The Crittenden Press

fall HOME IMPROVEMENT

Cabin converted to getaway

Tour of Crittenden, Livingston log homes set for this weekend

STAFF WRITER

onnie Slayden immediately saw the potential when he gazed at an old log cabin that sat on the Asbridge property in Crittenden County. It was abandoned, neglected and in structural disrepair. The cabin was built before the Civil War and was rich in history and character. Slayden knew if he could salvage enough logs to properly rebuild the cabin, it would fit perfectly on his family farm.

Slayden purchased the cabin in the summer of 2010 and spent the next several months dismantling the structure, salvaging as many logs as he could and hauling them to his farm in northern Livingston County.

Three years later, Slayden and his wife Sharon have the one-room cabin rebuilt, complete with a brand new fireplace, cypress flooring and a wrap-around porch. Their log cabin will be one of many to be shown during this weekend's 2013 Fall Log Cabin Tour. The tour is scheduled from 1 to 5 p.m. Sunday and is sponsored by the Salem Garden Club. It will feature tours of cabins in both Crittenden and Livingston counties.

Slayden said he and his wife did much of the work on weekends. After preparing the site for the cabin's new loca-



Roy & Pam Buijk Marion, Ky.

Chittenden Family Cabin 792 Bethel Hill Rd., Salem, Ky.

Ronnie & Sharon Slayden

Eddie & Linda Defew

Kennedy Springs Rd., Lola, Ky.

Slocum Rd., Salem, Ky.

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tion, he poured the foundation and worked on the project throughout 2011. Built not as tall as the original cabin, Slayden designed the roof steeper and was able to incorporate a half loft for a bedroom. The staircase leading to the loft is made from one of the original logs of the cabin.

Because the original fireplace had been removed years earlier, Slayden had a new fireplace built, which came in handy while working on the cabin's interior during the winter. The couple worked on the project throughout the spring and into the summer of 2012. Slayden credits various individuals with helping build the stairs, porches and install roof-

"After I looked back, we had a lot of good times doing it. We made a book. I've got thousands of pictures we took step by step," he said. "I can flip through those and it brings back memories of where I was at. It was really hot that summer in July."

Despite the extremes in weather and long hours working afternoons and weekends, Slayden believes the logs used for the cabin turned out better than even he had anticipated, given they predate the Civil War. He said the project is not yet complete. He plans to build a room on the back of the cabin for a kitchen. He purchased logs from an individual in Shady Grove that has the same Cherokee notch pattern



Ronnie and Sharon Slayden of Livingston County transformed the pre-Civil War era cabin below into a comfortable, one-room retreat. The cabin was moved piece-by-piece from the Asbridge farm in Crittenden County to its current location in northern Livingston County. The cabin is part of the Fall Log Cabin Tour.

that matches the cabin's logs. Conceived as a place to get away from modern technology and to enjoy hunting and the great outdoors, Slayden said there is only one slight drawback he hadn't anticipated that does require the use of mod-

"I've created another place to mow that I've had to mow all summer besides my yard," he said. "But that's all right."

ern machinery.

Tickets for the 2013 Fall Log Cabin Tour are \$10 each or \$8 for advanced sales. They are available at Harris Gas, Salem City Hall or at Saturday's Fall Jamboree. For more information on the tour, dial



County offers free dumping; junk disposal rules apply

ny part of home improvement includes Lcleanup and getting rid of junk. And as the days grow shorter and the temperatures drop, residents of Crittenden County are scurrying to finish such projects around the home.

With the ritual, though, comes rules, and the Kentucky Division for Air Quality reminds people who are wrapping up their summer cleanup that there are restrictions on disposing of the junk removed from the rafters, shed, garage and basement. One of those rules applies to outdoor burning, a popular means to erase the clutter across rural areas of Kentucky.

The Division's website warns that burning trash is illegal in Kentucky, though many residents don't realize it. And fines for illegal burning can go as



Free debris disposal

Just in time for autumn cleanup, Crittenden County will offer free dumping this Friday and Saturday at its convenience center off U.S. 60 East. The program will see the disposal center open 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Friday and 8 a.m. to noon Saturday. All large items, including furniture and appliances, will be accepted, but disposal of household garbage requires a fee.

high as \$25,000 per day per violation. But this weekend, there is a free alternative to disposing of trash without the risk of fine. Crittenden County Convenience Center will be open 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Friday and 8 a.m. to cleaning, accepting home debris at no

All large items, including furniture and appliances, will be taken at the center on U.S. 60 East, just outside of Marion. There will remain a charge, however, for disposal of household garbage.

This fall program is offered by Crittenden Fiscal Court.

If you can't make it to the convenience center this weekend, remember that Kentucky law prohibits the burning of many of the same materials accepted at the facility at no cost this Friday and Saturday. Those items include plastics, tires, painted or treated wood, building materials and even

"In Kentucky, it is never legal to burn household trash other than uncoated paper products," the Division of Air Quality's website warns.

It's also illegal to burn trailers, buildings and construction and demolition debris such as shingles, drywall

Free dumping offered in Livingston

Livingston County residents will be able to clean out their garages, basements and sheds this week and dispose of their unwanted materials for

Today (Thursday) through Saturday, the county dump on Cutoff Road will be open to residents of the county for free disposal of items. The dump will be

open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. today and Friday and from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday. In Salem, roll-off dumpsters at the Old Salem Riding Club will be available all three days for disposal of materials.

Free dumping of household trash is not part of the fall cleanup.

Call the Livingston County Judge-Executive's office at 928-2105 for further information.

and insulation.

Some open burning in Kentucky is permitted. For instance, campfires, fires for cooking and fires to dispose of tree limbs are allowed in Crittenden County as well as many other counties across the Commonwealth. Burning within 150 feet of woodland or brushland, though, will remain illegal during daylight hours between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. until Dec. 15, when Kentucky's fall fire hazard season ends.

For those uncomfortable with

burning limbs, trimmings and other foliage, the county's brush dump on Bridwell Loop is open for free disposal of such items. The site is open seven days a week for dumping.

For more details on outdoor burning laws, visit air.ky.gov or call (888) BÜRN-LAW.

For further information on the county's free dumping this weekend at the convenience center, call Crittenden County Judge-Executive's office at





Generators overlooked as necessity

Generators are not something people think about on a daily basis. However, more and more people are realizing just how valuable generators can be. Portable generators as well as stationary standby generators have become must-have items for many homeowners.

Portable Generators

Many portable generators provide temporary power by using a fossil-based fuel, typically unleaded gasoline, and tend to range in power from 500 watts to 17.5 kW. The more expensive and larger the unit, the more amperage it will be able to supply. In a portable generator, the motor is typically housed on a metal frame with wheels to move the generator where it is needed. Once fired up, the generator converts the power produced by the motor into electrical current that can supply many of the devices in a home by way of extension cords plugged into the generator. A portable generator will only run as long as it has fuel. Homeowners need to frequently fill up the fuel tank if they plan to run the generator around the clock.

Standby System Generators

Standby generators can be expensive, but many people find the cost of a standby generator is well worth it to maintain power in the event of an outage or emergency.

Hospitals and retail businesses often have standby generators installed on their buildings to automatically switch over to this power source should the electrical grid go down. Homeowners are looking to these devices to offer standby power as well.

While a portable generator may cost a few hundred dollars, standby generators can cost from a few thousand dollars to as much as \$15,000 for larger units that can power much of a household. Standby generators also require installation by a professional electrician, adding to their overall cost.

A standby generator is like a heavy-duty car engine, complete with a radiator, gas tank and an alternator that generates power. The entire setup is contained in a weather-proof box, which is connected to the main fuse box of the home by a cable. When power is lost from the electric wires outside of a home, the generator senses it and starts up, all he while blocking any power from the electric lines from the power station to prevent a feedback of power.

supply power to all of the outlets in a home.

Water damage one of biggest threats to house's condition

Few things can cause more damage to a home than water. Leaks and flooding can cause various structural insufficiencies and may lead to unsafe conditions in a home. Panic often sets in when

water enters a home. Some homeowners live in areas where a high water table inevitably forces groundwater up and into subterranean living spaces. Others may live close to coastal areas or rivers and streams that can overflow and cause home flooding. Still others who may not have had a water problem before learn that a heavy rainfall, and perhaps inadequate drainage outdoors, can cause water damage to a home.

Compounding these issues is the fact that very often a home's utility systems are located out of the way in basements, or these spaces may be finished to create additional living space. Water in a basement can be much more than a nuisance. Water can lead to thousands of dollars in damage.

Moisture or several inches of water in a basement is nothing to take lightly. Furnaces and water heaters damaged by water can be costly to replace. Wires that come in contact with water can become hazards and cause an electrical fire. and water in a basement may be a harbinger for bacteria and viruses, creating unsanitary living conditions in the home. Mold spores that have developed in a damp base-

Supplemental

space heaters

require careful

consideration

Space heaters can be an effec-

tive method of supplemental heat when the weather outside gets cold,

but the Consumer Product Safety

Commission reports that space

heaters can cause fires and lead to

burns and, when using electrical

heaters, may cause electrocution

from faulty wiring. When operating

a space heater, it is important to fol-

away from any drapery, bedding

- Keep the heater at least 3 feet

- Turn off the heater when you

- Keep the heater on a level sur-

- Don't leave the space heater on

- Never use a portable propane

space heater designed for camping

face that is hard and non-flamma-

all night while you are sleeping.

outdoors inside a home.

low some safety guidelines.

and flammable material.

leave the room.

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ment can spread to other areas of the home thanks to a heating and cooling forced air system. And a cool, damp spot can be the perfect habitat for insects.

When a basement develops a water problem, it is best to call in a professional. Although it might not be cheap, calling a professional can help you to remedy the situation faster than if you try several methods to fix the water problem your-When looking for a waterproofing company, seek recommendations from people you trust. Only do business with licensed professional contractors who are willing to give you a free estimate. You also can check out businesses by contacting consumer advocacy groups. You may be able to read up on their business practices and learn if there have been any complaints lodged against a company in the past.

Hydrostatic pressure, poor foundations and cracks can each cause water to enter the house. Each situation is different, and a combination of exterior and interior changes may need to be made. In order to alleviate some water problems, certain modifications must be made. While the following solutions may not be applicable in each situation, they are some of the more common modifications plumbers suggest when fixing flooded basements.

 Sump pump: In some cases, the installation of a well and a submersible pump may be all that's needed to keep basements dry. When water rises high enough to start the pump, the sump pump will then expel the water out through a pipe to a drain or the street. Sometimes a sump pump works in concert with a French drainage system, which is a channel around the perimeter of the basement that funnels water to the sump pump

- Vapor barriers: Vinyl, plastic and paint encapsulation systems may be applied to the interior of foundation walls to serve as a barrier system. This prevents water or condensation from reaching the interior of the house. A vapor barrier may extend below the foundation to direct water runoff into a drainage system.

 Exterior fixes: There are many ways to address flooding from outside the home. These include using outdoor vapor barriers and paints, having grading issues corrected so water will flow away from the home, digging of a swale to catch water away from the basement, exterior drainage systems, and utilizing specialized rain gutters and downspouts to direct water further away from the home during rain-

- Plumbing repairs: Sometimes water issues may be the result of a pipe backup or a faulty appliance and not necessarily an outdoor water issue. In these cases, repairing the source of the leak may be all that's needed.









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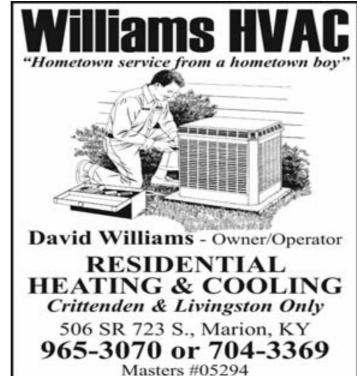
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Yards need winterizing for health

Changing seasons can be tough on a lawn. Always exposed to the elements, lawns can fare especially poorly upon the arrival of winter, a season known for its harsh and unforgiving weather. Even the most perfectly manicured lawn can suffer at the hands of winter, causing homeowners to sit idly by and hope spring arrives that much sooner.

But as punishing as winter can be on a lawn, homeowners are not without recourse. Much like homeowners can take steps to help their lawns survive sizzling summer heat waves during the warmer months of the year, they also can take steps to help their lawns make it through

mous with winter.

- Don't procrastinate. Putting off the process of winterizing a lawn can put that lawn in jeopardy. Lawns will turn dormant the closer you get to winter, and they may reject the nutrients found in fertilizer as a result. Those nutrients will prove valuable once spring weather returns, so start the winterization process in early fall so the lawn has sufficient time to absorb nutrients and strengthen itself for the seasons to come.

- Treat trouble spots. Summer can be even harder on a lawn than winter, especially for lawns located in regions where heat waves and

Some tree pruning can prove best in wintertime

Many homeowners may not know that pruning trees in the winter can benefit some trees. Deciduous trees are dormant in winter, so they won't bleed sap when pruned at this time of year like they will at other times of year. In addition, many varieties of trees are less likely to attract disease or insects if pruned in the winter. Oak trees, for example, emit a strong odor when pruned, and that odor can attract a type of beetle that causes oak wilt. But this type of beetle hibernates in the winter, making this the ideal season to prune oak trees.

Before pruning trees, regardless of the time of year, homeowners should learn the types of trees on their property and when the ideal pruning season is for each type of tree. Pruning also may depend on climate, so speak with a local gardening or landscaping professional to determine when is the best time to prune the trees on your property.

Once the time has come to prune, keep the following tips in mind to maintain healthy and aesthetically appealing trees.

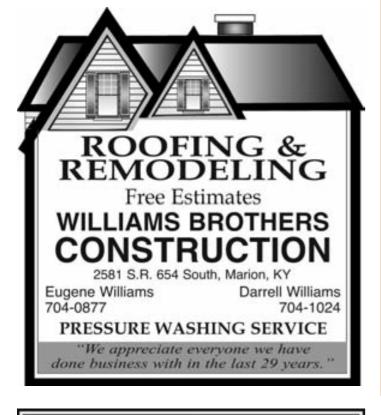
- Remove limbs that appear to be competing for space. Tree limbs ing parallel to one another can be pruned. Such limbs may prohibit the growth of nearby limbs.

- Remove limbs that are growing in. Some tree limbs may appear to be growing toward the interior of the tree, and these limbs can be pruned.

- Remove limbs growing toward the ground. A healthy tree's limbs will grow outward, not toward the

- Remove dead limbs. Dead limbs simply take up space, and a dead limb is not going to grow back come the spring. Dead, broken or diseased limbs should be removed

- Do not top trees. Tree topping is the removal of large branches and/or trunks from the top of a tree. Topping leaves a tree susceptible to disease and insect infestation, and homeowners who top trees to prevent them from getting any larger should know that topping actually promotes the growth of smaller, weaker branches that eventually grow as tall, if not taller, than the original branches before the tree was topped. Topping also decreases a tree's life expectancy.



stances, certain spots on the lawn seem to be hit harder than others, and those spots should get special attention when winterizing. Check the soil's pH levels before fertilizing or applying any treatments. Such a test will reveal which spots need the most attention, and treating trouble spots now will make

spring lawn care that much easier.

Aerate the property. Aerating can help a lawn recover after a long summer and help it survive the potentially harsh months that lie ahead. Aerating, which involves puncturing the soil or removing cores of soil from the ground, can restore a lawn to health by improving its drainage and allowing more water and air to reach the roots of the grass. Aerating also makes it easier for nutrients to penetrate the soil, which encourages a healthier lawn over the long haul. Heavy lawn traffic compresses the soil, a potentially harmful process that can be reversed via aeration.

- Take steps to strengthen the roots. Aerating promotes stronger roots, but homeowners might also want to find a winterizing product

Alvin Yoder

Manager

with potassium and phosphorous, both of which can strengthen roots. Different types of lawns will respond differently to certain winterizers, so discuss your options with a lawn care professional who can help you find the right fit for your property.

- Remove debris from the lawn. Debris left on a lawn over the win-

ter can prove very harmful. Piles of debris left scattered around a lawn can suffocate blades of grass, leading _to long-term damage and a potentially unsightly lawn come the spring. In addition, piles of debris might make good homes for organisms that can damage the lawn. As fall moves into winter, periodically remove all debris, including leaves

and branches fallen from trees. - Make the lawn off-limits once the temperatures dip below freezing. A lawn should be off-limits once the ground freezes. Stepping on grass that has frozen will leave noticeable footprints, and walking on frozen grass can kill the turf. When winter arrives, people should avoid using the lawn as a shortcut into and out of your home and stick to driveways and sidewalks instead.

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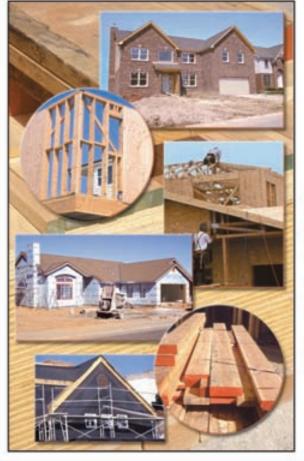
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Autumn perfect season for certain home improvements

Home improvement projects can add value to a home and do-ityourselfers know the sweat-equity that goes into such projects can give homeowners a greater sense of pride in their homes. But no two home improvement projects are the same, and homeowners should know that certain projects are best tackled during certain times of the

Fall is a great season to work on your house, as the weather is often at its most agreeable once the summer heat has gone and before winter weather arrives. The following are a handful of fall-friendly home improvement projects for homeowners looking to improve their

Roof repair

Whether you're repairing or replacing the roof, fall is a great time of year to dust off the ladder and get some work done on your roof for a variety of reasons. First and foremost, fall is ideal for roof work because you won't have to be up on the roof with the summer heat bearing down on you. This can make the project move along more quickly, which is especially beneficial if you are paying laborers to work on the roof. The fewer hours workers are fixing your roof, the less you will be paying in labor costs.

In addition, fixing up the roof in the fall ensures those winter storms, be it rain or snow, won't find their way into your home via leaks. A leaky roof in winter is hard to fix, as the roof surface could be treacherous in the winter and winter winds can make it dangerous to be up on the roof at all. Addressing leaks in the fall can prevent damage to your home's interior, which can mount up if a leaky roof is not addressed until the following

Window work

When the weather outside gets frightful, poorly insulated windows can allow cold air into the home. That often has a trickle-down effect on finances, forcing you to turn up the thermostat in an attempt to offset the cold air pouring into the home. Whether you need your windows replaced or simply need to patch up any leaks, a proactive approach to leaky or older windows in the fall can save you from unneces-



Autumn is an ideal time of year to tackle home painting projects as well as many other types of improvements.

sarily high heating bills come the winter. Addressing leaky windows also makes a home more comfortable for its inhabitants

Fall is the ideal time to address a home's windows because the temperature outside tends to be pleasant. This means you likely won't have to make much of an effort to offset the elements, and open windows in the fall won't make your home's interior very hot or cold like they might if you were to tackle the project during the summer or winter.

Painting projects

Painting is another home improvement project that seems tailor-made for fall. A fresh coat of paint or a new color scheme around the house can give a home an entirely new look and feel. But paint can be pungent and the aromas may last if it's applied at a time of year when it can't dry while the windows are wide open. Paint fumes inside a home can make the home uninhabitable, but painting at a time of year like the fall, when you can keep the windows open during and after the project, can help air the home out

But interior painting isn't the only painting project homeowners can tackle in the fall. Many exterior paints are temperature-sensitive and need the temperature outside to be above 40 degrees. Paint that freezes won't dry properly, and homeowners might be left with a costly and unsightly mistake on their hands. Fall temperatures tend to be amenable to both interior and exterior painting projects, just be sure to check the weather forecast before making your first brush

Fixing the floors

Wood flooring is a hot commodity for many homeowners. But not all flooring can be added to a home at any time of year. That's because certain types of flooring emadhesives that need temperatures inside the home to be within a certain range, and that range is often within 70 to 80 degrees, which makes fall a great time to install such floors.

Colder temperatures can make it difficult for the flooring to dry and bond, which will prove problematic down the road. What's more, many people entertain friends and family come late fall and into the holiday season, and it can be difficult to do so if you are busy installing new

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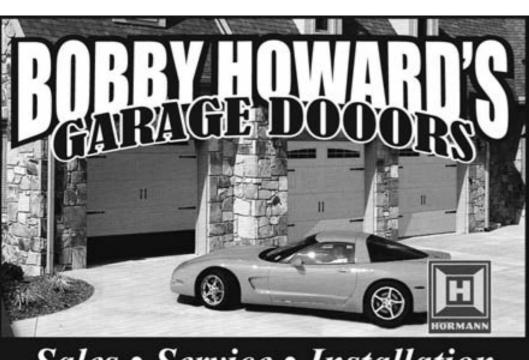
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Reducing monthly costs requires care

Saving money is a priority for many people. But reducing monthly expenses is typically a bigger concern for homeowners, especially new homeowners adjusting to life with a mortgage, higher energy bills than they likely had while renting and other costs associated with owning their own homes.

Home ownership is a dream for many people, but the realization of just how expensive owning a home can be is often eye-opening once you get the keys and move in. Once the initial sticker shock has worn off, homeowners should know that the cost of home ownership need not be so steep. In fact, there are several wavs homeowners can cut costs without drastically changing their

- Combine your insurance coverages. Many lenders mandate that borrowers carry homeowners insurance for their homes. The cost of coverage varies from company to company, and one of the ways homeowners can reduce the cost of their homeowners insurance is to bundle their homeowners coverage with their auto insurance. Some companies provide discounted premiums as high as 15 percent for policy holders who combine their homeowners and auto insurance coverage. Speak with your current provider to determine if combining your coverage could save you money. If the savings are not significant, shop around for an insurance



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Refinancing an existing mortgage is one way homeowners looking to reduce their monthly expenses can make life more affordable.

company that can offer you the lower price you desire. Just be sure the company is accessible and reputable.

- Refinance your mortgage. Refinancing your mortgage is another great way homeowners can save a substantial amount of money. Even if you only recently purchased your home, your lender might be willing to refinance your mortgage with a lower interest rate. Depending on the amount of time and money left on your loan, reducing your interest rate by 2 percent can save you a substantial amount of money on your monthly mortgage payment, which can add up to considerable savings on the total interest you will

pay over the life of the loan. If you think your interest rate is a tad too high, consult your lender and discuss refinancing at a lower rate.

- Bundle your services. More and more consumers have decided to bundle their Internet, phone and television packages. Consumer Reports found that bundling just two of those services instead of buying them from separate providers can save consumers between 40 to 60 percent depending on where they live. Rates for bundling packages often come with an expiration date, but a Consumer Reports survey found that even those packages come with some wiggle room. In their 2011 Annual Telecom Survey,

Consumer Reports found that onethird of survey participants attempted to negotiate a lower rate for their bundled services, and 90 percent of those efforts were successful. When negotiating, discuss lower prices for bundling as well as extending the package beyond the current expiration date.lt never hurts to ask, and one study has already shown that it actually helps to ask.

- Go green. Going green benefits the environment, and it's almost certain to benefit homeowners' wallets. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, toilets account for more water usage in the home than any other appliance or fixture. But the EPA also notes that a family of four can save thousands of dollars by switching to a high-efficiency toilet over that toilet's lifetime. And installing ecofriendly appliances or fixtures around your home might even make you eligible for certain tax breaks while also updating your home, something that will make the home more attractive to prospective buyers when you sell down the road. There are many ways to make a home more environmentally friendly, and nearly all of them can save you money over the long run.



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Clearing gutter grime calls for safety

Homeowners have many responsibilities synonymous with certain times of year. For example, pool maintenance must be a priority in the summertime, but such a chore is unnecessary in the heart of winter.

Cleaning gutters is a household chore that many homeowners associate with both spring and autumn. Cleaning gutters prevents water damage on the roof while protecting your home's siding and foundation. In addition, cleaning gutters in the fall gives homeowners a chance to ensure they are firmly secured to the house, an important precaution when potentially harsh winter weather is just around the corner.

Unlike many household chores, cleaning gutters can be quite dangerous, as it often requires homeowners to climb up and down on ladders or spend ample time on the roof. As a result, safety should reign supreme when cleaning gutters, and homeowners should take the following precautions before gutting their gutters of grime.

- Don't try to be a hero. If you are afraid of heights, then it's perfectly alright to hire a professional to clean your gutters. Men and women with a fear of heights cannot predict how they will react when climbing a ladder, so play it safe and hire a professional if the thought of climbing up

and down a ladder frightens you. - Inspect the stability of your ladder. Ladders play a key role when cleaning gutters of leaves, dirt and grime, so homeowners should inspect their ladders before they get to work. An unbalanced ladder may not be reliable and should be re-

placed. You will be moving and swaying somewhat while cleaning the gutters, so you will need a secure ladder that does not teeter back and forth each time you reach for the gutter.

- Keep the ladder on stable ground, and ask a friend or family member to hold it. The ladder should always be planted on a flat and secure surface before you climb up to clean the gutter. And much like you might have a spotter when lifting weights, have a friend or family member hold the ladder as you climb up to ensure the ladder remains stable

- Move the ladder frequently. It can be tempting to reach as far as possible while on the ladder, as you can save time by covering more ground on each trip up the ladder. But overextending yourself is a considerable safety risk, so move the ladder often, even if the job is taking more time than you had expected.

Wear tight clothing. Loose clothing when cleaning gutters can easily get stuck on shutters, tree branches or other items when climbing up or down the ladder. If you aren't paying attention, clothing that gets snagged can throw off your balance when you start to move, increasing your risk of falling.

-Wear protective gloves. Anyone who has cleaned gutters in the past can attest that you never know what might have settled in gutters since the last time they were cleaned. Wear a thick pair of gloves that won't puncture when caught on a gutter, sharp twig or branch. You won't want holes in the gloves, as holes may leave you susceptible to any bacteria in organic items that might have settled in the materials in your gutter. Gutters also may have sharp edges that can leave you susceptible to cuts if you aren't wearing gloves. In addition, gloves keep your hands warm, which will come in handy as you clear the gutters of materials that are often wet. When choosing gloves, be sure to choose ones that give you some grip so you can firmly grasp the ladder as you climb up and down.



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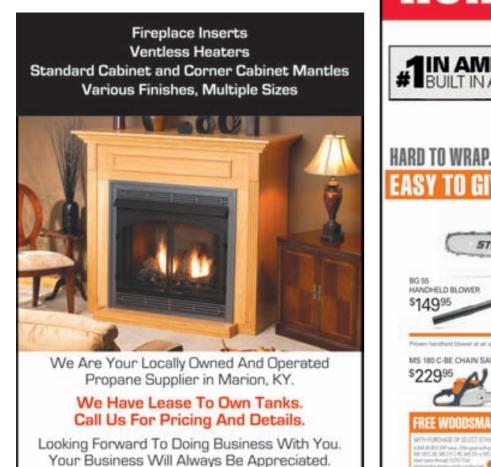
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Improving home's air quality important to do before winter

With fall soon to give way to winter, many people will soon be spending more time indoors. Winter weather can be harsh, and it can be difficult for fresh air to make its way into a home once the warmer temperatures of summer and fall give way to the cold days of winter.

Poor indoor air quality can cause multiple problems. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, poor indoor air quality can increase a person's risk of developing pneumonia, and it also may aggravate existing respiratory conditions such as asthma. The EPA also notes that long-term exposure to indoor air pollution can increase a person's risk for heart disease, respiratory diseases and even cancer.

 $Because \, indoor \, air \, pollution \, can$ be so devastating, many homeowners look for ways to improve their indoor air quality, especially before the arrival of winter, when residents of the home figure to spend such a significant amount of time indoors. Fortunately, homeowners can take many steps to do just that.

- Clean with soap and water. Soap and hot water can still clean a home effectively, and this age-old combination might be the healthiest way to clean as well. Many household cleaning products contain potentially harmful ingredients that can introduce toxins and irritants into a home. Avoid such cleaners and solvents when cleaning a home. If stains prove too stubborn for soap and water, be sure to open windows when using potentially harmful cleaners indoors

- Purchase an air filtration system. Air filtration systems vary significantly in size, cost and function. Some systems are designed to remove specific pollutants, and may not be effective at removing additional indoor air pollutants. Larger models tend to be most effective at filtering pollutants like dust, but such units are more expensive than smaller units. If your home is especially dusty, then a large filtering sysprove a worthy tem may

Open windows and doors when possible. Introducing outdoor air into a home is a great way to improve indoor air quality. Of course, opening windows and doors might not be feasible in the middle of winter. But take advantage of any such opportunities when they present themselves. For example, after cooking a big meal, open the kitchen exhaust fan to allow fresh air into the home. Such fans are not large enough to cause a significant temperature drop in the home, but they can directly remove contaminants from inside the home, like those that might be emitted from gas stoves.



remove pollutants the vacuum cleaner might have left behind.

- Insist guests and residents remove their shoes. Chemicals can find their way into a home in a variety of ways, and you and your fellow residents or guests may be tracking them into your home on your shoes.

Keep a doormat inside all entryways, and insist guests and residents remove their shoes before entering your home. This reduces the amount of potential pollutants brought into your home and also makes cleaning the home that much easier.

Break out the mop. Vacuum cleaners can be effective at picking up pollutants inside a home, but they also can leave things behind. When a vacuum cleaner seems to be leaving some dust behind, take out the mop and, with just a little water, address the areas where dust is still lingering. Water should be enough to do the trick, and, unlike some cleaning products, water won't be introducing any additional harmful pollutants into the home.

- Smoke outside. Smoking inside a home is inviting trouble, especially during those times of year when the windows cannot be opened. Secondhand smoke is a significant

source of indoor air pollution, as cigarette smoke is known to contain more than 4,000 chemicals. Smoking indoors, whether an area is wellor poorly-ventilated, can be dangerous to smokers. Exposure to secondhand smoke puts adults and children alike at risk of several diseases, including asthma and cancer. If you or your fellow residents or visitors must smoke, do so outdoors.



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Ridding home of drafts saves winter energy costs

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Think about what it might be like if you turned up the heat and then opened all of the windows in your home. All of that warm air would rush right out, and you would be left with a cold home and a hefty heating bill.

A home that is full of drafts is inefficient and expensive. And drafty homes are not just a problem when the weather is cold, as air that seeps in when you're trying to keep the home cool can be an inefficient nuisance as well. Higher energy bills and wasted resources do not have to be tolerated if you simply scour your home for drafts, sealing them to cut energy costs and make the home more comfortable.

Drafts are often small cracks around windows and doors, but there are many other places where drafts can form. Knowing some of the less visible spots where drafts come from may help you to seal out unwanted cold air more effectively.

Homes that feature attics with pull-down stairs tend to be drafty. In such homes, a large hole is cut out of the ceiling so residents can access the attic. So instead of thick insulation, these homes may only have a sheet of plywood blocking your interior space from the outdoors, as many attics are directly vented to the roof. To determine if there is a leak, turn on the attic light, close the attic door, and check to see if you can see the light on from below. If you can, then there is a gap letting both the light and air escape. In addition to using flexible rubber around the opening of the attic to better seal the door when it is closed, you can think about adding a thicker, more insulated door.

Dryer vents The standard home laundry dryer vents outdoors via an exhaust duct. This duct is open to the outdoors, and it may be letting cold air into the home. That's because there is typically a flimsy flapper made of sheet metal on the outside of the vent to help protect against air infiltration. But over time dryer lint can accumulate at the vent opening, causing the metal flapper to stay open when it should close. Homeowners can invest in dryer seals that close the vent when the dryer is not in use. Not only does this prevent cold air from entering

the house, but also it keeps out pests, like bugs and rodents.

Check pipes that exit the home, such as those that feed outdoor water spigots, as such pipes can let cold air back into the house. The same can be said for waste pipes. Also, check to see if pipes that connect to garages, basements and crawl spaces are not insulated. Use sealant around these pipes to block drafts into the home. Foam insulation can be sprayed into small crevices, where it will expand and harden, blocking off air access. These damp, cool spots are also great places for insects to enter the home. Sealing drafts also may prevent bugs from entering the home.

Electrical outlets

Outlets and light switches can be significant sources of drafts in a home. Check to see that the switch plates are secure. If drafts still come through, then employ outlet draft blockers to prevent cool air from entering the home and warm air from exiting it.

Homeowners can address drafts in a variety of ways. And doing so can make a home more comfortable and cut energy costs considerably.





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Radon in homes increases cancer risk

Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas that forms from the natural decay of uranium found in soils. Colorless and odorless, radon can greatly increase a person's risk of lung cancer. Smokers who live in homes with high

radon levels are especially susceptible to lung cancer.

Radon can enter a home by moving up through the soil beneath a home and finding its way through cracks and holes in the foundation. Many people feel homes with basements are espe-

can enter a home whether the home has a basement or not. Granite countertops may emit radon, but not always at levels that cause cancer. Countertops can be tested for radon emissions, and such testing is inexpensive.

Bathroom renovations can be kept easy, cheap

Bathroom renovations are second to kitchen renovations on the list of the top remodeling projects to increase home value. The popularity of bathroom renovations and their ability to transform a space has left many homeowners wondering if there are any easy and affordable ways to change the look of their bathrooms

While "easy" is a relative term, there are ways homeowners willing to make certain concessions can keep the work and cost of a bathroom renovation to a minimum.

Resurface

When possible, covering up what you have in the bathroom is much less expensive and less laborintensive than tearing out existing fixtures and floors and replacing them anew. Resurfacing can extend to refinishing bathtubs to installing shower liners. Those who have unsightly walls or wallpaper that they're just not ready to remove may consider using wainscotting to cover a portion of the room or even tiling entire walls

It is important to note that resurfacing and covering up items in the bathroom should only be reserved for cosmetic fixes. If something needs to be replaced because it is damaged or mildew-covered, then covering it up is only hiding the problem and asking for more work in the long run.

Scale back on materials

One way to save money on a bathroom renovation project is to choose less expensive materials. For example, you may not need to install travertine or marble flooring in a space where less expensive flooring like vinyl is adequate. Advancements in vinyl flooring have enabled this affordable material to mimic the look of more expensive materials at a fraction of the cost.

When redoing tile on walls and shower enclosures, many domestically-produced tiles rival the looks of more expensive imported alternatives. You may be able to save more by buying tile in bulk and using the rémainder in other applications around the house.

Paint

Do not underestimate the power of a fresh coat of paint on any room in the house, including the bathroom, Dark, small space be made to look more expansive with lighter colors. Cavernous bathrooms that look empty may prove more inviting with darker hues. Pick a paint that is designed for bathroom application so that it will inhibit the growth of mold and mildew.

Update hardware

A new faucet or some new cabinet pulls can make the room look new and fresh without breaking the bank. Match finishes throughout the bathroom so everything will be cohesive. When shopping for a new shower head, choose a model that also conserves water. This way you will be making cosmetic and energy-saving renovations at the same

Handling labor yourself instead of hiring workers can reduce the cost of bathroom remodels considerably. It is possible to buy fully assembled bathroom vanities and install them yourself. Even installing a new toilet is relatively easy with the help of a friend.

There are a number of ways to make bathroom renovations a bit easier and more affordable. Even nominal changes can give the space an entirely different look and feel, which can make the room more enjoyable and help improve a home's resale value in the process.

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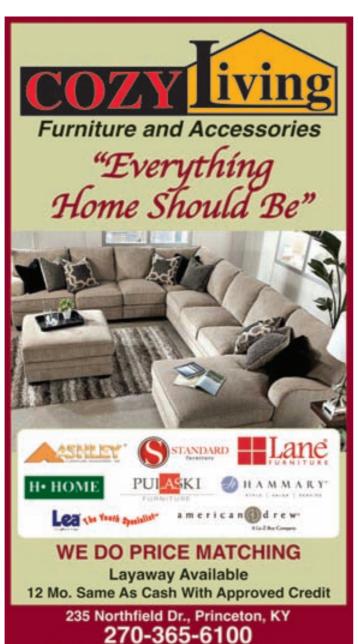
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