Two or three frosts might be enough to make warm-season grasses go dormant for the winter. Cool-season grasses may keep growing and require mowing even after a few frosts, so it's imperative that homeowners determine which type of grass is in their yards.

- **Soil temperature:** If it's hard to determine if frosts have occurred, homeowners can try checking the temperature of their soil to decide if they need to keep mowing. A leading lawn care expert recommends homeowners continue mowing warm-season grasses so long as they keep growing. Lawns may not grow as quickly in fall as they do in spring or summer, and growth may not be as visible to the naked eye during this time of year as it is in other times. Homeowners can routinely check soil temperature to determine if their grasses have stopped growing. Warm-season grasses tend to stop growing once the soil temperature is consistently at 55 F or below, while cool-season grasses tend to stop when temperatures are 45 F or lower.

Falling leaves have long been a barometer used by homeowners to determine if they need to keep mowing their lawns. That's not necessarily a reliable metric, as grass can still keep growing even if leaves have been falling for weeks. In addition, using a mulching mower when leaves begin falling is a great way to provide the lawn with nutrients it can use throughout the winter. Some trees shed their leaves more quickly than others, but it's a good rule of thumb that lawns will need to keep being mowed if trees are still retaining more than half their leaves.

A host of factors can help homeowners determine when it's safe to put their mowers away for the winter.



Must-haves for your home office

Remote work has been around for many years, though it certainly picked up steam in 2020. In an effort to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus COVID-19, in March 2020 government officials implemented stay-at-home measures that mandated many working professionals to begin working from home. That transition occurred seemingly overnight, forcing men and women to find somewhere in their homes to work.

As the dust settled and working professionals grew accustomed to working from home, many recognized the need to have an office in their homes. Various factors can make home offices more conducive to getting work done, and the following are some home office must-haves that can help people be more productive while working from home.

Lighting

Lighting is important in a home office. It's easy to overlook natural light, especially for workers who previously worked in offices that did not have windows. But natural light can help save on energy costs and boost mood. In fact, natural light is a valued commodity for people used to working in office settings. A 2018 survey of more than 1,600 workers conducted by the human resources advisory firm Future Workplace found that access to natural light and views of the outdoors were the most sought-after attribute of a workplace environment. In addition, 47 percent of workers surveyed admitted they felt tired or very tired from the absence of natural light or a window at their office. When designing their home offices, homeowners should keep this in mind and choose areas of their homes that get ample natural light during a typical workday. Additional lighting also will be necessary. Recessed lighting can give an office a sleek look, and lights that

can dim can allow workers to adjust their lighting based on how much they need at any given point in the workday.

Quiet

Professionals forced to work at home when social distancing measures were implemented may not have had much quiet, especially for those with young children whose schools were closed. But when designing a home office, homeowners have the chance to make their offices more conducive to concentration. Soundproofing walls may not be necessary, but look for areas of the home that don't get much foot traffic. Kitchens are very popular rooms in many homes, so try to locate your home office away from the kitchen. A spare bedroom upstairs may make for the most ideal home office setting if the home does not have a traditional den. Spare bedrooms come with doors, which can instantly create a sense of quiet when closed. A converted garage also can make for a useful home office, but make sure the room already has cooling and heating and, ideally, windows.

Electrical outlets

Recently built homes tend to be equipped with enough outlets to accommodate our increasingly connected lifestyles. But older homes may need some electrical updates before they can capably accommodate home offices. When updating your electrical, replace existing outlets and fixtures with energy-efficient LED fixtures, which save money and benefit the environment. Before updating the electrical, decide on how you want the office to be laid out so you can have outlets installed where your computer, devices and other items, like a printer and television, will be. This makes it easy to hide cords and give the office a clean, professional look.

Laundry room renovations you'll love

Does it seem like your hamper is always full and the washing machine is running constantly? You may not be imagining it. Laundry Butler for You, a wash, dry and fold service, says the average household washes 50 pounds of laundry a week and 6,000 articles of clothing every year. Families with children at home are doing laundry most often, and those with pets may find there is ample laundry to wash as well.

With so much laundry being generated, homeowners may want to consider paying extra attention to the space in the house where their clothing is being cleansed. Laundry room renovations may not top homeowners' priority lists, but it may be time to give these rooms another look.

Assess your equipment

If your appliances are aging, a laundry room renovation can start with an investment in new appliances. New models have large capacity loads, tend to be energy-efficient and could have innovative features that help fit with your laundry lifestyle. Purchasing front-loading models also can free up design space, as you can install a counter directly above the units, saving room for other items like drying racks.

Figure out your room needs

A laundry room need not be limited to laundry only. Many homeowners make large laundry rooms catch-all spaces that can serve as utility or mud rooms, pantry overflows, or off-season storage areas. Consider the functions you want the room to serve and include those ideas in your designs.

Add some natural light

If possible, include a window in your laundry



room. Natural light can help make the room more enjoyable. It also can help you identify stains on clothes that need to be addressed and make it easier to fold matching items like socks.

Think about a utility sink

Many washing machines drain out directly to waste pipes in the floor or wall, but you also can opt to have them empty into a utility sink. This sink also provides a convenient place to hand-wash items, clean tools or paintbrushes, or store items

that perhaps you do not want to bring into a bathroom or kitchen sink.

Include some flair

This utilitarian space need not be boring or bereft of design elements. Mirror your home's style in the laundry room, and include wall hangings, plants, accent items, and even task lighting. Play up certain features with a bold floor tile or brightly colored walls.

Updating laundry rooms can be a great way to make doing laundry more enjoyable and efficient.

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5 tips for making your bathroom a relaxation station

(BPT) - As Americans are spending more time at home in response to the pandemic, many are looking for ways to turn their living spaces into retreats of calm, comfort and well-being.

For some people, that's meant major renovations. For others, it's meant making select improvements designed to add more tranquility and/or enjoyment to their lives in what has become a somewhat uncertain world. It's not so surprising then that home-improvement contractors listing their services on Houzz saw a 58% boost in homeowner requests in June 2020, relative to June 2019.

"In terms of design, I think people are seeing their living spaces as their refuges - sanctuaries where they're safe and comforted," notes architect Ryan Leidner on Dwell.com. "As the outside world becomes less touchable, I can see a great desire for the materials, textures and objects within our homes to have more of a tactile quality that invites us to use them. And I can see people getting more creative and interested in ways to bring the outside in, possibly re-imagining their living spaces as indoor gardens and landscapes."

A prime area of focus for many homeowners has been their bathrooms, which are now being converted into spa-like havens of self-care, instead of just functional spaces. At the same time, many are adding features that aim for better cleanliness, sustainability and multi-generational living.

If "your own private spa" sounds like the perfect place for your family to re-energize and rejuvenate from the cares of each day, here are ideas for creating such a space in your home.



Today's roomy bathtubs are designed to let you stretch out and relax, fully immersed, in a soothing surround of hydrotherapeutic luxury.

- Add an extra-deep soaking tub. Gone are the days when a bath meant scrunching your limbs into a cramped basin of water and trying to stay warm. Today's roomy bathtubs are designed to let you stretch out and relax, fully immersed, in a soothing surround of hydrotherapeutic luxury.

- Install a curbless shower and linear drain. The most progressive shower configurations are ergonomically constructed with sleek, curb-free, ADA-compliant entries, so family members need not step in and out, but merely walk in. In conjunction, install a linear drain that swiftly eliminates surface water using one-directional sloping and smart engineering techniques developed in Europe. Unlike more traditional drains, a linear drain also allows for freedom of design; because

it appears as an unobtrusive strip aligned with your shower wall, you can choose any kind of material for the rest of your shower floor – even larger-sized tiles. That means fewer seams that can collect mold, mildew and grime, and less cleaning for you.

- Invest in voice-activated smart features. With a few technology and equipment upgrades, Alexa, Siri or Google Home can now run your bath at your temperature of choice, power up your shower, light up your mirror, warm your toilet seat, diffuse your favorite fragrance, play all your top tunes and perform a number of other functions aimed at customizing your home spa experience and boosting its luxury level.

- Incorporate a steam shower. Equipment added right into your shower stall can pipe in fresh steam cus-

tomized by temperature and duration. "Bathing" in the vapor can feel wonderfully soothing and hydrating, and it's said to produce health benefits ranging from better circulation and sinus drainage to clearer skin and rejuvenation of tired muscles.

- Treat yourself to a towel warmer. Those living in cold climates may especially appreciate the luxury of having a warm, cozy towel in which to snuggle up after a relaxing bath or shower. These handy pieces of hardware are relatively easy to install and can be well worth the investment in terms of comfort.

When it comes to coping with the extra stress of COVID, your home can become a sanctuary that helps you relax and recharge. Consider making upgrades that will make time at home more peaceful and enjoyable for you and your family.

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