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HOME & GARDEN

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Protect landscapes from wildlife and more over the winter

Landscapes are vulnerable to the elements during the cold weather months. Everything from de-icing products to hungry animals to the weight of snow can affect trees, shrubs and other plants.

Just because certain greenery will go dormant during the winter doesn't mean landscape maintenance ends when the mercury dips. Homeowners can take certain actions to winterproof their properties and safeguard landscapes so they recover more readily when spring arrives.

Utilize barriers and deterrents

When resources are scarce, animals will be on the hunt for anything that's edible, and that includes whatever greenery is growing on a landscape. Physical barriers in garden beds and around trees can help prevent damage caused by moles, voles and deer. Line the bottom and sides of garden beds with garden cloth to prevent ground-burrowing animals from getting in from beneath, suggests the gardening resource I Must Garden.

Wrapping shrubs in burlap or covering them in temporary netting can deter deer, who will seek accessible food sources

over the winter. Erect fencing around new trees to keep deer away from the bark and lower branches.

Make the yard less attractive to deer and burrowers by opting for fat-based suet cakes to feed birds rather than loose seeds and berries in feeders, which herbivores will enjoy. Also, don't overwater or mulch landscapes too early. The loose soil and warmth of the mulch may entice moles and voles and other rodents to stick around in those areas and feed on plants.

Use a safer melting product

Investigate options in snowmelt products, as traditional rock salt can injure buds and branches and kill lawns. In addition, avoid piling salted snow in one area of the landscape, as it will concentrate the salt in that spot. Spread out snow piles to help minimize the damage to delicate plants.

Secure saplings and juvenile plants

Harsh winds and battering snow can damage young plants. Use stakes and lattices to secure them so they'll be better able to withstand the weather, suggests Total Landscape Management,

a commercial and residential landscaping company.

Promptly remove snow from branches to help trees and shrubs; otherwise, the weight of ice and snow can break off branches and cause irreparable damage.

Erect a snow barrier

Prior observation tends to educate homeowners about which areas of the landscape are most vulnerable to snow drifts and blustery winds. During the winter, winds often blow in from a northeasterly direction, but each homeowner can make his or her own assessment. Put up a tarp between two stakes to serve as a "snow fence" that protects vulnerable areas of the landscape from blowing snow.

Keep plants cozy

Wrap plants in burlap, garden blankets and plant domes to insulate them from cold weather

and some animals. Move container plants into a garage or shielded area for the winter.

Winter can place landscapes in peril. A few strategies can provide protection.

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How to protect your deck to keep it lasting longer

(BPT) - If you have a deck, it's probably one of your favorite - and most used - spaces, especially when it's warm outside. But time, usage and weather can all take their toll on your family hangout spot. The good news is, even if you're a novice DIYer, it's easy to protect your deck and keep it looking great in just a few simple steps, and doing the job yourself can save money and help you avoid more work on it in the future.

Now is a great time to clean, stain and seal your deck. Here's how to ensure the job is done well.

1. Check your deck

When was the last time you assessed the condition of your deck? Look for issues like dirt, mildew, algae or old stain coating that's peeling - plus damaged, cracked or warped wood that may need to be replaced.

Try the "splash test" - splash a little water on the deck and watch how quickly the water is absorbed. If the water is rapid-

ly absorbed into the wood, that means it's no longer protected from the elements and needs attention.

2. Clean it up

While you might be tempted to rent a power washer to clean your deck, it's not recommended, as power washing can damage wood - especially if you're inexperienced in using this tool. Instead, choose a deck cleaner designed specifically to clean decks in preparation for staining and sealing.

If you see dirt and stains but no coating peeling off, an exterior cleaner like Thompson's WaterSeal Heavy Duty Deck Cleaner will work on any type of wood. If you see old peeling coating, however, Thompson's WaterSeal Maximum Strength Deck Stripper is the strongest option to help remove old stain.

Make sure to follow the instructions on whatever product you use for cleaning your deck, and don't forget the rails or benches. If you have sever-

al boards that vary in color, a solid color stain would get you a more consistent color, transparent stains will show more wood grain, and semi-transparent stains add more color and protection while keeping some of the wood grain visible.

3. Refresh and protect

Once your deck is cleaned, you can start to envision the effect you want. Would you like to see more natural wood grain, a little grain, or almost none? Design experts often choose a dark or light deck color to provide a strong contrast to the color of the home's exterior. You can also use different color stain on the railings and benches of your deck for visual interest. If you're unsure what look you want, try a small sample area first to see how it appears once the stain is dry.

To make staining and protecting your deck easier, Thompson's WaterSeal products provide year-round protection in just one coat - with

specialized water-beading formulas to help prevent water damage. Choose from four stain and wood sealer products depending on the look you want: Clear Wood Sealer shows all wood grain, Transparent Wood Sealer shows the most wood grain, Semi-Transparent Wood Sealer shows some wood grain and Solid Color Wood Sealer shows little wood grain.

Measuring your deck, including railings and benches, helps you determine the amount of stain you'll need. Read the product instructions carefully before using. You'll find useful information including weather guidelines and recommended temperature ranges for application. For example, it's best to avoid windy and rainy days as well as high temps when your deck boards are very hot.

Also check product labels for recommended wait times between cleaning and staining. Thompson's WaterSeal

Wood Sealers require waiting 48 hours before applying deck coating.

4. Maintain your beautiful new deck

To help ensure that your deck stays looking great even longer, keep your deck free of leaves, dust, dirt and snow. Visually check your deck for trouble spots and do the "splash test" every year, so it will stay in good condition as long as possible.

Using these tips, you should be able to protect and revitalize your deck so you and your family can continue enjoying it for years to come.

Pro tip: You can seal and protect other surfaces in your outdoor space beyond decks and fences, including concrete and stone patio pavers, using products like Thompson's Multi-Surface Waterproofer.

Ready to get started? Learn more about how to protect your deck at ThompsonsWaterSeal.com.

Patriot Seamless Gutters: Your Trusted, Local Gutter Experts

Patriot Seamless Gutters LLC is your Times News Reader's Choice for best of RAIN GUTTERS. Patriot operates out of Kempton, PA, with a satellite office in New Ringgold, PA. We are proud to announce our continued commitment to providing superior gutter solutions to homeowners and businesses throughout the Times News community. We have been serving this community continuously, since 2009. With a reputation for excellence and a commitment to customer satisfaction, Patriot Seamless Gutters stands as the leader for all your gutter installation and maintenance needs.

At Patriot Seamless Gutters, we understand the importance of reliable and efficient gutters to safeguard your property. Our team of highly skilled professionals is equipped with the latest industry knowledge and experience to ensure that your gutter system not only performs flawlessly but also enhances the aesthetics of your home or business.

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You can visit our website at www.patriotseamlessgutters.com to explore our range of services, view our gallery of completed projects, and read testimonials from satisfied customers.

Patriot Seamless Gutters remains committed to excellence, and we look forward to serving this community for many years to come. Join the Patriot Seamless Gutters family today for gutter solutions that stand the test of time.

About Patriot Seamless Gutters:

Patriot Seamless Gutters is a locally, veteran owned and operated gutter company serving Carbon, Schuylkill, Lehigh, and Berks counties, including the surrounding areas. With over 15 years of experience and a dedication to quality craftsmanship, Patriot Seamless Gutters is the trusted choice for all gutter installation, repair, and maintenance needs.

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Signs a roof must be repaired or replaced

The exterior components of a home, such as the siding and the roof, help to protect its occupants from the elements. While many roofing materials can last for decades, at some point in time homeowners will likely have to repair or replace the roof on their home.

Roof wear and tear may not always be so evident, particularly because most homeowners do not make it a point to get on their roofs very often. The first sign of roof damage typically is a leak that is noticeable from the indoors. It may include a browned spot on the ceiling or even pooling water in the attic. Leak from storm damage or something minor like a water intrusion through a nail hole or from a lost shingle typically can be repaired easily enough. However, additional indicators may necessitate a complete roof overhaul. Here are some signs a roof is in need of repairs or replacement.

- **Sagging roof:** If the roof is sagging, it could be due to excess loads, such as water-damaged shingles or even weakened roof structure. A professional will need to restore the integrity of the roof.

- **Cracking and buckling:** It is likely that shingles will have to be replaced if there is cracking or if shingles are buckling and warping.

- **Exposed nails:** Exposed nails may rust and contribute to a leaky roof, says Family Handyman. How long the nails were exposed could indicate if the roof can be repaired or if everything should be redone.



- **Lost granules:** Asphalt roofing shingles have small granules on the surface. Over time these granules will slowly degrade and fall off. If there are many granules in gutters or if one can see that portions of the shingles are bare, it is likely time for a new roof.

- **Visible light:** Homeowners who can see light streams coming into the home need roof repair. This is indicative of holes, cracks or spaces in the roof.

- **Growth on the roof:** Mold and mildew on the roof is a sign that the roof needs to be repaired or replaced. Such growths contribute to rot that jeopardizes the integrity of the roof.

A durable roof protects a home from the elements. Various symptoms signal that it is time to repair or replace a roof.

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His son, James M. Potocnie, worked with his father for years and eventually became sole proprietor. The third generation, Michael and his younger brother Andrew, are now a part of the company, working in sales for 19 and 17 years, respectively.

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The many styles of front doors

A grand entryway simply would not be complete without an impressive front door. A front door can dazzle guests and create a homeowner's desired vibe before anyone even steps inside, which only underscores how important the choice of door style can be.

When shopping around for a new front door for their homes, homeowners can consider the many popular styles as they seek to choose one that fits an existing scheme or use a new front door as a springboard to a redesigned home interior.

Farmhouse:

Farmhouse doors are not all one and the same. Traditional farmhouse doors provide a rustic look that's become popular in home decor over the last decade or so. Modern farmhouse doors are



a little less rustic because they incorporate more contemporary elements into their design. Each option is ideal for homeowners who aspire to create a farmhouse vibe in

their home interiors and exteriors.

Modern: Modern front doors tend to boast a bold look and many are made up of large glass panels. Some homeowners prefer modern front doors because the glass in them allows lots of natural light into their home's interior. The added light in the entryway appeals to homeowners who want to brighten up these spaces, which tend to be dark in homes with more traditional doors.

Traditional:

Traditional front doors may be the most recognizable to today's homeowners. Often solid wood but sometimes enhanced with glass, traditional doors may feature subtle, yet ornate designs. Traditional front doors might feel out of place in modern or rustic homes, so they're generally best suited to homes with owners that prefer more traditional decor inside their homes.

Custom: It's important that homeowners recognize they need not pigeonhole themselves into a particular design style for their front doors. Custom front doors may be costly, but many door manufacturers or contractors customize front doors. Custom doors may suit homeowners' with unique ideas about decor, and some can even mimic other popular styles while still featuring subtle differences. For example, homeowners can request an arched double door that, while unique, features many of the same qualities that characterize traditional doors, including ornate designs.

A front door can greatly influence the first impression people get of a home. That makes it worth homeowners' time and effort to explore the many different front door styles now available.

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Wood floor cleaning guide

Wood floors are coveted for a number of reasons, not the least of which is their aesthetic appeal. Many people prefer wood flooring because dust and dirt do not become trapped as they would in carpet fibers, seemingly making wood flooring easy to clean.

Most floors endure a lot of wear and tear. However, with care, wood flooring may last for decades. Part of that care includes understanding how to properly clean and maintain wood floors so they look their best. The following are some steps for keeping wood floors as pristine as possible.

- Remove shoes. It's a good idea to remove shoes, particularly heels, when walking on wood floors. Sharp heels, cleats and other shoes can scratch or dent wood flooring. All shoes can track in excess dirt, which can contribute to a lack of luster as well.

- Sweep or vacuum frequently. The experts at The Spruce suggest sweeping, vacuuming or dust mopping wood floors daily. Dirt and dust make floors more slippery, and dirt or sand particles can lead to scratches

on the floor.

- Learn your flooring type. Wood flooring is broken down into three main categories: solid hardwood flooring, engineered hardwood flooring and laminate wood flooring. Traditional hardwood is made of planks or strips of any hardwood covered in a wood stain. Engineered flooring is manufactured by gluing together several thin plies of hardwood. Laminate flooring looks like wood but generally is a veneer or a photographic image of wood covered by a thick layer of melamine resin over fiberboard.

- Skip harsh cleansers. Regardless of flooring type, most are covered by a sealant that can become streaky or dull if the wrong cleanser is used. Avoid chlorine bleach, ammonia, pine oil, or undiluted vinegar. Instead, choose a cleanser that is specifically recommended for the flooring type. Do not allow water or solutions to sit on the floor, as that can contribute to staining and warping. With laminate flooring, avoid wet mopping unless the flooring is specifically marked



as being able to be wet. The underlayers of laminate flooring can warp if it gets wet.

- Damp is better than wet. When cleaning wood flooring, use a damp rather than a soaking wet mop. Better Homes & Gardens says standing water can damage wood surfaces.

- Use the hard floor setting.

When vacuuming, adjust the vacuum to a hard flooring setting, which will not engage the brush rollers on the vacuum head. Rollers can scratch wood and laminate flooring, advises The Home Depot.

- Use repair products as needed. Scratch and repair kits can fill in small scratches.

Wood floor polish and wood waxes also can revitalize worn floors. Again, check that the product is safe for your particular flooring before use.

Wood floors bring warmth to a home and are very popular. Cleaning them correctly can add to their appeal and longevity.



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How homeowners can turn attics into livable spaces

Houses typically feature various areas that are traditionally designed for storage, such as garages, basements and attics. However, with some renovation, these spaces can be transformed into livable areas.

Homeowners who would like to convert attics into livable spaces need to take certain things into consideration before starting an improvement project. While the attic may seem like it has plenty of room and is structurally sound enough to walk in, that's not necessarily so. To be converted into usable living space, an attic must be brought up to the standards of modern building codes, according to the design experts at Board & Vellum. Retrofitting beams and insulation can eat up available space in an attic. Thus, it is best to consult an expert to see if an attic can be converted.

Furthermore, an attic that was not initially designed as a room when the house was built can add extra "load" upstairs if it is converted. That could present certain structural problems. That means a structural engineer also must be consulted to see if adding beams, flooring and drywall will necessitate other changes elsewhere in the home to accommodate the extra load.

In order to have a functional attic room, building codes will dictate that it needs to be accessible by a full-size

staircase. Also, it will need to have another exit in case of an emergency so that will likely be an accessible window, according to the home information site The Fill. Homeowners' budgets and renovation plans will need to factor into these considerations. Homeowners also are advised to check local permits to determine what else may be required to go forward. It is best to follow the rules. Lack of a permit for work can affect the ability to sell a home down the line.

Individuals also should plan for heating and cooling upgrades as the home will need to have ductwork installed in the attic, or at the least, a stand-alone heating and cooling unit. As heat rises, it can get quite warm in an attic, so ventilation and comfort should be considered. The attic will need to be wired for electricity for lighting and other needs. Air sealing and additional insulation can the attic space more comfortable as well. Consult with a qualified electrician and an HVAC technician and have an energy audit done to discuss needs.

Attic renovations can give homeowners more space in their homes, which can be used as offices, bedrooms or cozy corners. This is no small undertaking and all of the right steps need to be followed to ensure a legal, safe and successful renovation.

NATIVE TREES

Many people can really get behind Doug Tallamy's belief in native trees once they understand the important role they play in our ecosystem. Doug calls the Oak Tree a "Keystone Plant" or a plant that supports the most biodiversity. No matter what the species, the Oak supports 500+ species of caterpillars and is essential to the life cycle of these native moth and butterfly species. Whether its *Quercus alba* (White Oak), *Quercus bicolor* (Swamp White Oak), *Quercus coccinea* (Scarlet Oak), *Quercus palustris* (Pin Oak), or *Quercus rubra* (Red Oak), any homeowner looking to create a pollinator oasis should have an Oak Tree anchoring those plants.

Obviously, you may have a limited amount of space in your home landscape, but there are other great native trees to consider from a beauty and biodiversity stand point. Maples like *Acer rubrum* (Red Maple) and *Acer saccharum* (Sugar Maple) are famous for their fiery red and orange foliage colors but they also support nearly 300 species of native moth and butterfly larva according to Tallamy. Even better, they also provide a very early season nectar source for the adult forms of these species as they bloom from late February into April.

Betula nigra is one of the most durable selections of Birch Tree available. Prized for its cinnamon colored, exfoliating bark and easy to grow nature, this selection also supports 400+ species of native moth and butterfly larva. 'Heritage' is an improved, naturally occurring selection with even more stunning bark in creamy white mixed with orange hues that are especially stunning in the winter landscape.

Other outstanding native trees to consider are *Malus* (Crabapples), *Prunus americana* or *Prunus virginiana* (Cherries), *Pinus strobus* (Pines), *Liriodendron tulipifera* (Tulip Tree), and *Carya ovata* & others (Hickory). Each of these trees, in addition to others, are great caterpillar host plants with a lot of landscape appeal. They will be the anchors to your pollinator landscape and provide one of the means to establish a living landscape that is teeming with native moths, butterflies, birds and pollinators.

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Air conditioning maintenance tips

There is no denying the relief cool air provides when the temperatures outdoors are particularly steamy. In fact, having a place to cool off is a necessity for those who have succumbed to heat ex-

haustion or have difficulty regulating their body temperatures.

Even though air conditioning can provide relief, some people are reluctant to turn it on because of the drain on electricity and

the subsequent high energy bills that come with it. Certainly running the air conditioning can be costly, but regular maintenance helps a system to work more efficiently. It also enables homeowners to recognize issues that can lead to expensive repairs if left unchecked.

Here are some air conditioning maintenance tips to keep a system in top condition.

- Change the filters. Dirty, clogged filters can cause a system to work harder to cool down rooms, compromising efficiency.

Check the HVAC system's manufacturer recommendation for how frequently to change the filters. Some may benefit from monthly replacement if the air is running constantly.

- Consider the MERV rating. The filter will have a minimum efficiency reporting value, or MERV, according to This Old House. The higher the number, the better the filtration. But a higher MERV rating requires more energy to pull air through the filter. Therefore, choose a balance of filtration and energy cost requirements.

- Maintain the outdoor unit. Clean the AC unit with a soft-bristle brush and vacuum the fins at the start of the season and if the unit becomes dirty from weather, pollen and other elements. Bent condenser or evaporator fins can restrict air flow that would normally pass through the air conditioning system. Gently straighten them to improve air flow.

- Check and repair leaks. Airflow leaks through ductwork and with window AC units can reduce efficiency. Hold an incense stick or another smoldering item to check

for leaks. If the smoke blows around, there is leakage. Use foil tape to seal small gaps and duct mastic for large ones. Stuff foam around a window unit and use taping as necessary.

- Supplement with a whole-house fan. The Family Handyman says an attic-mounted fan pushes hot air out through the attic vents and draws cooler, outside air through open windows and doors. The whole-house fan can be used to draw out most of the hot air before turning on the AC, or as a substitute on cooler days when having the AC on may not be crucial.

- Schedule annual maintenance. Homeowners may be able to handle various maintenance tasks, or they may want to have an HVAC technician come out and do the following: clean and inspect coils; adjust and replace fan belts; lubricate motors and bearings; inspect controls and safeties, check refrigerant; and determine if the unit is large enough for the home.

Air conditioning systems need routine maintenance to operate efficiently and at the lowest cost possible.



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What to know about replacing gutters

Certain home renovation projects are more glamorous than others. A remodeled kitchen is sure to garner its share of “oohs and aahs,” while a newly paved driveway is much less likely to dazzle guests.

A gutter replacement is another job that might not have the wow factor. But fully functioning gutters are a must and can help to prevent potentially expensive roof damage. Gutters rarely draw attention, but homeowners can keep an eye out for signs that indicate gutters need to be replaced.

Signs gutters should be replaced

Various signs indicate it's time to replace existing gutters. Homeowners should act promptly if any of the following signs arise, as poorly functioning gutters can make it hard for water to get into the downspouts, ultimately pushing it backward and likely underneath roof shingles, where the result can be costly water damage.

- Peeling paint
- Cracks
- Pooling water in the gutter
- Mildew in the gutter, which can sometimes be seen even from the ground
- Water damage: Water damage on the gutter can be limited to certain spots and will be noticeable on the underside of the gutter
- Soffit damage
- Sagging gutters
- Detached gutters, which can be detached from other pieces or the house
- Rust

Who should replace gutters?

Many home improvements can be completed successfully by skilled do-it-yourselfers, but a gutter replacement is best left to the professionals. Homeowners who live in

single-story homes may be able to replace gutters on their own, but the issues that can arise when gutters are not functioning at optimal capacity make this a job best suited to professionals, even in residences without high roofs.

Some gutters may be under a manufacturer's warranty, so homeowners can check to see if their gutters qualify for a free upgrade. Experience is one of the best reasons to work with a professional gutter installation team. Experienced professionals can identify which gutters are the best fit based on a host of factors, including the pitch of the roof, local conditions and the size of the house. In addition, gutter installation requires the use of various tools that many

DIYers may not have on hand, which can cut into the cost savings of doing the project yourself.

Homeowners also should not underestimate the challenges of working on ladders that are high up off the ground. Professionals are accustomed to such challenges, while DIYers may not be comfortable or used to climbing ladders with materials and tools in hand.

A gutter replacement is a worthwhile investment that can ensure rain water efficiently and effectively runs through gutters and away from the roof. Leaving this task to the professionals can ensure the job is done right.

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3 great reasons to replace aging windows

Windows are easy to take for granted. Unless windows are showing signs of wear and tear or so dirty that it's hard to see through them, they often go unnoticed. However, replacement windows add value to a home and save homeowners money.

Much of the savings are attributed to new windows due to energy efficiency. The Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy estimates that up to 30 percent of heating and cooling energy can be lost through heat gain or loss, and aging, inefficient windows contribute to such losses. Replacing windows can save homeowners money, with one expert at Angi estimating that installation of energy efficient windows can cut energy bills up to 12 percent.

Savings are noted when firms promote replacement windows, but homeowners should know that replacement windows provide additional benefits. These are three reasons for homeowners to consider upgrading their windows today.

1. New windows reduce carbon footprint. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency reports that replacing single-pane windows with ENERGY STAR® certified windows helps to reduce CO2 emissions by a large margin. The EPA reports that such windows can save as much as 6,200 pounds of CO2 emissions due to reduced energy consumption of new windows.

2. New windows brighten a home. Natural light brightens a room and makes it appear larger. Homeowners who have old windows may not realize how little light windows let into their homes. Aging windows can become foggy over time and stop natural light from entering a home. this creates a gloomy feel and forces homeowners to turn up the thermostat on cold days. New windows brighten the home and lets natural light in on cold day s and helps heat the home

at the same time.

3. New windows cut down on noise. Manufacturers look for ways to produce windows that make homes more comfortable. Noise reduction can accomplish that goal, and Consumer Reports notes that triple-glazed windows helps to greatly reduce outside noise. Homeowners who currently have single-pane windows may be astonished by the differ-

ence in noise levels when upgrading to triple-glazed windows, which contain a third layer of glass. That third layer of glass reduces noise levels, making triple-glaze windows ideal for homes on busy streets or in urban areas with lots of foot traffic.

Replacement windows pay numerous dividends. Homeowners can reap these rewards by replacing aging windows.



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Woodcraft suggests storage options to free up more indoor space at home

Fall signals the coming of cool weather and more time spent indoors - the perfect opportunity to launch a major effort to store as much as possible out of sight and free up extra space for work/study, cooking/dining, exercise, or a family "hangout."

Armed with projects in mind, visit the local Woodcraft store, check the Woodcraft catalog, or go online at woodcraft.com to get the tools, supplies and information you need for a successful "space makeover."

Ready-made storage solutions

Find a "home" for everything from tools to sports and fishing equipment to household items and craft supplies in TANOS Systainers. Tanos offers a system of boxes that is designed to stack and lock together for transport or stationary storage, while offering easy access to individual units anytime. Build your own custom mounting system for M and L Systainer3 containers on a wall or in a cabinet/shelving with the TANOS Rail Set.

The updated Systainer3 series includes containers in three base sizes: 11.65" deep in widths of 15.59" (medium), 20" (large), or 31.18" (extra extra large). Six heights are available. Medium containers come in seven colors; other sizes are gray.

The smaller TANOS® Systainer3 Organizer Storage Container is 3.23" high, 11.65" deep and either 15.59" or 20" wide with a clear lid to show the contents. Insert boxes sold separately.

TANOS® T-LOC SYS-Sort IV/3 and SYS-Combi II and III Systainer® offer a variety of options for organizing and storing small parts and pieces.

Systainer3 system is compatible with earlier versions. Watch this video to discover the updates for this new version: <https://bit.ly/systainer-v3>.

Other space saving products include:

- FastCap Kaizen Foam is a handy partner with TANOS. It peels away in layers, creating a perfect fit for tools in containers.

- Portamate Six-Tier Wood Rack is a multipurpose steel racking system that provides generous storage capacity for wood, pipes and other long items. Six levels can each hold 110 pounds.

- GRIP 3-Piece Magnetic Tool Bars provide a home for ferrous metal hand tools like wrenches and screwdrivers. Set includes: 8", 12" and 18" bars.

- The 24" W x 6" D x 3" H sturdy, plastic WoodRiver® Red Tool Rack has holes of varying sizes to fit a wide

range of common hand tools like screwdrivers, wrenches, pliers, and more - up to 96 different tools.

- WoodRiver® Sandpaper Organizer has six 91/4" x 12" x 1" drawers for storing sandpaper or other items like scrapbooking or craft paper.

- WoodRiver Tilt-Out Bins come in two sizes: five individual bins, each 33/4" x 41/2" x 51/2", and eight bins, each 21/2" x 23/4" x 31/2". An interlocking dovetail rail design allows bin systems to be stacked, either vertically or horizontally. The five bins measure 33/4" x 41/2" x 51/2".

For more handy storage products at Woodcraft, check out this video: <https://bit.ly/Workshop-Storage>.

Products for building storage options

Building shelving or cabinets along unused wall areas or in closets or a garage can be tailored to specific needs, but will require some tools and supplies. Here are a few suggestions.

Make pocket-hole joinery quick and easy with the new generation Kreg® Pocket Hole Jig 720PRO that comes with a Kreg Docking Station to transform it into a benchtop workstation.

Kreg offers other handy jigs for building shelving and installing hardware and hinges: Kreg 32mm Spacing Shelf Pin Jig with 1/4 Drill Bit, Kreg Hardware Drilling Jig, and Kreg Concealed Hinge Drilling Jig.

Check out the Festool T18 Easy Cordless Drill Plus Set to drill more effectively. The T18 features a new generation brushless ED-TEC motor and electronic torque setting for precise screw driving and drilling wood or steel. Use most drill bits, from 1/16" to 1/2" diameter, with the metal keyless chuck.

WoodRiver 100-Piece Combo Brad-Point and Twist Drill Bit Set includes six to 10 each of 14 bit sizes ranging from 1/16" to 5/16".

Build your own organizer with WoodRiver Cubby Connectors and 3/4"-thick wood (sold separately). Make as few or as many compartments as you want with the cross-, T- and L-brackets.

Built-Ins: Cabinets and Shelves from Taunton offers basic building tips and then instructions for constructing built-in shelves, cabinets and specialty projects like a corner seating nook.

To learn more about these and other products, visit your local Woodcraft store, call (800) 535-4482 or visit www.woodcraft.com.

The most likely spots where mold will grow in a home

Mold is a type of fungi that is found both indoors and outdoors. When mold grows inside, the health of people who spend time in the home or business where it grows can be in jeopardy.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, moldy environments may cause stuffy nose, wheezing, red or itchy eyes, and even skin conditions. The Institute of Medicine reports there is sufficient evidence to link indoor exposure to mold with asthma symptoms, as well as hypersensitivity pneumonitis in certain individuals. Certain molds are toxigenic, meaning they can produce toxins, says the CDC. Though there are very few reports of toxigenic molds found inside homes, when present, they can cause rare health conditions.

No one wants mold in their homes, as it's not only unhealthy, but also unsightly. The Environmental Protection Agency says there is no practical way to eliminate all mold and mold spores in an indoor environment. Certain rooms and spaces warrant careful inspection since they are more vulnerable to mold growth. Mold spores take root in areas where there is ample moisture. Controlling moisture indoors is key to controlling mold. Here are some mold-vulnerable spots that merit some extra attention on the part of homeowners.

Bathrooms

Bathrooms generate a lot of moisture through showering and bathing. Bathrooms need to be vented to the outdoors with an exhaust fan. If there is no fan, one should be installed. If that's not possible, open a bath-

room window to air out the room after bathing. Wipe down surfaces in the bathroom to dry them and keep mold at a minimum.

Laundry area

Clothes dryers are moisture-generating appliances that should be properly exhausted to the outdoors. Homeowners also should make sure that washing machines and utility sinks are working properly and there are no leaks that can cause mold growth behind or underneath the structures.

Kitchen

Mold also may grow in kitchens. Look under the sink and by the dishwasher for any leaks and areas susceptible to mold. Ventilating cooking areas can help reduce moisture in the area as well, says the CDC.

Basement

Homeowners who have basements or crawl spaces could be breeding mold down there unknowingly, particularly if the areas are unfinished. Moisture,

warmth and darkness are prime conditions for mold growth. A dehumidifier can be utilized in the basement to help reduce the moisture saturation in this space. Also, check for leaky pipes or windows that may contribute to mold growth. Humidity levels in a home should be kept between 30 and 50 percent to help limit mold formation.

Attic

Although an attic may not be a spot homeowners frequent regularly, it's a good idea to get up there and look for potential mold problems. According to the North Carolina Department of Health, in the winter when buildings are heated, mold often grows in cold, uninsulated exterior walls where building surfaces are relatively cold compared to the indoors. Attics without proper insulation could be vulnerable to mold growth. Roofs also may be compromised by weather, causing leaks into the attic.

Mold can be found anywhere in a home, but is more likely to grow in certain spaces.

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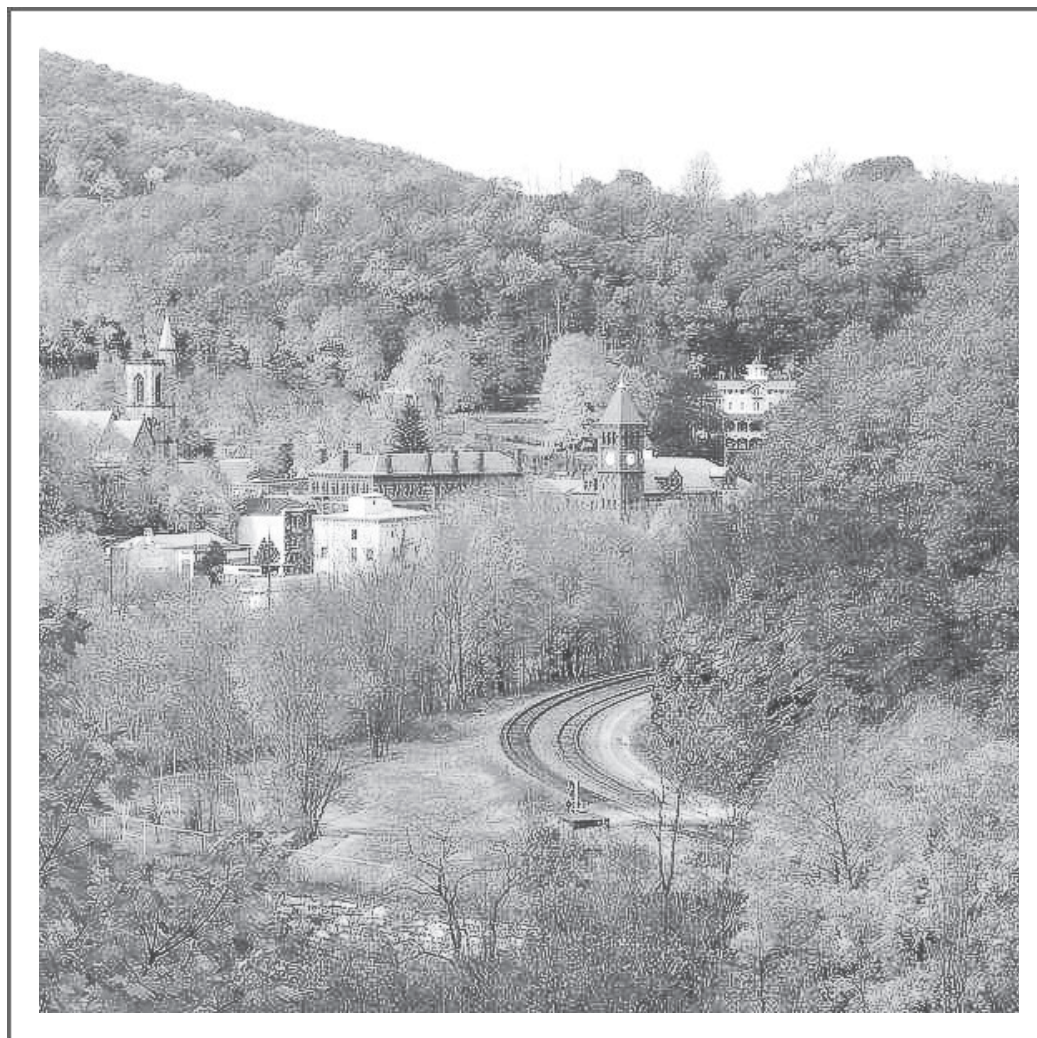






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TIPS TO ORGANIZE YOUR CLUTTERED KITCHEN

Kitchens are the heart of many homes. Thanks to the popularity of open floor plans, kitchens also are highly visible from nearby spaces, such as family rooms and main entryways. A messy, cluttered kitchen can be an eyesore. That makes kitchen organization a worthwhile goal.

The following tips can help homeowners organize their kitchens.

Start with the utensils

Utensils come in all shapes and sizes. Take inventory of your utensils,

discarding or donating items you don't use. Next, designate drawers or countertop storage solutions for utensils you use most. Place them within reach, and consider your dominant hand for placement.

Categorize your pantry

Empty the pantry, paying attention to staples you often use. Then figure out a system for categorization that works for you. Perhaps place all baking essentials together, such as flour, oil, baking soda, and cocoa powder. Maybe you

need to designate a "kids corner" in the pantry to keep fruit snacks, granola bars and breakfast cereals. Use uniformly shaped containers to store foods so you're not contending with oddly shaped boxes and bags.

Use extra wall or ceiling space

Large pots and pans can eat up cabinet space or clutter the inside of an oven for those who don't have any

other space. While your decorative Dutch oven might fit nicely on a shelf, cast-iron pans and skillets can be hung from durable hooks over an island or near the stove.

Organize under the sink

It can be difficult to keep cleaning products tidy. Try installing a tension rod inside the cabinet and use it to hang spray bottles, rubber gloves and cleaning

cloths.

Use kitchen cabinet rollouts

Lack of space in cabinets can be remedied with rollouts. They provide more capacity to cabinets and make it easier to find items, instead of having to dig in the cabinet recesses.

Tame your container collection

It's tempting to save all of those take-out containers or empty margarine

tubs for leftovers. But if there's an avalanche every time you open up a cabinet to reach for a container, you probably have too many. Invest in one type of storage container so you can nest the containers and lids for ultimate organization.

An organized kitchen is more attainable than it seems. Some simple strategies can help homeowners make them less cluttered and more calming.

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